

Article

The Sustainability of an Urban Ritual in the Collective Memory: *Bergama Kermesi*

Ülkü İnceköse 

Department of Architecture, İzmir Institute of Technology, 35430 Urla, Turkey; ulkuincekose@iyte.edu.tr

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Abstract: *Bergama Festival*, locally known as *Bergama Kermesi*, is an annual festival which dates back to 22 May 1937 in the city. It came into existence as a result of Atatürk's intention to introduce this, an extraordinary town with its historical and cultural properties, and promote it internationally. The Festival is an important element in the collective memory of the city. Initially, it was a civic event, a device in the formation process of the Turkish Republic. However, now, it is a civil event for national and international representatives, and a festival that allows locals and guests from different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds to mix freely and equally for a certain period. In the course of the Festival, the public buildings and the open spaces of the town become places of activity and entertainment. Parks, stadiums, the town square, and streets function as spaces for a variety of activities. Looking back at its 81-year history, one can notice some important changes in the Festival's cultural and social practices, from an earlier state-dominated character into the current more publicly oriented one. This article studies the change of Bergama Festival as an 'invented tradition' into an element of the collective memory in town from the perspective of different public affairs that it introduces. In this regard, the article will also show how an urban ritual can maintain its sustainability by keeping itself fresh in the social life.

Keywords: collective memory; invented tradition; sustainability of tradition; festival; *Bergama Kermesi*; Bergama

1. Introduction and Theoretical Background

Festivals are generally defined by their pleasurable and public characteristics, and they are also discussed from historical, cultural, social and political perspectives. Getz and Page define the festivals as 'themed, public celebrations' [1] (p. 67), Falassi argues that a festival as an event is a social phenomenon [2] (p. 1). In Falassi's explanation, the festival with its social role and symbolic meaning is to be associated with the community's ideology, worldview, social identity, and historical continuity [2] (p. 2). Janiskee explains that the festivals are "formal periods or programs of pleasurable activities, entertainment, or events having a festive character and publicly celebrating some concept, happening or fact" [3] (p. 97). Human geographer Cudny's definition of festival reference in Encyclopedia Britannica focuses on the values of limited duration, social collectivity (religious, political or socio-economic), and repetitive events [4] (p. 16). Also, Ekman and Geertz embody festivals as social events, and both describe festivals in terms of their relationship with the identity of people or citizens [5,6]. All these explanations or definitions confirm that a festival is a 'socially sustaining device' [1] (p. 68), which is effective in the sense of identity due to its social and cultural significance. In addition, being a repetitive and collective event implies social devices of collective memory of a city or social group. The challenge for researchers accompanying memory and festivals has been extended in related issues of nationality, locality, spatiality, and sense of identity. Shin discussed the role of the Gwangju, Biennale in the reconstruction of the political image of Gwangju, and shows the relation between the event and the recreation of the city's identity [7]. Derrett investigates how cultural festivals develop and reflect a

community's sense of place through four festivals in the Northern rivers region of NSW [8]. Chen and Tao assert that the landscapes of the Qiqiao festival memory are important in forming the identity of Zhucun City [9].

In the work 'On Collective Memory', which is a breakdown in memory studies, Halbwachs argues for the collectivity and multiculturalism of memory. Memory as a social phenomenon occurs in a society: "Yet it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" [10] (p. 38). To remember, the people need to be within a current of collective thought [11] (p. 2). Assman, with the reference to Halbwachs' 'memory images', puts forward 'memory figures', which constitutes the collective memory. 'Memory figures' provides the continuity in time and place, a total image of the group and re-constructivist character for collective memory. These are presented as three features of 'memory figures', namely, 'reference to time and place', 'reference to the Group' and 'Re-constructivism'. First, figures of memory are related to specific time and place. These have periodic rhythms and specific spaces. Second, collective memory is related to the 'real and living community'. Finally, memory is not related to the past, it is reconstructive and 'there are no pure facts of memory' [12]. Remembering the past is not only bringing back the knowledge of the past, and collective memory is not a simple depot of the knowledge of the past. Collective memory is a living and reconstructive process. "Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time" according to Halbwach [10] (p. 30), and constructs the relationship between the memory and space. Collectivity of memory is possible through the sharing of specific spaces and time. Memory needs spaces, and all memories are based on the space in which they occur [12].

Within this context, festivals, with other repeatable practices including celebrations, events, rites, and ceremonies, serve to shape the collective memory of a city as a memory figure. They are replicated and each generation can transmit their experience to the next [8]. Set apart from the daily life of the city, festivals give an opportunity for citizens or a group to become a part of a collective activity, and provide a common sense of unity [13]. These expressive activities are socially performed and commemorative in the constitution of collective memory of the city [14]. For Connerton, images of the past and remembered knowledge of the past are transmitted and maintained in two ways: By 'commemorative ceremonies' and 'bodily practices'. Besides their entertainment functions, they are effective tools for the creation of a society's memory and its maintenance and sustainability. Periodical formations, structured time and place relations, ruled bodily practices, and defined program activities in a structure of a festival all constitute a common shared history for individual citizens or a group with the reference to past.

