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Whose Diwali is it?  
The case of the Indian Community and Auckland City Council

# Focus of the Enquiry

- Ethnographic research
- Auckland Based
- Focus
  - Cultural representation and the role of the producer
- Observation
  - Over the past 12 years there has been a management change in the production practices of the event  
Diwali: Festival of Lights
- Method
  - Producer Network Maps developed in my PhD research at University of Otago



# Case Study

## “Diwali: Festival of Lights”

- Production practice transformation 1998- 2013
- Community celebration to ‘Major Civic Event’
- Cultural organisation to government agency producers
- Executive decisions align with larger tourism and economic development strategies
- Co-production to exclusive management production

# Research Questions

- How do relationships to event resources change under the influence of 'festivalisation'?
- How do such changes affect the communities that the resultant events allegedly represent?



# Historical Background

- 1997: the NZ government recognised the benefits of cultural celebrations
- 1998: Auckland Indian Association (AIA) organised its first community Diwali celebration in response to the rapidly growing Indian community population
- 2002: Asia2000 (now Asia: NZ) launched “Diwali: Festival of Lights” with AIA.
- 2004: Auckland Council and Asia: NZ collaborate and grow Festival

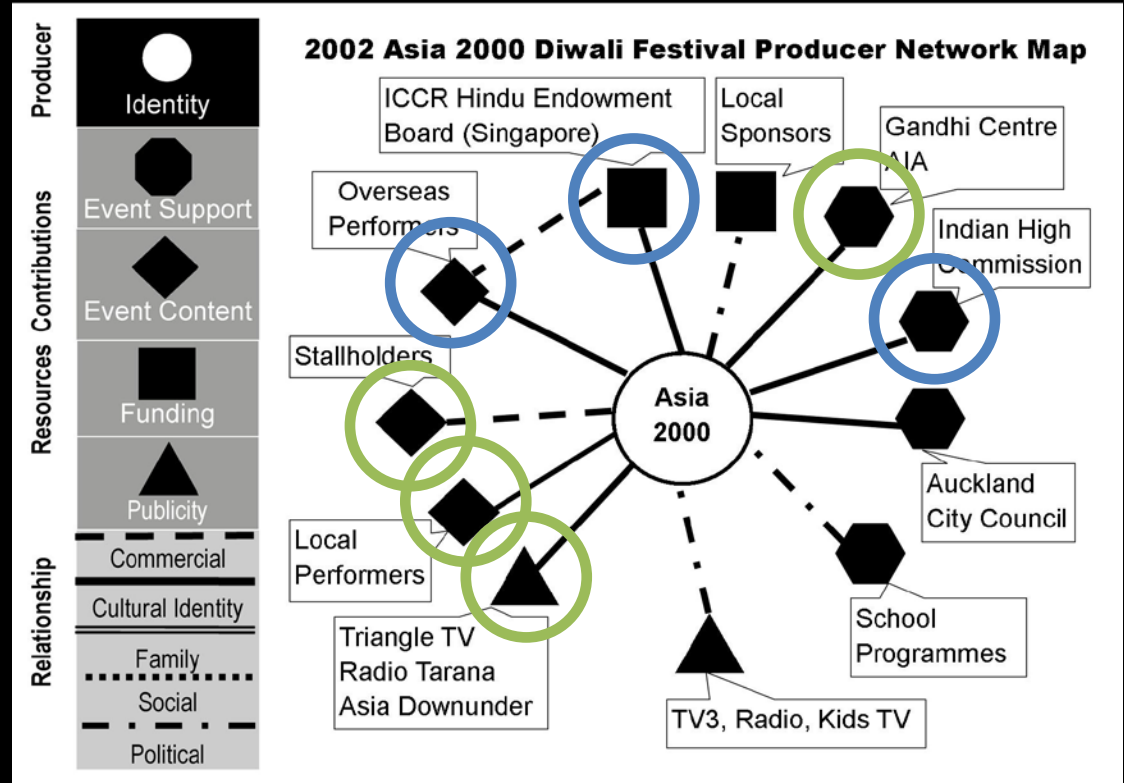


## 2002 Diwali: Indian Community Focus

Producer had a strong relationship with the Indian Community

Asia200 is a producer with a cultural focus endeavouring to create a “traditional” event that engages the community (King 2002)

