

## **SOCIAL EVENT AND ENVIRONMENT: IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND ITS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AMONG THE MACCAA OROMO OF WESTERN ETHIOPIA**

**Waktole Hailu**

Lecture, College of Social Sciences and Humanity Department of Oromo Folklore & Literature,  
Jimma university, Ethiopia

---

### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper examines the impacts of social events on environment and natural resources. In this investigation primary data were gathered through data collection instrument like interview, observation and focus group discussion. It provides impacts of social events on land, water, plants, animals, and other living creatures existing around the place where social events are celebrated. Though indigenous people care for environment; visitors do not care for them. This brings natural resource destruction. To minimize these problems strong management plan is important. The board and event manager should be established prior to the event and control each and every activity that may negatively affect natural resource existing around the event venue. The committee in general and event expert in particular should identify possible risk prior to the event and forward possible solution and operate event accordingly.*

**Keywords:** *Social event, Environment, Impact assessment, Management*

### **1. Introduction**

On a global basis there is unprecedented interest in festivals and events – at international and national level in cities and towns, villages and hamlets, and in rural and coastal areas. Everyone wants to celebrate their particular form of culture, tradition, differently or in similarity with others (Ian Yeoman 2004). The participants involve in the event either for religious or secular activities like entertainment, economic and for other socio-cultural mission (Wood, E. 2002).

Festivals and events provide an opportunity for community cultural development and invisible phenomenon like a sense of place, values, and belief. Values and beliefs held by individuals in a

community are inextricably linked and shape people's attitudes and the way they act in specific situations Ter, M.M., Boyd, W.E. and Gardiner, J.E. (eds), (2001). This shows how the values, interests and aspirations of individuals are influenced by their natural environment (space and place) and how this leads to a sense of community that influences how the community celebrates; that affects the community's wellbeing (Craik, J. 1995).

Festivals and special events vary in nature from place to place and are linked to social and cultural contexts. Thus understanding of the cultural identities of host communities shows significant festivals in human condition. The community celebrates a sense of place through organizing inclusive activities in specific safe environments. In addition, they are the outward manifestation of the identity of the community and provide a distinctive identifier of place and people (Getz, D. 1997).

No matter what the reason is for hosting a festival or event, there is a wide range of participants, each with different expectations, and this will impact on the management processes considered for each individual festival or event (Hall, C.M. (1992). The management model adopted needs to match the requirements of all those involved in each stage of the individual festival or event, and tools such as those employed in managing projects and quality are useful (Derrett, R. 2002).

Although festivals and events vary enormously in types and forms, the management issues relating to this wide range are often surprisingly similar and include working within an increasingly competitive environment with decreasing resources and more discerning and sophisticated consumers (Gilbert, D. and Lizotte, M. 1998). Thus, festivals and events can place pressure on natural environments. Therefore, it is important that organizers encourage a responsible approach to each individual's relationship with the environment in which the event occurs. Increasing attention to details of livability in more fragile event environments has provided opportunities for increased awareness and education in sustainable practices. This paper addresses the wide-ranging operational and management issues of such a diverse activity. It mainly focuses on environmental impacts of social event and its management practice in case of Oromo ethnic group in Ethiopia.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2. 1. Concept of Social Event**

Many definitions are given for the event. Goldblatt (1997) defines an event as ‘a special event recognizes a unique moment in time with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs’. According to Getz (1993), cited in Brown (1993) event is themed public celebrations’ which brings people together to celebrate, to demonstrate, to worship, to honor, to remember, to socialize (Arcodia & Robb, 2000). The definition that has been adopted here is that proposed by Jago and Shaw (1998, p.29), namely, ‘a onetime or infrequently occurring event of limited duration that provides the consumer with leisure and social opportunity beyond everyday experience’. This definition is taken as embracing the other subcategories of events, including community festivals and mega-events.

Social events are public celebrations taking place at single space and point. Though some of social events are limited, majority of them are publically performed without discrimination of age, sex color and religious belief, in social event any interesting group or individual can take part. Though the scholars define event, there is no universally accepted definition since they are defined from different perspective. But the common element to most of these scholars’ definition is that event is a celebration of ceremony or ritual where a reflection of a culture and a community is revealed. Most events come from a good idea that is linked to the culture of the community and are underpinned by a reflection of place and a reflection of that culture.