Festivals can be realized with the continuity of the past, however, they can also serve as a new beginning for the collective memory of a society or a group. In this situation, a festival has the role of an agent for the construction of the new collectivity. It can be considered an instance of Eric Hobsbawm's 'invented tradition'. In the 'invented tradition', Hobsbawm's main concern is how and why a society's traditions of the past are transformed. Hobsbawm states that "Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" [15] (p. 2). Invented traditions can be related to present-day ideas constituted with the reference to the past, and also with 'quasi-obligatory repetition' [15]. They are considered by Hobsbawm as "a process of formalization, ritualization, characterized by reference to past, if only by imposing repetition" [15] (p. 4). This process ensures social cohesion, social identity, and social interactions in a community [16]. 'Invented tradition' is also associated with new phenomena of the nation and related definitions, including nationalism, the nation-state, the national symbol [15]. Hobsbawm explains the role of invented traditions for legitimizing the existence of a nation and for promoting its continuity of it. The investigation of the relation between the concept of 'invented tradition', collective memory, and events helps to clarify the debate on the construction of modern nation-states. Endo pointed out how local identities were constructed through the concepts of the

transformation of tradition, and invention of tradition by referring to the two festivals known as Yosakoi Matsuri and Yosakoi Soran Matsuri [17]. Stankova and Vassenska draw attention to festivals' and local events' contribution to the conservation of cultural heritage and traditions [18]. Kong and Yeoh, Regt and Lippe; Parvez; Repšienė and Žukauskienė; and, Crespi-Vallbona and Richards analyze specific cases to reveal how officially produced events were instrumental to building up nations and national identity [19–23].

In this context, this paper considers *Bergama Kermesi* as an 'invented tradition' and investigates the process of formalization, ritualization and re-forming since 1937 until today, through analyzing the relationship between festival spaces and social practices. In this way, the paper aims to embody the transmission of the collective memory of the city through the festival. It also explains the role of the festival's characteristic transformation from 'civic' to 'civil' in providing this continuity and in the relations between space and social practices.

2. Methodology

This research is based on a theoretical framework which draws on the concepts of 'invented tradition' and 'collective memory'. The term of 'invented tradition' as used by Hobsbawm provides a conceptual context for understanding the social meaning of the event and analyzing the uninterrupted process of *Bergama Kermesi* from its invention date to present. Through the concept of collective memory derived from Halbwachs as a social phenomenon, the process of memory reconstruction in Bergama was analyzed, in regard to the sustainability of the festival and the transformation of the event. The assertion of the research is that the sustainability of *Bergama Kermesi* is related to the characteristic transformations of the festival. The transformations are explained in a historical–chronological manner, highlighting the political, social, cultural differentiations in the history of the Republic of Turkey [24]. The focus of the historical section is the process of transformation of the forms of publicness from civic ceremony to civil event.

This research article accepts *Bergama Kermesi* as a 'social reality and social activity' which is created by social interaction and explores how the sustainability of a local event has been maintained since 1937. In this context, it refers to ethnographic methodology to understand the social meaning of the event for the citizens and their actions [25]. This research presents a case study, a well-organized qualitative research method [26]. The case study research is appropriate for identifying, describing, analyzing and also theorizing of this social event [27]. The 'invented tradition' and 'collective memory' issues are discussed through the case study research method in many studies connected with the issues including 'nationality', 'locality', 'identity' and 'tradition' [18–23]. Among these studies, few are constructed on the relation between the concepts of 'invented tradition', 'collective memory' and 'festival' [20–22]. Among these studies, this research originally constructed a conceptual relation between them through the case study.

Two types of research method used in the case study were the personal experiences of the author, who has lived in the city of Bergama since 1975, and historical/documentary research. Personal experiences of the author are based on the author's observations as a participant in the case study research. The author's participant observations, which is the accumulation of forty years of experiences, provide the study with unique insights [28], because the author participated in countless activities and experienced forty years of the transformation of the festival under discussion.

In addition to the author's observations, historical/documentary research was conducted in the study. Historical/documentary materials are especially important for this study, providing a rich source for analysis of the event [29]. These materials shed light on the periods of the festival between 1937–1975/80, which the author did not experience. These were accessed from archival sources including local and national newspapers, local bulletins, personal photographs and invitation cards for festival activities. Continuities or discontinuities of the activities, social meanings, activity spaces, and public rituals in a historical process of eighty-one years of the *Bergama Kermesi* were analyzed through

this firsthand knowledge. All these archival materials provide more detailed information about the festival, and in this way, the heritage of the event can be understood.

3. The Invention of Tradition: *Bergama Kermesi*

“Gentlemen, the place we are standing upon now is an exceptional corner of our country as it contains unique antiquities. However, it is lost in the dark aisles of the history by being unknown, unseen and unheard. This should come to an end. This place should advertise itself locally and globally. The local people of this exceptional town should be given an opportunity to introduce themselves with a fair and festival . . . ” [30] (p. 9); (Atatürk, 1934)

Except for official holidays, *Bergama Kermesi*, is the only urban activity in which all residents in the town of Bergama can participate. The Festival, continued without interruption, for 81 years since 22 May 1937 is a ritual that enables the citizens to socialize extensively.