Relationships with overseas Indian government cultural resources

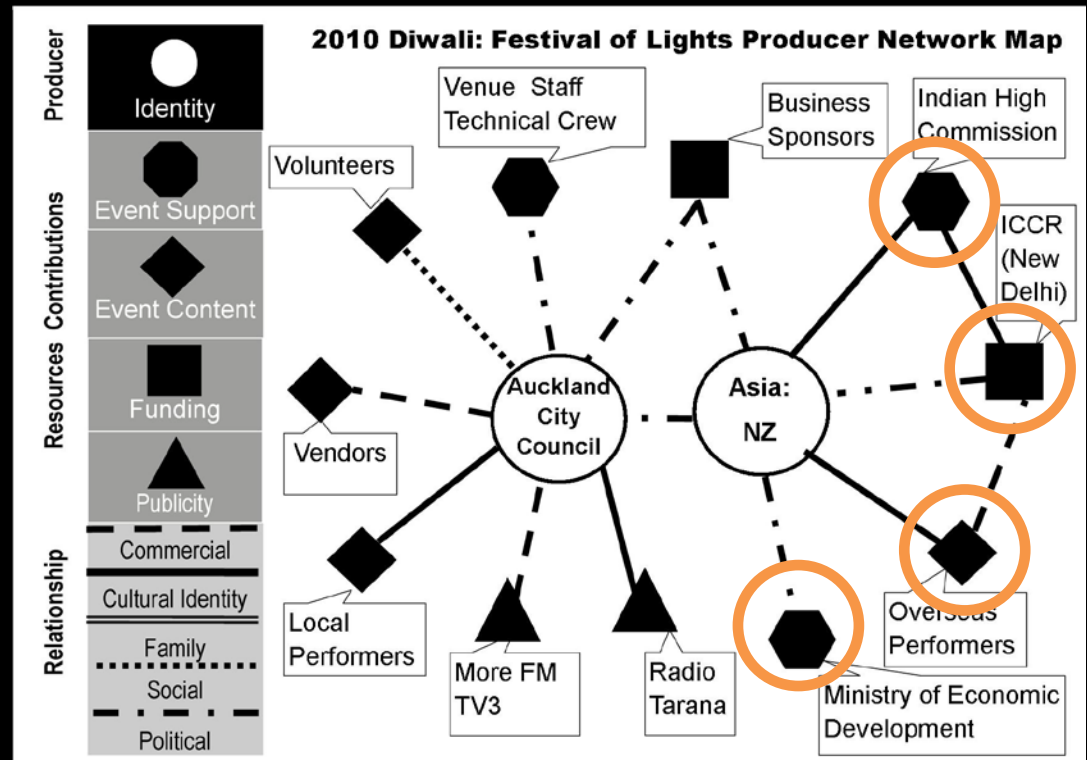


## 2010 Diwali: Community to Auckland City Council Focus

·Auckland City Council and Asia:NZ (formally Asia 2000) become co-producers

Co-producers share resources

- Asia:NZ management of overseas performers, and government funding resources from NZ and India
- Auckland Council venues, vendors, local businesses and event support