### **2.2. Major Cultural Festivals and Events**

Baker and Associates (2007), in an assessment of the economic impacts of the Glastonbury Festival, expand on this 'general' approach by pointing out the less quantifiable economic impacts, such as trading opportunities for not-for-profit organizations and the contribution of the festival to local entrepreneurial culture. Data for this was gathered mainly through stakeholders’ interviews. Snowball and Willis (2006) take a significantly different approach. In their (academic) study of the South African National Arts Festival, they use Choice Experiments (CE) to value the utility visitors derive from various sections of the festival. They argue that this methodology is particularly useful for estimating benefits of the various aspects of the festival and how these are differently valued by the audience. A detailed comparison of four existing

economic impact studies of major festivals in the UK and Spain by Vrettos (2006) found that all studies used different methodologies and justifications, especially in relation to the multipliers used. While all studies reported positive impacts, none questioned whether these impacts occurred because of the artistic or rather the social nature of the festival. Only one study noted that the net effect of the festival could be negative as well; however, no attempts were made to calculate the monetary value of any of the possible negative impacts (e.g. litter, noise, and criminality).

### **2.3 Social Impacts of Festivals and Events**

Although there has been a strong focus on economic impacts, there are other types of impacts of events and festivals including social impacts. These include reinvigorating existing facilities and creating an image for the tourist destination, as well as promoting tourism sustainability (Getz 1991). While there is a reasonable amount of literature on the social impacts of tourism, particularly through the sustainable tourism literature, less research has concentrated on the social impacts of events and festivals. Issues such as safety, trust and ‘a sense of personal and collective efficacy’ (Onyx & Bullen 2000) form part of the social capital concept and would appear to have relevance in an investigation of the social impacts of events and community festivals. Delamere’s (1997) social impacts instrument for community festivals investigates a number of key elements pertinent to this study.

These include the impact of the festival on the friendliness, safety, tolerance and creativity of the community. Delamere concentrates his questionnaire on the social costs and benefits of community festivals. For the purposes of this paper, social impacts are defined as any impacts which potentially have an impact on quality of life for local residents. Thus, economic outcomes of events (such as employment opportunities) and environmental effects (such as litter) are included because perceptions of such impacts are likely to contribute to residents’ overall reactions to an event. This is consistent with most of the previous work in this area. Ritchie (1984), and later Hall (1989, 1992) suggested a classification of potential event impacts comprising six dimensions; economic, tourism/commercial, physical, socio-cultural, psychological, and political. Some examples of positive and negative manifestations of these impacts are shown in here.

Mason and Beaumont-Kerridge (2004) have examined visitor and residents' attitudes towards the economic, socio-cultural, environmental and political (community) impacts of the Sidmouth International Festival, using visitor surveys and focus groups with local residents during and after the festival. This study contains an extensive discussion of earlier publications and concludes that 'the majority of festival research has tended to ignore or at least play down the other impacts that can be classified under the headings of environmental, sociocultural or political'. Similar criticism can be found in the work of Carlsen et al. (2007), who explicitly calls upon other festival researchers to 'move beyond economic impacts in order to understand the complex and comprehensive set of benefits and disbenefits associated with festivals'. Writing on the Edinburgh Festivals, they argue that the cultural, community and social benefits of major festivals have not been systematically studied, while they point at the limitations of focusing on more narrow economic outcomes, such as comparability, reliability, and utility of estimates. As an alternative, they propose an inclusive research agenda', focused on 'the benefits of the festivals for the arts, culture, community, economy, society, and stakeholders'.

#### **4. Materials and Methods**

In this investigation observation used as principal research method, because irrecha celebration is relevant for observation .It contains various activities, material culture, performance, dancing, which is easily visible and understood by noticing at its natural setting or spot. I observed activities performed and material used on the irrecha celebration from the beginning to the end and wrote what I understood.

Interview can be of two types, informal and formal. Formal interview refers to systematic asking of the same question of every individual given sample. This means the researcher proposed well-structured and meaning full question focusing on specific topic of interest and ask his or her respondents. Informal interview involves asking open ended question at field and it gives tremendous freedom to explain his or her idea. From these types of interview I used informal interview which is mainly done at spot.

## 5. Result and Discussion

### 5.1 Social Event and Oromo Ethnic Group

Social event is universal phenomena Even though time, place and, objectives behind celebrating social event differ from culture to culture. Society of this world has its own ritual event which is highly connected to culture. Especially social events are frequently performed by society governed by culture and nature. Among the society of this universe who live by culture and nature Oromo ethnic group is one.

