

Ideological, Social and Cultural Aspects of Events



Edited by
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and Tomas Pernecký

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Preface

The idea behind this project started as a frustration of the editors with the current events curriculum. The limited, business-oriented content that is delivered in classrooms across the world, we thought, needed a book that would challenge students to think of events in terms of their societal and transformational potential. In our experience, students are often very enthusiastic and eager to learn about event management, but less interested in the other aspects of events. International figures show that the popularity of the study of events is on the rise, resulting in more event programmes, papers and student enrolments. Yet the contemporary (event) student is influenced by a distorted vision that sees the fun and excitement in the management of events, without being able to critically penetrate beyond the experiences that are put together by skilled professionals. As academics, we are responsible for preparing a force of intellectuals who ought to be critical thinkers. However, through insufficient curriculum, we are reducing them to efficient taskmasters: managers, workers and contractors.

Although we understand the importance of managerial know-how, we also hold that there is more to events than the business and marketing savoir faire. Events are underpinned by ideologies, and are therefore political; events are necessarily a part of societies, and are therefore social; events also speak of traditions, customs and meanings, and are therefore cultural. It is by understanding these aspects of events that the future event managers can be enlightened in a critical fashion. Events, as value-laden activities, tell our stories: they are mirrors that reveal who we are as a society, as a people, and who we would like to become as human beings. The study of various aspects of events is thus an invitation to explore the history of specific communities and humanity at different intersections throughout time. The hope is that this volume will contribute to a growing body of knowledge that sets out to raise awareness about the true importance of Event Studies.

The book is organized into five thematic parts. The first part, *Introductory Pointers*, seeks to establish that events are first and foremost a societal phenomenon – a fact that is often overlooked in the event management literature. In Chapter 1, Tomas Pernecky and Omar Moufakkir commence by explaining the rationale for this book, and offer a brief historical overview of events, mapped against the progress of human societies. In Chapter 2, Keith Hollinshead, Vannsy Kuon and Mohamed Alajmi further situate event management/event development in the broader context of contemporary society, and introduce the concept of *liquid modernity* – a perspective that has much conceptual promise for the study of events.

In the second part of the book, *Ideological Undertones*, the three contributions focus specifically on the ways in which ideologies underpin events. Tomas Pernecky begins this section in Chapter 3 by arguing that events are an immensely important phenomenon in the making of societies. He draws on the concepts of ideology, power and consent to demonstrate the complex forms of ideological manifestations through events. Chapter 4, by Colleen Pastoor, Kellee Caton, Yaniv Belhassen, Billy Collins and Mark Rowel Wallin addresses the topic of Christian music festivals, and further demonstrates how ideologies are produced in the 21st century. The authors offer insights on how festivals socialize youth into the conservative Christian movement, and touch on several other issues, such as the political implications associated with holding these events. Also included in Part II is a chapter by Nicholas Wise, Jenny Flinn and Ivo Mulec, who share their research findings from a study on the Exit Festival in Novi Sad, Serbia. This festival started as a political event organized by students who opposed the policies of Slobodan Milošević in the year 2000. This event is unique for its origins in a region of geopolitical dispute (the Western Balkans) during the 1990s.

Part III, *Constructing Values and Collective Visions*, is also composed of three chapters. In Chapter 6, Ivana Rihova, Dimitrios Buhalis, Miguel Moital and Mary-Beth Gouthro argue for a shift from the traditional value perspectives to a more holistic representation of socially constructed value in practice. As put forward by the contributors, socially constructed value is formed in social practice, and more attention ought to be paid to the social practices performed in events. In Chapter 7, Louise C. Platt follows with a case study from Liverpool in the north-west of England. She draws on Turner's concept of 'the subjunctive mood' in order to understand how local people performed identities in the period 2008–2009, when Liverpool held the title of European Capital of Culture 2008. Chapter 8 is another case study from the UK, but this time Ria Dunkley takes us to Wales to scrutinize the effectiveness of an event to inspire and create a more sustainable society. She shares findings from the Emergence Summit – an artistic gathering at the Welsh Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) in 2012.

Part IV, under the heading of *Multiculturalism, Community and Integration*, brings together a collection of six case studies that are connected by a broader focus on the importance of events for communities. In Chapter 9, Malcom Cooper sets the scene by discussing the Yag'ubi Festival, held from 1997 to 2007 in Queensland, Australia. He tells a story of the celebration of diversity and the transformational impacts of the event, but also of its rapid decline and eventual termination. Chapter 10, by Kelley A. McClinchey, continues the thread of multiculturalism. This contribution accentuates the need for multicultural approaches in festival studies, and offers arguments as to why they are needed. Chapter 11, by Penelopi Alexandrou, examines the significance of ethnocultural festivals for the Halifax Greek Community, and Chapter 12, by Candace I.J. Nykiforuk, Laura M. Nieuwendyk, Ashley Humeniuk and Kelsey Klaver, reveals resident and non-resident community perceptions of an inner-city community event in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. In Chapter 13, Carol Kline, with Jason Oliver, reach beyond the economic and social impacts of events, and employ the 'Community Capitals Framework' to evaluate festivals in several small towns in western North Carolina. Closing Part IV is Chapter 14, by Vassilios Ziakas and Carla A Costa, who share insights on the social value that derives from VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) tourism in regard to community events. The authors see potential in synergizing event tourism and VFR in order to maximize the social value of events.

Observations and Conclusions forms the last section of the book, and contains the final chapter (Chapter 15), in which Omar Moufakkir reviews the contributions in this edited volume and presents an overall summary, which is complemented by an outline of possible future research perspectives and directions.

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1 Events as Societal Phenomena

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A complete view of society would also be a complete view of all the individuals, and vice versa; there would be no difference between them.

And just as there is no society or group that is not a collective view of persons, so there is no individual who may not be regarded as a particular view of social groups. He has no separate existence; through both the hereditary and the social factors in his life a man is bound into the whole of which he is a member, and to consider him apart from it is quite as artificial as to consider society apart from individuals.

(Charles Horton Cooley, 1922, p. 38)

Introduction

Interest in events within social and cultural settings is old and well established, particularly in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology (Getz, 2012). Parallel to these disciplinary perspectives, which tend to examine events as contexts for understanding various aspects of social life, human practices and behaviour, sits a field of 'Event Management' (currently undergoing a make-over to become 'Event Studies'), which has emerged as a response to business-oriented

needs. Noting these developments is Getz's (2010) systematic review of English-language literature on festivals – showing that the majority of academic articles were published after the 1990s, with a further proliferation after 2000 – a sign, he notes, of significant growth but growth without a strong cohesion. This assessment provides a picture of the progress that has been made in the fields of tourism, hospitality and leisure, and shows what aspects of festivals have caught scholarly attention over the past few decades. In addition to Formica's (1998) earlier analysis of academic research on festivals and special events between 1970 and 1996, Getz further identifies three key discourses. The first, a *Discourse on the Roles, Meanings and Impacts of Festivals in Society and Culture*, covers the roles that festivals and events have in communities in terms of their social, cultural and environmental impacts, and extends also to understanding issues such as social and cultural capital, identity and personal outcomes for participants. The second, a *Discourse on Festival Tourism*, concerns the commodification of festivals, while the third, a *Discourse on Festival Management*, relates more to management principles and is largely practice-oriented. All in all, it is

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