The story of the emergence of *Bergama Kermesi* goes back to the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and his visit to Bergama on 13 April 1934. Upon seeing the ancient site of Askleipon, Atatürk asked the Governor of the city of İzmir, Kazım Dirik Pasha and his entourage to organize a fair and a festival in order to advertise the town “locally and globally”. Atatürk underlined the necessity of introducing this town of unique antiquities in his instructions, in which he urged the governor Kazım Dirik Pasha “Sir, please note this down and do whatever it takes” [30] (p. 9). *Bergama Kermesi* started with such a decision, and 81 years later is still run by various organization committees, with their different goals and different schedules. The same differences are also reflected in the profiles of the participants. Accordingly, there have been changes in the spaces and their functions owing to the structural changes in the activities of the Festival. All these changes during 81 years are not indifferent to the social, economic, political and cultural state of the country. The ruling political rhetoric and consequent emerging cultural and social politics have had an effect on the structure of the Festival. At the beginning, the Festival was originally based on the Republican People’s Party (CHP)’s ideals for creating Westernized cultural policies in the era of one-party regime, aiming at creating a new nation-state. The structure which was based on the issues of national identity, and its social practices were specified and limited. The main space of the Festival is the *Halkevi* (Public Hall), one of the most important places symbolizing the project of Turkish Modernization [31]. As Uğur Tanyeli mentioned, *Halkevi* together with stations and parks are ‘agents of modernization’ in the city life [32]. When its effects on the daily life of the city are analyzed, the activities and the use of the spaces had a specified and structured nature. Similar to a national day, it depicted a stabilized structure. However, in modern times, it depicts a more entertainment-based structure defined by the popular culture. In spatial terms, there is no specific place named as the main space of the Festival. Different areas of the town, including the streets, turn into activity places. In daily life, many urban voids scattered around the town change the social dynamics into an area for an elevated form of socialization.

This idea of entertainment, which was initially defined by an authoritarian mindset that could be seen as civic to some extent, also affects the way the spaces in the town are used and the way people behave. Later, this civic character changed into a civil structure in all aspects. Accordingly, analyzing the transformation story of this 81-year old *Bergama Kermesi* in terms of a space-publicness affairs relationship is definitive in understanding the way the Festival is reflected in the collective memory of the urban people.

3.1. Civic Publicness: 1937–1951

In the era from 1937–1961, the Festival appeared as a national event as a device for legitimizing the existence of a Republic of Turkey and for providing the national identity. The original schedule of events in 1937 continued up to 1951 with no major changes in the objectives, the structure of the organization, activities, social practices, participant profiles or festival spaces. In all aspects, the Festival of 1937 reflected an understanding based on the aims of the founders of the new nation-state, who proposed new national values on a route to creating a new nation-state [33].

3.1.1. Organization

The festival was conducted by the organization committee whose structure was main evidence for the civic character of this period of the festival. It consists of the *Kaymakam* (the governor of the town), the chairman of the ruling party (*CHP*), the mayor, the director of *Halkevi* (the public hall), the director of the town museum, relevant secretaries and an officer from *Halkevi*. Apart from the mayor, all members of the committee were representatives of the centralized government structure which served the unifying process of the nation-state. The structure of the organization committee in the first Festival seemed to be followed in the years until 1947. After taking over the organization of the event, *Halkevi*, the most active facilitator, also became the ultimate organizer. The official statement of such a decision clarifies the change as a result of the inefficiency in the organization of the event every year, owing to the failure to transfer knowledge and experience to future organizers successfully. The statement also mentions that it is an event of musical, folkloric, and tourist activities which should be in the management of *Halkevi*. The statement concludes as “Thus, it is noticed and approved that the organization of the event should be given to *Halkevi* where it was born a decade ago” [30] (p. 91).

3.1.2. Activities and Spaces

The main activities of the event include the official opening ceremony, a parade, the sight-seeing tours to the ancient sites, national sports competitions, drama and traditional dance shows (Figure 1). In addition, *Halkevi* (the Public Hall) band performances and the Festival market are among the activities. All except two mornings are allocated for the trips to the ancient sites, underlying Atatürk’s intention to present Bergama to the world with its unique antiquities. The young *Halkevi* members are responsible for guiding the guests around the ancient sites. Thus, some courses to educate those young people about antiquities are planned. Another morning activity in the program is the performance of the *Halkevi* Band every day except one during the event. In the four days of the event, the evening activity is the performance of a play. Apart from that, except for the last day, there are sports activities (archery, running, and cycling races) and traditional dance shows (*bengi* dance, *kalkan* and *zeybek* dances). One festival day is a celebration of *Kozak*, a plateau to the North of Bergama. Water activities are organized in the neighboring coastal towns of Dikili and Çandarlı. The evening activity in Kozak includes some regional and national dance shows [30,33–35] (Figure 2).



Figure 1. The opening ceremony of *Bergama Kermesi*: opening speech and parade (source: Bergama Municipality Archieve).



Figure 2. Festival activities; Kozak Day, dance shows, drama (Source: Bergama Municipality Archive).

There are two main activity spaces: *Halkevi* and *Bağlarkırı* (The Moors). The biggest problem in the formation of new nation-states is to break away from the previous identity, to try to form a historical ground to anchor and sustain the new national identities [24,30]. Relatively, the *Halkevi* appears as one of the most important public places in the Westernization project of the Republican era [32,36,37]. These public halls, which were intended to impose the new ways of life and new values serve as spaces for activities regarding humanities, fine arts, drama, sports, social assistance, public courses, publications, farming, and exhibitions [38,39]. The function of the public hall in the organization of *Bergama Kermesi* corresponds with its duties and activity areas [40]. The fine art activities organized by the *Halkevi* targets creating a new public taste in music and art. Consequently, the performance of the *Halkevi* Band every day of the event, as seen in the original program, is important. Plays and sketches as artistic activities are among the most important activities in an attempt to promote the idea of creating a new society. Plays had an important place in the first event of 1937 [41]. In the first two nights of the 1937 Festival, İstanbul City Theater performed two plays, entitled as *Tosun* and *Hülle*, which criticized the traditional marriages in the society. In addition, there were performances of the regional drama groups on two days of the event. One is a performance by the town's Hunters' Club. The band performed in the garden of the *Halkevi*, and again all plays were acted on the stage in *Halkevi*.