Estimated audience:  
110,000

## 2011 ATEED and Auckland hosts the RWC Focus

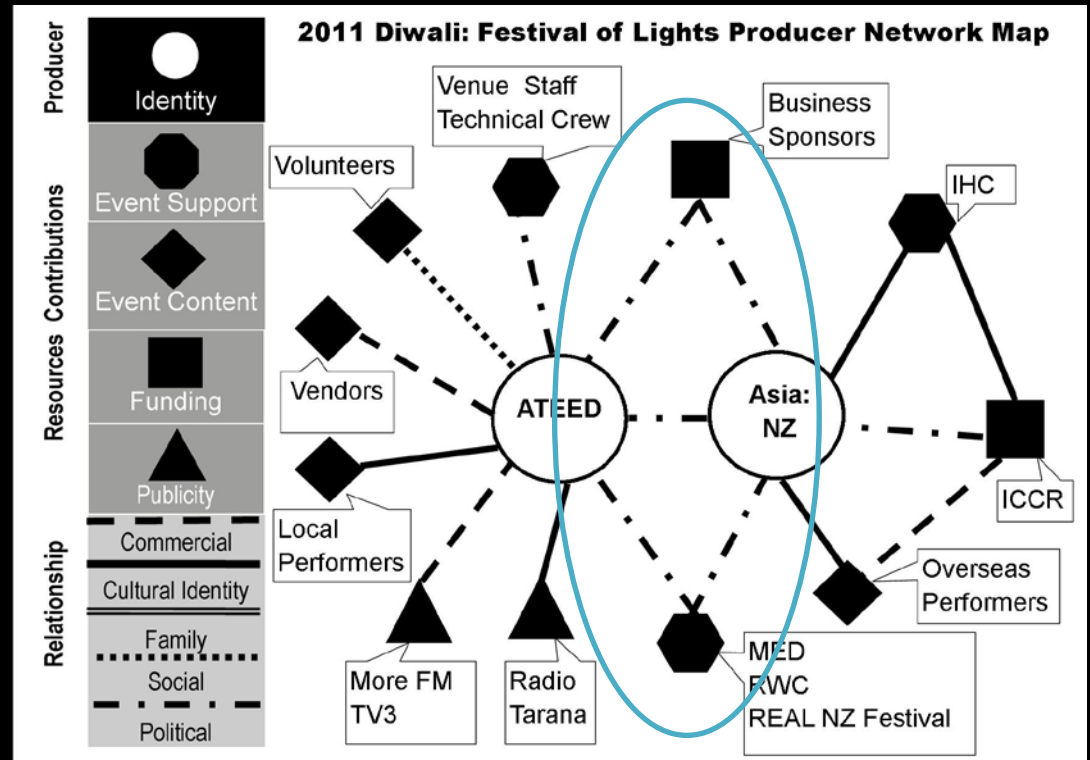
Festival Council management re-located to the portfolio of ATEED

Less community consultation and increased stallholder fees

ATEED relationships to other RWC government agencies/agendas- notably MED, RWC and REAL NZ Festival and sponsors

85,000+ RWC fans expected to bring 25-30% increase in attendees

Attendance down 25-30%





## 2012 ATEED Control Focus

New brand “Kiwi festival with an Indian flavour”

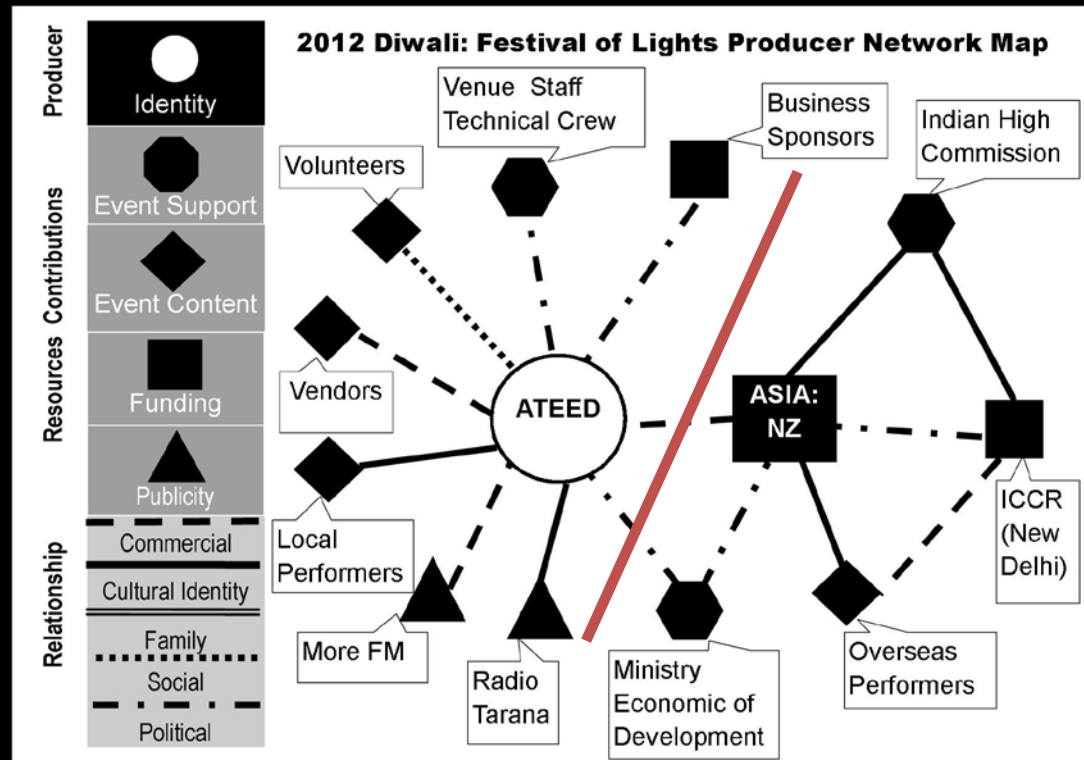
Resources relationship access based on strategic economic development stakeholders