Oromo ethnic group is a branch of Cushitic family living in the horn of Africa. Oromo society has appreciable culture which has heroine's relation with nature. Oromo respect, each other and live together in peace, love. Oromo society treats not only human being but also other creatures like forest, animals, water, and other biodiversity created by waaqa.

For Oromowaaqa, *safuu* and *ayyana* have great position. waaqaa is creator of all universe and all other creatures, keeper, and potentate of all creatures. In oromo philosophy waaqa gives peace, prosperity. Thus prey for waaqa every time in his/her life.

Nagana nu olchitee nagana bulchi  
As you kept us in daytime, retain us at night too  
Hamaa nuraa qabi  
Protect us from depraved fortune  
Dogoggora nu olchi  
Protect us from inaccuracies  
Nagaanuubuusi  
Give us harmony and prosperity

Among the Oromo the other grateful thing is ayyaana. Oromo perceived ayyaana as divine keeper that is given from *waaqaa* (god) to all creatures. As Bartle (1983) avers *ayyaanaa* communicates between creatures and creator. It protects all creatures from bad fortune. That's why, the killer prays for *Dachee* when he goes to forest to kill animal for trophy. While seceded they explain their filling through different songs.

The other concept highly connected to Oromo world view is safu. As Gemuchu(1993) stated *safuu* is law of creator that everybody must respect. According to Oromo customary law the one

who breaks the law of creator will encounter bad fortune, lack peace, fertility and harmony. Thus all individual members of the society carefully keep it.

Unconsciously if acts against law of waaqaa are committed by individual or group of society, Oromo performs ritual purification and reconcile himself to *waaqaa*. It believes that the doer who lacks peace and fertility should pray Waaqa. On such social event it is mandatory for all members of the society to avail and fully participate in the incident, as Oromo view all wrong and crime has consequences on harmonies life of human beings and nature The Oromo view is that the individual act which violates law of creator has direct consequences on society as whole and other living things. Thus everybody actively involves in the activity of ritual purification. Individuals who fail to participate in such public activity is punished by customary enforcing mechanism like exclusion.

## **5.2 Impacts of social event**

Social event has both positive and negative impacts on socio cultural and economic life and environment where the occasion takes place.

### **5.2.1 Positive impacts**

Social events are performed in group. Most of the time, such events are carried out by number of individuals who share common culture. Some of the participants even can have varied culture; people who have different culture can take part in the celebration for visiting and recreation and other purpose. It is a crowd of people collected in single spaces for specific purpose. The purpose of the event can be social, political, cultural or religious for whatever it is when people come together for single purpose they have similar attitude and objective on that issue. These contribute for participants in particular and ethnic group in general strength, solidarity and love and serve as source of tourism, conserves and promotes culture.

Social events bind people together, promote peace, love, and unity among themselves. These linkages strengthen their relationship and develop tolerance for the differences existing between

them. In this way it promotes sustainable peace and love between individual members of the society and inter-ethnic group.

The social event has great contribution in marking the identity of the participants. Activities and performance take place on the stage by participants and shows the performances and their culture. Costumes worn on celebrations, materials, jewelry and other materials used in the event are meaningful and convey message. Body movement, non-verbal communication, dance, songs, cursing, blessing, worship and stage in general are the reflectors of identity of participants.

Not only showing identity but social events also serve as source of tourism. On one hand it keeps and preserves culture and history of participants on the other it generates income for host community and country in general by attracting tourists from other areas. It generates extra money for country, sources of employment for society, contributes for sustainable development of one country and transforms social, economic, cultural and political activities of society.

On the other hand social events protect and preserve material and spiritual element of culture. Rituals, festival and other non-cultural events are self-protective, cannot easily be degraded by both internal and external factors. Social events not only conserve themselves but also other spiritual elements of culture. The existence of social events encourages the existence of dance, song, beliefs and other intangible aspects of culture.

Likewise it gives attention to the place where the social events are celebrated. This is especially true for the events which take place in outdoors in open air. The place/s are taken as historical site get attention to be conserved and protected. In this way it plays a key role in environmental conservation and protection.