In terms of creating a new national identity based on *Türkism*, it was advocated in the first years of the Republic that the traces of the Turkish identity are visible in Central Asia and Anatolia [42]. Relatively, in order to remember and revive some traditions and practices of the past to prove the existence of a common culture, activities like *cirit*, archery, sports competitions, and traditional dance shows to place in the event as a symbol of regional and national values. In fact, the news about *Bergama Kermesi* in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper of 25 May 1937 says that "As a matter of fact, the Festival's ultimate purpose is to maintain the tradition of the national dances, to display the historical artifacts and to organize competitions" [30] (p. 36). Again in the same news article, the games named above depicting Turkish war crafts were defined as 'a tradition of the ancestors'. The emphasis on the term 'national' was similarly evident in some other newspapers reporting the event. Another common comment was that the event was very well received, and greatly enjoyed. For example, *Cumhuriyet* newspaper reports in detail, the excitement caused by some national games during the event, even saying that the traditional game of *cirit* made some high-rank officers cry [30].

Sports activities and competitions took place in a huge, dirt field with no infrastructures in a part of the town called *Bağlarkırı*. There are not even any shaded areas, except for served tents erected for the guests in the protocol. The opening speeches of the event are delivered on an elevated wooden stage. The activity field, which was vaguely marked, was only for defined activities. The activity field was surrounded by the spectators, most of whom had to watch the games standing while a small number had the chance of watching on chairs. The participation of the local people of Bergama, and also a large number of visitors from neighboring towns of Manisa, Soma, and İzmir, was noticeable. The newspapers of the time also stress of the impressive participation in the event.

Some newspapers, in their reports, talk about the participation of ‘innumerable’, ‘thousands’, ‘10,000’ and ‘15,000’ people [30].

The structure of the first Festival guided later ones in organization, activities, spaces, practices and the participants, with no major changes. This repetition of the event in its early days affects its becoming so-called ‘traditional’ [15]. As Hobsbawm states, occasionally some new customs can be derived from the old ones, and at other times they can be borrowed from the rich sources of official rituals, symbolism, and morality [15]. Similarly, some old practices are used for new goals in the invention of the tradition of *Bergama Kermesi*. For example, the stories of the old warfare are re-interpreted in the form of stage drama to narrate the heroic stories of the past, and they are introduced as the symbols of the converted common national culture. Furthermore, the opening speech of the Governor of Izmir, Etem Aykut starts as follows: “It is crucially important to revive what our ancestors did thousands of years ago in Central Anatolia through this event today” [30] (p. 52).

The rituals of the first Festival can be categorized under three main headings according to the organizational functions of *Halkevi*: Fine arts (drama, music, dance) short sketches, and sports. In a period finishing with the closure of the public halls by Democrat Party in 1951, these types of ritual seemed to continue. In the Festival, drama is regarded as one of the most important activities as a means of Westernization, and it has been an inseparable part of the event since 1944 [43]. The second president of the Turkish Republic, İsmet İnönü’s remark after the performance of a play in Ankara *Halkevi* in 1943 had a big effect on the decisions to make the drama an important part of the event, as he said “These classics will be performed for an international audience on the stages of Bergama after the war, and it will be regarded as a big success of the Turkish culture” [30] (p. 60). After the renovation of the Amphitheater of Asklepion in 1944, it became one of the main spaces of the event, and a lot of plays were performed there. The first play to be performed in the theater in the same year was *Eşber* by Abdülhak Hamit Tarhan [30]. Traditional dance shows also became one of the most popular activities of the event right from the beginning. This immense contribution, support by the public halls in music and dance performances, made traditional dance shows an important part of the Festival program. The chairman of Bergama *Halkevi*, Haluk Ökeren, in his speech delivered in a Traditional Dance Night in Ankara *Halkevi*, emphasized the national value of traditional dances. He said “only in the Republican era have Turkish history, Turkish language and folklore been valued and studied [. . .] The best way to reflect the richness and greatness of our history is folklore [. . .] You will witness your own identity in these dances and the performers” [30] (p. 61).

Similarly, sports activities were also among those used to emphasize national values in the event program. One of the members of the first organization committee of the Festival, Rıza Dinçer states that “the Republican era give the long-neglected but highly-deserved respect to once forgotten national sports and attempts to bring them up to life again” [30] (p. 28), underlying the importance that should be given to sports to re-vitalize some national values.

The Festival kept its original structure based on nationalism and modernization until 1951. Despite the fact that regular rituals of the event remain the same, some new spaces and rituals were added later on. The aim in the beginning was strengthened with the addition of some new practices into the event. Such innovations can be exemplified as Karagöz, puppet shows and regional music performances in the opening of the second year; the opening activity of the seventh year in a form of the masquerade of national costumes; the use of the Asklepion Theatre as one of the main spaces of the Festival; and the use of the museum garden for some activities.

Some long-lasting symbols were created to make the Festival a memorable event, as an inspiration for the future. The badge issued in the first Festival and cigarette boxes designed for the one in the 9th Festival can be given as examples. However, neither was able to achieve sustainability.