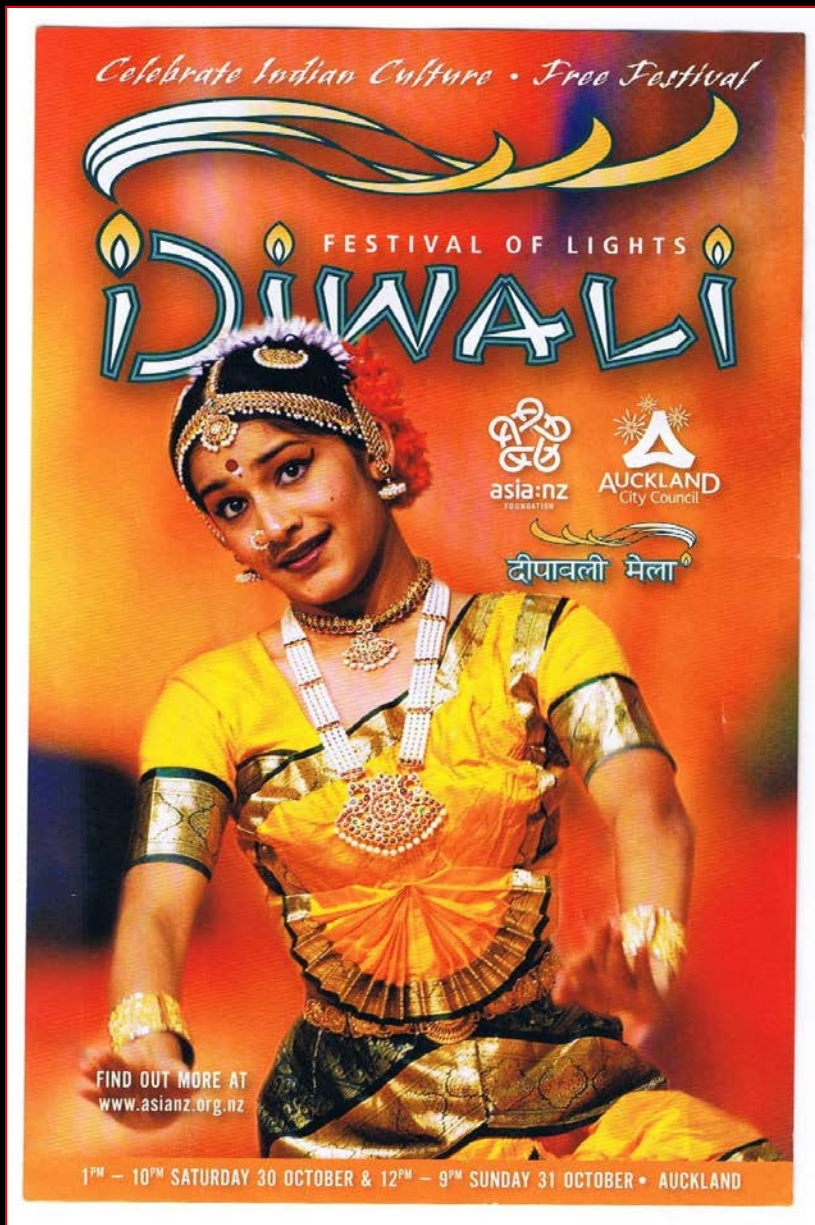
ASIA:NZ relationships reduced to funding and as a source for overseas performers