### **5.2.2 Negative impacts**

Social events can cause damage and distraction of plants and animals. Participants of different social events cut branches of trees for different purposes like cleaning and seating. Cutting down of trees on the other hand, cause migration of animals from their place. Likewise different creatures living in water can be affected by social events due to dumping of wastage and



contaminated things in to water. Such contaminated things affect living creatures living in water body which results in the death of living things in water body and surrounding places where social events are carried out. As a result of social event soil erosion and land degradation can be emerged. Though host community takes care of environment and surrounding living creatures, visitors and other guests invited from other culture do not. Social events which contain large number of people affect ecosystem, while the participants move here and there grass, trees, and places often are damaged.

On the other hand social event can cause reduction of bio diversity in the environment. Activity and performance take place in social events. Due to crowd movement on a place where events are carried out unstable conditions can happen on the surrounding habitat like loud sound which may disturb their living. Similarly harmonious relationship existing between livings creatures can be disturbed as a result of alienation of single creatures.

Social event not only disturb local inhabitants but also it can cause environmental pollution. Most social events are celebrated in open air and are performed continuously for long period of time at a single place. The participants involve in the incident up to the end. During the course of the event they throw waste material on the surrounding environment. Similarly littering liquid of washed material used in the event can also pollute the areas of the event. This contaminates the stage and surrounding place.

Similarly materials and paper used for event promotion pollute venue and surrounding areas. Dozens of materials like soft drink, candy and gamy, bought from local shop that people use in the event can also cause environmental pollution. Promotional papers, soft and other materials that participant and committee used in the course of the event can contaminate environment. The pollution can go beyond the specific venue where event takes place.

The pollution can cause the destruction of surrounding living things like plants, animals and other creature surrounding the place where social event takes place. Littering, urine and other waste materials mixed in to water which directly cause water pollution which in turn affect host

community and other living things living in the area. This especially is true for social events taking place in outdoors at river basin, sea, salty water, ocean and stream.

Prior to social event everything needed for event must be prepared. This preparation can be road, stage preparation, and temporary hotel and other facilities. These activities cause for the clearing of the tree and dislocation of animals from their home. In addition to this, grass and plants existing at event venue are cleared and cut .Participants often climb on the tree to get a better view of the event and break the branches of the tree. Either for seating or for shadow, the participants break the branch of the tree where there is no proper seating. Degradation of plant leads to the migration or disruption of living creatures from their place. This is the main obstacle for the sustainability of social event itself and need serious control and management.

### **5.3 Management**

To avoid or to minimize the above mentioned negative impacts of social event appropriate management is compulsory. Qualified event manager together with management committee should be organized prior to event. Event manager should manage each and every activity performed in relation to the event and possible side effect and potential hazards from the beginning to the end. The committee should consider both sides - the interest of the participants and facility and side effect it may have on environment and surrounding natural resources and host community. In general the following tasks should be considered by event manager.

He/she must coordinate all activities performed in pre-event, post event and during event. Among these, coordination, giving clear orientation to participants, guests and visitors are important for environmental protection. Their do's and don'ts should be introduced very well with its location so that participants, guests and visitors should act accordingly.

Event manager should also consider the interest of local people. He/she should manage sound, microphone, music, and other activity which disturb local communities. If the events do not have permanent and pre-established venue it is preferable if it is far away from local residents.

Based on numbers of expected participants the event manager should prepare stage and set up temporary toilets, food stalls at event place. Mere preparation is not enough still giving clear orientation about its location is very important. So that participants use it throughout the course of the event.

Similarly event manager should prepare place for waste materials (for both solid and liquid). Among these putting containers and preparing holes are necessary. Additionally, putting basket at several places for waste materials and telling the participants to put unwanted material in them only. Proper sewage for littering liquid should be prepared. On the other hand if possible providing permanent material like glass, pot and other materials should be kept for use in future can minimize environmental pollution.

Taking care for plant and other animals in the area is important. The committee should ensure that participants do not break the trees either for shadow and seating purpose. It should prepare enough seating as per expected number of participants with well-prepared shadow either for sun or rain. In this way the event manager can minimize unexpected risk on natural resource and environment. Such strong plan can contribute for the success and sustainability of the event.

## **6. Conclusion**

Social event is universal phenomenon and has both positive and negative impacts. Positively it contributes to preservation and promotion of culture and history of particular group where it originates. On the other hand it negatively affects host community, environment and natural resource found around venue where it takes place. Positive side of social event should be strengthened. The side effect of social events should be minimized. The effect of social event environment and natural resource can minimize through organizing qualified management committee.