Although *Bergama Kermesi* appears as a social and cultural right from the beginning, it also functions as an opportunity for local development based on tourism. A member of the first organization committee, Lütfullah Denizler explains this in his notes as follows: “Hence, the merchants will have the chance to develop themselves economically. Assuming each guest to the event spends two liras, we can

see that those thousands of “two-liras” will bring prosperity to the town” [30] (p. 24). The problems regarding the accommodation and feeding of the guests into the event’s early years appeared among the biggest obstacles for the organizers of the Festival. For example, because of the lack of service personnel and facilities, a kitchen was prepared and a chef was transferred from İstanbul to train young locals in the service business. Again, it is reported that in the second year of the event, the *Halkevi* was used for feeding and accommodation with the placement of extra beds in the building [30].

3.1.3. Time

Bergama Kermesi was first organized in 22 May 1937 and lasted seven days. This schedule has continued with some exceptions. In that period, the Festival is affected by the economic state of the country during the Second World War. The original seven-day event was shortened to three or four days in 1940. In addition, the seventh year Festival was organized as a two-day event. The uninterrupted organization of the event even during the Second World War was used as a means of propaganda by the advocators of the so-called nation-state. In the fifth year opening speech, the governor, Fuat Tuksal stated that, owing to the Army, the peace and prosperity would prevail in the country in a time of chaos and war in the world. He concluded his speech with “Long live İnönü, the Nation’s Chief for these days. Long live the great Turkish nation. Long live the Turkish soldier!” [30] (p. 56).

3.2. On the Way to a Civil Society: 1951–1961

The Second World War brought about important changes in the Republic of Turkey as in the whole world. Under the influence of the ideological dominance of liberalism, multi-party political systems were established in the Republic of Turkey. In this way, the modernization project of the Republic of Turkey was continued with populist tendencies [24,44,45]. Parallel to these changes, some modifications in the organization of the Festival, including the structure of the organization committee, Festival activities, and spaces reflected its more liberal rhetoric. The schedule of the Festival was sustained, as in the last period, and the Festival was organized as its original seven-day period.

3.2.1. Organization

All *Halkevi* in the Republic of Turkey were closed in 1947. And, the organization of the event, conducted by *Halkevi* until then, was given to The Society of Bergama Lovers, which has been actively involved in the organization of the event since its foundation in 1944. As a result, a civil society organization was responsible for the Festival; this means a structural differentiation in the organization: The civil-oriented event replaced the central-official one in terms of managerial aspects.

3.2.2. Activities and Spaces

In a period up to 1961 when the Festival started to get international recognition, no changes were observed in the regular practices of the event. The performance of the classical and modern works, folk and other dance shows, sports competitions, the trips to the ancient sites, and the masquerade of the national costumes continued to as in the previous years. One of the differences between this era and the early days was the increase in the participation of out-of-town groups. Although there was a limited participation for rather theatrical activities from the other towns in the early days, this new period witnessed more active participation, such as the rhythm and dance group of Karşıyaka Girls’ High School in 1952 and the dance team of the İzmir American Girls’ College in 1953. In addition, there was also an increase in the number of participating folk dance and sketch groups from other towns.

Again in this period, some new additional practices were added to the regular ones: The organization of Turkish Ornamental Art Exhibition in 1954, and the Festival Culture and Arts Awards in the same year, the organization of a poetry contest in 1958, and an exhibition in *Çamlıpark* were listed as examples. However, these activities could not maintain sustainability. The Arts Award took place in the event program for the years 1954, 1956, and 1958 [30].

Even though the national approach on which the event was founded continues to exist in this period, it is observed that the radical structure of the event, which might be somehow called 'civic', seems to have dissolved to some extent. The transfer of the organizational duties to a 'civilian' group, the extension in the regular structure of the event program with the addition of some new activities, the active participation of the people with arts and culture awards, and the variety in the profile of the participants coming from other towns all changed the structure of the Festival into a more participative and popular one. This can be explained by the statement of Haluk Elbe, a member of The Society of Bergama Lovers about the event in 1954. Elbe said that the event was based on two objectives, which could be summarized as first, reviving the cultural and artistic traditions peculiar to the ancient civilizations, making use of those traditions, and second, revitalizing old national arts and culture that were almost extinct, improving them, and handing them to the coming generations [30]. These words also show the struggle for providing the continuity of invented tradition through reference to the past.

With the closure of *Halkevi*, the Festival lost one of its main symbolic spaces. In this period, the activities took place in Cumhuriyet Square, Asklepion Theater, sports field, and the museum garden. In this period, the opening ceremony initiated with the official ritual of the flag ceremony, the anthem singing and as in the national holidays and the Festival proceeded with a parade. Asklepion Theater was allocated for plays and sketches, whereas, Cumhuriyet Square was used for the opening ceremony and various types of shows, and the sports field was used for competitions and sports activities [30].

3.3. The International Recognition of the Festival: 1961–1980

The Festival gained its first international recognition in 1961, on its 25th anniversary. However, the effects of this recognition in the event were not noticeable until 1965. The first attempt to give the Festival an international identity was to invite dance and folk dance groups from the Greek island of Samos; however, the dance groups postponed their visits citing incidents in Ankara, but the visit did not materialize that year either [30]. *Bergama Kermesi* as an international festival tended more to have a populist character. This transformation affected the activities, spaces, and organization of the Festival. The schedule of the Festival was maintained as in the original state in that period.