Further rises in stallholder fees and performer diversity reduced

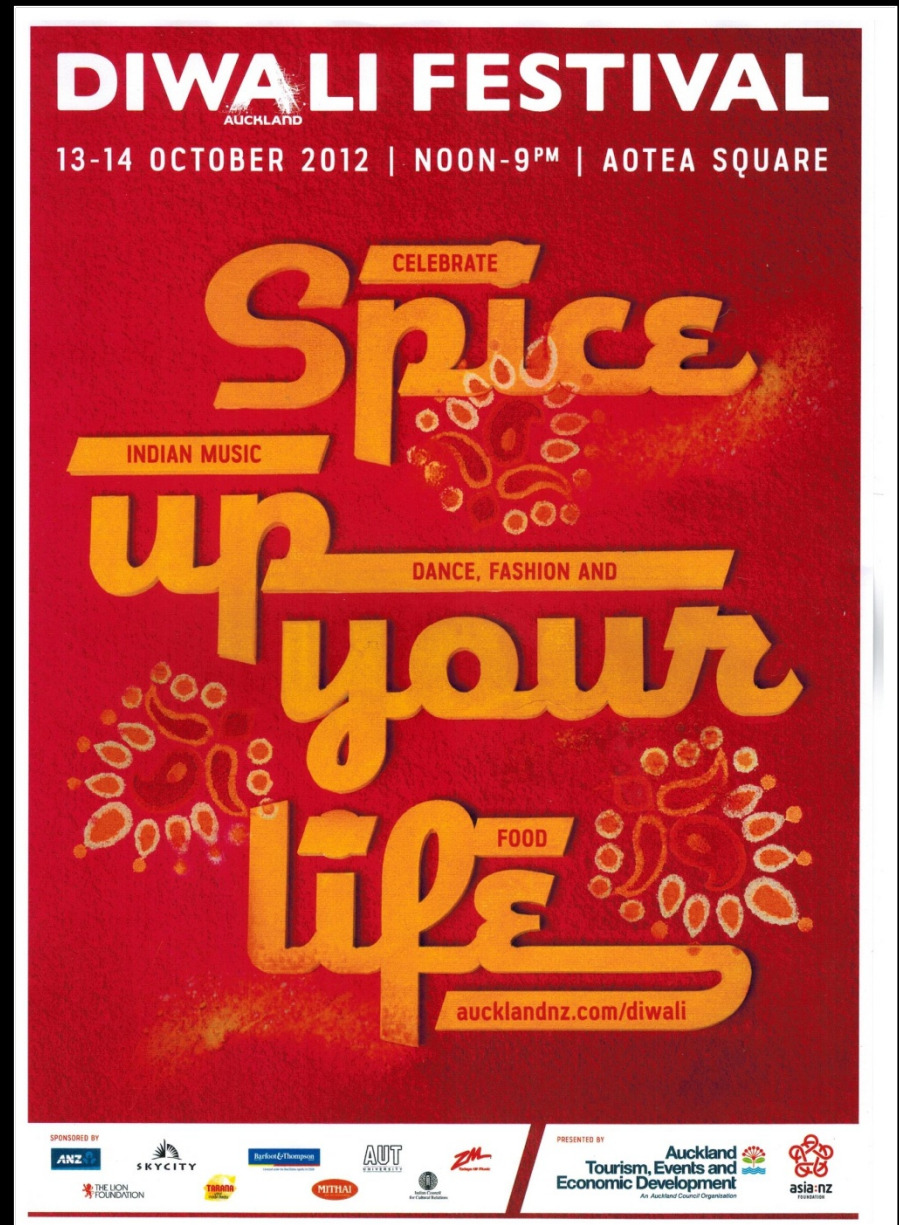
Significant decrease in stallholder and audience participation

Significant increase in Indian community Diwali celebrations closer to the actual Hindu calendar dates





2010 Diwali: Festival of Lights Poster



2012 Diwali: Festival of Lights Poster

- We feel Diwali needs to retain its theme and not be swept by the increasing effects of commercialization, westernization and Hollywood and Bollywood influence. Therefore while mindful of the increasing social bonding significance of Diwali, its theme should not be diluted to such an extent that it merely becomes yet another Western event bereft of any worthy cultural, traditional or religious significance that it currently holds. It is for this reason that Waitakere Indian Association links with its affiliate, Waitakere Hindi Language and Cultural School to portray the real theme of Diwali event.
- Singh, T. R. (2012, October 04). Waitakere Diwali changes cultural landscape while maintaining tradition. *Indian Weekender*. Retrieved from <http://www.indianweekender.co.nz/Pages/ArticleDetails/7/3268/New-Zealand/Waitakere-Diwali-changes-cultural-landscape-while-maintaining-tradition>

# Outcomes

- Voices of dissent
  - Bollywood/Punjabi content
  - representation of Indian performance culture
  - management decisions
    - Council and their selected sponsors
- Growth of community celebrations outside of government control

## Findings Summary: Producer Relationship Access to Resources

Number of Relationships