The event manager should have skill and should have detailed knowledge about culture, history, religion, and world view of the participant and host community. He/she should analyse the side effect of single social event of which he/she becomes manager and settle possible solution prior

to the event. Similarly, interest and facility that should be provided for participant at venue should be identified and delivered to participants at event place.

On the other hand objective and mission of the event should be introduced to the target audience before the date of event. Promotion should be done on issues like seating place, rights and obligations of participants and committees, natural resource and environment related discipline, service and its location, so that participants can easily assess and use it without confusion. Likewise keeping baskets in which waste materials are thrown is also important and reduces environmental pollution. In general strong planning on side effects of social events on environment, natural resources and host community and effective work on its implementation reduces possible risk and promotes the sustainability of social event.

## **REFERENCES**

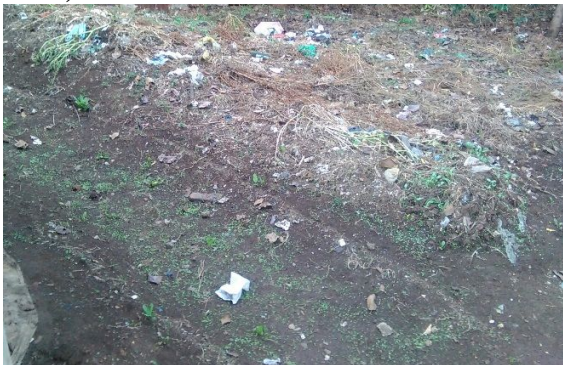
- Allen, R. Harris, L. Jago and A. Veal (Eds). *Events Beyond 2000: Setting the Agenda*, Australian Centre for Event Management, Sydney, pp. 154-160.
- Arcodia, C. & Robb, A, 2000. 'A Future for Event Management: Taxonomy of Event Management terms' in: J.
- Baker Associates, 2007. *Glastonbury Festival 2007 Economic Impact Assessment*. Shepton Mallet: Mendip District Council.
- Belhaven Press. ter, M.M., Boyd, W.E. and Gardiner, J.E. (eds), 2001. *Heritage Landscapes: Understanding Place and Communities*. Lismore, NSW: Southern Cross University Press.
- Brown, L. (ed.) , 1993. *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press
- Carlsen, J., Ali-Knight, J., & Robertson, M., 2007. ACCESS - a research agenda for Edinburgh Festivals. *Event Management*,

- Craik, J. 1995. Are There Cultural Limits to Tourism? *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*.
- .Drummond & U. McMahon-Beattie (Eds.), *Festival and Events Management: An International Arts and Culture Perspective* (311-328). Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Getz, D., 1997. *Event Management and Event Tourism*. New York: Cognizant Communication Corporation.
- Gemechu Megersa (1993). “*Identity, Knowledge System and the Colonizing Structure*”. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.
- Gilbert, D. and Lizotte, M. , 1998. *Tourism and the Performing Arts*. Travel and Tourism Analyst.
- Hall, C.M. , 1992. *Hallmark Tourist Events: Impacts, Management and Planning*. London: Belhaven Press.
- Mason, P., & Beaumont-Kerridge, J. , 2004. Attitudes of Visitors and Residents to the Impacts of the 2001 Sidmouth International Festival. In I. Yeoman, M. Robertson, J. Ali- Knight, S.
- Merrett, R. 2002. Making Sense of How Festivals Demonstrate a Community’s Sense of Place. Conference paper, Events and Place Making: Building Destinations and Communities through Events, UTS, Sydney
- Ritchie, J.R.B. , 1984. Assessing the Impact of Hallmark Events: Conceptual and Research Issues. *Journal of Travel Research*.
- Snowball, J.D., & Willis, K.G. , 2006. Estimating the Marginal Utility of Different Sections of an Arts Festival: The Case of Visitors to the South African National Arts Festival. *Leisure Studies*.
- Vrettos, A. , 2006. *The Economic Value of arts & culture festivals. A comparison of four European Economic impact studies* (MA Thesis, University of Maastricht, 2006).
- Wood, E., 2002. Measuring event economic and social impacts: A case study of Blackburn withDarwen Borough Council. Discussion Paper. School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Leeds Metropolitan University.

**Appendix**



**1) social event**



**2). Impact of social event on environment**



**3). Waste material polluting the environment**