3.3.1. Organization

That the Festival gained a tourism-based structure starting in 1965 is directly related to the transfer of its organization to the municipality of the city. Adem Özelli, the mayor of Bergama in 1971, explained that: 'Our aim is to introduce Bergama and its residents better and to take financial benefits [...] The more tourists come here and the longer we can make them stay, the more we earn' [30] (p. 174).

3.3.2. Activities and Spaces

The attempts to give the Festival an international identity, and the works to make the Festival a tourism-based event, correspond to a degree. Even though this cannot be directly proved, as Eriş mentions in his book, there is some evidence: Even the name of the organizing body The Society of Bergama Lovers changed to The Tourism Society of Bergama Lovers. This change is not reflected in the organization of the Festival until 1965, and the standard social and spatial practices remained the same. The only noticeable change in the event program in this period was the Ottoman Army Band (*Mehter Takımı*) performances. For the first time, an activity peculiar to the Ottoman Culture was added to the activities sharing mainly nationalist republican ideals of the period before 1961. Even though standard practices remained the same in their structures, some activities in the event face underwent some changes as well. The emergence of the plays telling the stories of the Ottoman era can be given as an example. For example, the play in the event in 1961 is *Fermanlı Deli Hazretleri*.

Some partial changes in the organization of the Festival program have been noticed since 1965. These changes can be described as the attempts to turn the Festival into a tourism-based structure. Each day of the event was given a specific theme; the Parchment Day, Dikili Day, Wrestling Day, Ballet Day, Drama Day, Asklepion Day. Such an organization of the Festival lasted until 1973. This particular

kind of organization of the event, based on different activities to emphasize different values, helped the Festival to be visible and recognized. This new understanding of the multi-dimensional structure of the Festival aims at attracting the attention of different participant profiles. The Folklore Day in the 1966 event, Cleopatra Day in 1969, and *Keşkek* Day in 1971 are noticeable activities.

Now the Festival appears to be a means of economic development based on tourism, and it is seen as a 'source of income' for the town and the municipality. All the activities in the event relate to a concept of entertainment based on popular culture as a result of this new approach. The emergence of the concerts of popular singers in the event program is another result of the same approach. Concerts get so much attention and recognition that they were attached to the standard activities of the Festival lasting right from the beginning of the event, and even today they are accepted as one of the most important features of the Festival.

The change in the structure of the Festival also gives an opportunity to the event to attain a pluralist structure, and it also brings about some changes in the concept of publicness presented through the Festival. The Festival sets a unifying and compromising field of socializing addressing to the entire urban population either through the concept of civic publicness as in its early days or through its pluralist, participatory civilian structure emerging in the 1960s. All spaces in the Festival are used for all participants in similar ways, and all activities are available for everyone. However, in this particular new structure of the Festival, the concept of a unified event seems to be broken. The high entrance fees for the performances in Asklepion Theatre limits the number of the guests, which also leads to the restrictions in the use of the space. Thus, the relationship of the activities in Asklepion to the regular activities is different from the other activities. As a result, there seems to be a difference between the activities in Asklepion and the other activities in regard to the profiles of the performers, guests, and quality. The title of an article published in the *Demokrat İzmir* newspaper of 6 April 1974 by İskender Dinsel asked "Could the Festival appeal more to the common people?", which emphasized the existence of such a gap. Dinsel, in his article, refers to evening activities in Asklepion Theater, as the activities for the bourgeoisie, and the high participation, whereas, the day-time activities in the sports field get much less attention and the participant profiles are different. He concludes that the day-time activities are organized for ordinary people, but not the evening activities [30].

3.4. Civilian Publicness: 1980–Present

In the 1980s, *Bergama Kermesi* maintained its current organizational structure. However, the content of the Festival was extended through extra expectations in addition to the entertainment aspect. The Festival in 1988 attained a public opening with a panel discussion from advocating the return of the Zeus Altar to Bergama. It is significant that a non-entertainment activity takes place in the event program. From 1990, the Festivals display their participatory and pluralist structures distinctively.

3.4.1. Organization

The organization committee was extended by the joining of civil members. The chairman of the organization committee is the mayor, but other than the mayor, extensive participation of an organizing committee, and in some years a group of advisors including academicians and specialists, have played an important role in the organization of the event, and it is also noticed that young locals take part.

In organizational terms, the Festival has been under the control of the municipality in that period from 1965. However, the organization committee is pluralist in favor of a 'civilian' structure, and apart from the members of the city council, the committee involves representatives of political parties, the representatives of non-governmental organizations, the chairmen of Public Education and National Education, and a member representing the *muhtar* (headman) of different neighborhoods in town.

3.4.2. Activities and Spaces

While the standard activities, such as drama, sketches, and dance shows continue in the event program in other various forms, sports activities almost disappear until the 2000s. However, a wide

variety of new activities, such as panels, talks, forums, poetry readings, films, exhibitions, concerts, street drama, book signing days, have been added. The Festival's social features include panels, forums, and talks in the program, with many discussions of local and global issues by experts and the local people. The 1992 panel was entitled as 'What should be done for the Zeus Altar' which simply focuses on the idea of bringing it back to Bergama. The 1994 panels were entitled 'Professionalism in Football', 'The precautions to be taken for Turkish economy', 'Is a unity possible in the left wing?' On the other hand, the 1996 panel entitled 'Cyanide Gold and Facts' which focuses on the opening of a gold mine in the village of Ovacık, and the one in 1999 entitled as 'Economy in Bergama Toward 2000' represent exceptional themes [30] (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The banners of the Festival.

The new characteristics of the Festival together with the changes in its content have become highly appreciated, and the mayor Sefa Taşkın, in the reception of 1997, listed the local and global problems and the music concerts in the program as the 'traditional' elements of the Festival program [30]. The practices and issues discussed only 20 or 25 times in the entire history of the event are referred to as 'traditional', and expected to be transferred to the future.

In this period in which the 'civilian' features of the Festival are more prominent, the relation of social activities with the urban space also gets stronger. In addition to specific indoor and outdoor public areas, a lot of other areas become Festival spaces used for different social activities. Some examples are the use of the space in front of the city hall for book signing days, the use of the parks as a sculpture workshop for children, the use of *Han Kahve* in *İstiklal* Square as a place for the backgammon tournaments, the use of the wedding hall as an exhibition hall, and the use of the area in the Acropolis where the foundations of the Zeus Altar are believed to be as a drinks-party reuse. These examples indicate the spatial reflections of the transformation of the town into a public sphere as a whole.

The 'civilian' structure of the Festival, rooted in 1990, remains. When it is evaluated by focusing on activities, the period displays some differences. Some examples are the role of sports activities in the event program since 1999, the participation inhabitants of the Greek island of Samos as the guests of honor in the Festival of 2010, and the organization of 'Midilli Night' with concerts in the town square. These changes nevertheless mostly support the 'civilian' structure and extend the limits of the event.

Again, the Festival of 2018 maintains the same features like the ones after 1990 regarding the program, content, activities, and spaces. The activities in the Festival can be listed as: Fishing competitions, talks, book signing days, panels, folk dance performances, concerts, exhibitions, and theatrical performances (Figure 4). The opening of the Festival proceeds in terms of an official ceremony. The activity spaces are Cumhuriyet Square, Asklepion Theater, Gülpark, Museum garden, Exhibition Hall in the regional government building, Covered Bazaar, Synagogue, The Museum Exhibition Hall, and Kestel Damm. The exhibitions are open all day during the Festival, while other activities start in the evening, and the main transportation routes are closed to traffic, turning streets into a public space for the use of urban people (Figure 5). This involves stalls for sale, and advertisements, children's

playgrounds, parks and open spaces nearby. Many activities are available in this particular area. The dynamism of this part of the town reflects onto the other parts of the town to some extent (Figure 6).



Figure 4. Activities (speeches and dance shows) in different places in the city (photographs by the author).



Figure 5. Activities (different exhibitions) in different places in the city (photographs by Fatih Kurunaz and the author).



Figure 6. Free usage of the streets, parks and all places in the center of the city (photographs by the author).

Asklepion Theatre, one of the main spaces of the Festival, is set apart from the dynamism of the activity area. The theater is usually regarded as ‘a space of night activities’ by the people. While there is easy access to all the activities taking place in the town center, there is an entry fee for all the activities in the Theater, every day except one. Besides, the distance of the Theater from the city center is another problem. The Asklepion Theater, which appears to be the only space for evening activities of the event program before the Festival of 1989, is now one of several spaces allocated for evening performances. Allocation of other places in the city center as spaces of night activities eliminates the element of

'limited participation', due to lack of evening activities. However, it cannot eliminate the special position of Asklepiion Theater in the event program. The Theater is preferred for drama performances and concerts of popular singers. However, even today, a majority in the town still does not participate in these activities. This particular image of the Theater as an elite space remains in the memory of the local residents (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Night activities in Asklepiion Theatre from Festival 2014.

4. Evaluation and Conclusions

As an invented tradition, *Bergama Kermesi* has managed to survive up to the present. The Festival appears to be the most important social phenomenon transferring a collective memory of the citizens through the repetitiveness of the event in which different kinds of activities are presented in different spaces of the city. In this article, *Bergama Kermesi* was analyzed to understand how the sustainability of the event and how the collective memory of the citizens has been transmitted to the present by the Festival. This analysis was conducted through four factors, which are the main agents for the sustainability of the festival and the transmission of collective memory: Time, activities, spaces, and organization. It is possible to evaluate the outcomes of this analysis by three conceptual relations: Repetition and sustainability, unity and plurality, and publicness and collective memory.

4.1. Repetition and Sustainability

As Hobsbawm recognizes that 'inventing traditions is essentially a process of formalization, ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition' [15], as an invented event, *Bergama Kermesi* was transformed into a modern tradition at the end of the similar process. It was a social medium for collective memory, because of its opportunity for recalling their memories [10]. The repetitions which were created in this process varied in time, activities, spaces, and the organization of the Festival. Through these repetitions, experiences of the event have evolved into a tradition. Therefore, in terms of sustainability, the uninterrupted continuation of the Festival for 81 years is important. It was not interrupted even at the times of the World War and military coups, and their consequent important economic and political problems. The Festival, apart from some obligatory exceptions, has always been organized at the end of May or at the beginning of June, and it has also been organized over seven days. Above all, the Festival has an uninterrupted repetition for 81 years, becoming a ritual for local people. Repetition in the activities of *Bergama Kermesi* helps to transmit and maintain memories of the event. The particular repetitions of the activities also represent the history of the Festival, as they define the possible connotations of the event, and thus, the Festival becomes justified with its activities and spaces [10]. An official opening ceremony, drama performances, and folk dance shows have taken place at every festival. Some activities were just repeated in a specific period replaced by new activities implanted to the program with the connection of the character of the Festival. Spaces of the Festival have been changed over the long process, however, the Asklepiion antique theatre has become the most important space since 1944.

4.2. Unity and Plurality

The characteristic transformation of *Bergama Kermesi* from 'civic' to 'civil' is firmly related to the process of change from its unitary to the pluralist structure. The structure of the organization committee exemplifies this change. In the first period of the Festival, there was a centralized government structure; all members of the committee were government representatives. This structure began to resolve into a more pluralist structure in the second period, in which the responsibility of the Festival passed to a civil group. This dissolution continued in other periods, for example, for the 81st Kermes the committee consisted of the members of city council, representatives of different parties, some academicians, specialists, the chairmen of Public Education and National Education, and a member representing the *muhtar* (headman) of different neighborhoods in town. The types of activities and the participation in the activities were extended over the 81-year process. In the first period, specific ruled activities were organized by *Halkevi*. All activities of the Festival were directed for providing the national identity of the new nation-state. After the first period, this accent of national identity has gradually disappeared. Increasing the number of events and diversity in the activities ensured the plurality of the activities across different periods. This pluralism afforded the citizens, who have different interests, with various opportunities to be part of the activity. The multi-participation in the Festival allowed the sharing of experiences more socially, and helped to construct, reconstruct, and sustain the process of the collective memory. One of the main elements of the emergence of this memory transformation is the Festival's interaction with urban space. The places of the Festival in the public memory achieves a definition in the public sphere and merges into daily life through spatial and bodily practices over a period of 81 years. Collective memory is, according to Halbwachs, basically a re-construction of the past, and it is, according to Connerton, related with the remembered knowledge of the past; *Bergama Kermesi* is a period of constant remembering and also a period of re-construction [10,14]. In the first period, the Festival had its own spaces. *Bağlarkırı*, *Halkevi*, Asklepion Theater (since 1944), town square, and *Kozak* appear as the main spaces of the event, used in the defined time schedule of both daily and weekly routine for ordered activities. In the historical process, many new places were added to these main ones. In the recent years, especially after the 1990s, many buildings or the parts of the buildings, many sub-spaces in the front of the buildings and the main streets itself have been transformed into activity spaces of the Festival. The plurality and accessibility of spaces of the Festival provide the public's participation in the activities spontaneously.

4.3. Publicness and Collectivity

In Hobsbawm's terms, if the aim and characteristic of all traditions, whether invented or not, is stability, the Festival also has some particular routines aiming at social practices, and enabling it to become traditional; however, in each period of remembering and reconstructing, the Festival goes through spatial and cultural alterations and starts to interact with life again. This difference can be explained through the change in the concept of the public sphere, defined as moving from 'civic' to the 'civil'. In the early period of *Bergama Kermesi*, the characteristics of the activities of the Festival including ceremonies and entertainments meant that social interactions were ordered, controlled, and limited. Participation in the organization as an individual, or apart from the main actors of the official organization committee, was not possible. The individual or sub-group-based activities could not be performed in this public. All the interests of the citizens were directed to certain events, which were defined with specific objectives. The bodily practices were regulated and controlled by manners, organizers, or the state. This civic understanding of the Festival provided the constructing of framed memories shaping the collective memory of the city. In the historical process of the Festival, this official structure was transformed through the adaptation of the Festival to the new needs of the public and to the new understanding of publicness. The adoption of the participatory, pluralist, and liberal structure of the Festival encouraged the citizens to appropriate *Bergama Kermesi*, providing opportunities to participate in the organization committee in different ways. As a participant or audience, they could find an activity to suit their own interests. Unlimited spaces of the Festival, multifunctional usage of

spaces, and accessibility of these spaces provide social interaction and active citizenship. The bodily practices in this interaction are completely free and less limited by social rules.

Over the period of 81 years, the perception of the Festival in the local memory is reformed through changes via the attachment of new spatial and cultural practices to the existing rituals. Such a change can be defined as the loss of its civic character to civil one. Today, the Festival seems to have a participatory, pluralist and liberal structure in regard to spatial and social practices. However, it is obvious that the Festival does not naturally achieve a civil character, in that even the current formation of the event is based on civic rituals regarding the use of the space and time, the definition of the activities, and the methods of participation.

Bergama Kermesi is one of the most important elements in the formation of collective memory in the town of Bergama. The formation and sustainability of the collective memory come into existence through socialization practices and the public affairs resulting from those practices. This study of *Bergama Kermesi* attempts to explain how that collective memory was formed, the actors determining the period, the spaces of the collective memory, social practices, and how these practices and spaces are produced through the incidents in the publicness. In relation to this, the study also shows the transformation of an invented urban phenomenon introduced by an ideology of the 'nation-state' into urban tradition, its sustainability, and how it has been reconstructed in the present, according to the demands in society.

5. Notes

Being one of the cities in the Western Anatolia, Bergama is a multi-layered city dating back to the Prehistoric ages (Figure 8). In the historical process of the city, Bergama includes, in chronological order, the Pre-Historic, the Archaic and Classical, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Principles, Ottoman, and Republican periods. The city with its multi-layered cultural landscape was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in June 2014 (Figure 8).



Figure 8. The location of the city of Bergama, İzmir, Turkey.

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