"EVENTS IN A CHANGING WORLD": INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

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Introduction

This special issue of *Events Management* titled "Events in a Changing World" was born out of THE INC conference hosted by the University of Derby in conjunction with Sunderland University and the Centre in Research for Tourism Excellence (CERTE) on June 26–28, 2018 in Buxton, UK. The conference aimed to bring together international scholars exploring the need to effectively respond to important micro- and macrostructural changes affecting the Tourism, Hospitality, and Events industries conjoined. The uncertainty created by a multitude of current factors (e.g., globalization, economic unpredictability, terrorism, and the rapid development of IT and ICTs combined with important societal consumer changes) has created a multiplicity of sophisticated challenges to industry operators worldwide that, today more than ever, are in need to be explored and addressed (Pappas & Bregoli, 2016).

The 16 articles included in this special issue respond to this call addressing the theoretical and practical implications of the research in reference. Significantly, they make an important contribution to the advancement of knowledge within Events as they are concerned with people, their changing needs, and the challenges for planning and managing these experiences in new and creative ways and for a multitude of stakeholders.

It has long been accepted that events as mirrors of the social order (Handelman, 1998) and vehicles of individual and societal communication (Falassi, 1987) can tell us a great deal about how consumers and industry are being affected by the uncertainties of modern times. However, events conceived as potential agents of societal transformation (Richards, 2015) can act as lenses through which it is also possible to view and make sense of how people are responding to these uncertainties (Azara, Wiltshier, & Greatorex, 2018). May this be recognizing the need to adopt crisis communication strategies as a response to an increased threat from terrorism (see Pappas' article in this issue); or by highlighting how event consumptive practices such as *munches*, often seen "on the margins" of mainstream society (see Webster & Ivanov) may help our common understanding of what events are today and what they mean to people.

The field of events can be studied from different angles; that is, economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, marketing, management, and

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geography, just to cite a few (Lamond & Platt, 2016; Spracklen & Lamond, 2016; Wood, Jepson, & Stadler, 2018). Those accepted articles represent a wide spectrum of research loosely falling within the "umbrella term" of Event studies (Getz, 2012), bringing in evidence of how scholars embedded within distinctive (and perhaps at a glance conflicting) disciplinary discourses can provide new innovative ways of addressing the complexities of event production and consumption encountered today (Michopoulou & Giulianno, 2018; Park & Park, 2016; Ramsbottom, Michopoulou, & Azara, 2018). It is only through innovation and new ways of thinking that businesses can finally survive and develop (Sok & O'Cass, 2011). Thus, perspectives and research from different scientific fields and disciplines are highly important for the understanding of this evolutionary process as well as the changing dynamics within events.

The Themes Explored in This Special Issue

In total, these 16 articles contribute to the special issue's aim of increasing knowledge of the role of Events in a changing world and provide a basis for further researching the status of readiness of the industry to respond to the many issues discussed. The assumption made in this issue is that any analysis and subsequent response to the micro- and macrosociocultural, technological, and economical challenges affecting event production and consumption today must start in the first instance with an understanding of people and their evolving needs. It is in this light that we view the contribution by Lamb and Ogle and the important lessons (and associated benefits) that industry can draw from the cultivating of volunteers' attachment to golfing events: an effective engagement with volunteers may not only engender a positive experience, it may significantly increase the likelihood of repeat volunteering. Effective events planning, management, and delivery must start with an understanding of all stakeholders' involved in event production and consumption and not just be concerned with quick economic gains.

It is on a similar vein that we read the articles by Marinakou and Michopoulou and Melpignano. Aptly recognizing the increased challenges that event businesses are facing in relation to attracting and retaining talented employees (Marinakou) or engaging peripheral employees deployed to support the successful delivery of an event (Michopoulou & Melpignano), both articles firmly point at the need to reenvision current HR strategies, paying attention to all stakeholders including those "on the margins." The article by Wallace and Michopoulou neatly rounds up this discussion, highlighting how to truly innovate we must dare to break free from traditional schema and question the validity and usefulness of conventional stakeholders' management models currently in use.

The recognition of event tourism as current positive force for societal and cultural transformation, capable of reconfiguring space and place and interpreting, for the benefits of a wider audience, aspects of our cultural past is a recurring theme in many of the contributions included in this special issue. For example, the interesting discussions forwarded by Morton point at the impacts that walking tour guides are having on the reinterpretation of the urban landscapes that emerged during the Communist rule of Prague and Krakow. Similarly, Barrera-Fernández and Hernández-Escampa suggest how the reimaging of traditional events such as the Guelaguetza for a tourism audience are providing important sociocultural and economic impacts to the hosting city of Oaxaca.

However, time and again, the reader is reminded that multiple stakeholders' needs must be acknowledged and considered in the hosting of events: for one group's gain may translate into another group's loss. Indeed, as Barrera-Fernández and Hernández-Escampa suggest, inviting a highly spatially and time-concentrated number of event visitors into historic cities has the disadvantage of decreasing the quality of living for both tourists and residents.

Similar arguments are forwarded in the article by Marcher, Erschbamer, and Pechlaner. In the "mad rush" to hosting events such as the ever-popular Christmas markets, voicing the views and needs of many subaltern groups may be essential to achieve sustainable development through cultural events.

Although the article by Benjamin, Knollenberg, and Chen in this issue remind us of the opportunities that lie ahead for those events operators who engage with consumers in cocreating an event experience, the articles by Kirby and Crabb, Melpignano and Azara, and Pappas are a stark reminder that, in

reality, there is still so much work to do to ensure the benefits of events are enjoyed by all.

For example, Kirby and Crabb's article casts a dark shadow on the use of mega-events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World cup as ways of destination infrastructure development in Brazil. Despite being advertised as powerful agents of modernization, sociocultural transformation, and economic gains, the article suggests how, in practice, the process of hosting mega-sporting events (MSEs) is fraught with challenges and how different political agendas are played out to the detriment of the resident population. As more developing countries are set to host MSEs in the future, the article forwards calls for the development of holistic and integrated sustainability policies and corporate responsibility instruments, which may help all stakeholders benefit from the legacies of hosting these events.

On a similar tone is the article by Melpignano and Azara. The authors argue that the hosting of live music events at Italian World Heritage Sites (WHSs) for a niche creative tourist segment can attract and differentiate audiences bringing in addition a much-needed economic respite to these sites. Yet the potential these events may have in the valorization of WHSs is limited by the lack of a common stakeholders' approach to the hosting and management of these experiences. The lack of synergetic approaches to the use of live music events at WHSs, aggravated by the tensions within each single faction and deep-seated issues of trust inevitably translates into a raft of missed opportunities for both the events and conservation industries.

Finally, the article from Pappas on the need to develop crisis management communication strategies for popular culture events reminds us that today more than ever events are integral to peoples' way of life, may these be residents or tourists to a destination. In the authors' words the sharing of knowledge between event organizers and destination management organizations can go a long way to create a model of best practice that can be used to enhance the tourists' experience.

This special issue also firmly puts the spotlight on changing event consumption practices that we observe today and on the lessons that industry and academia can draw from them. Events in whatever shape or form are important spaces for identity affirmation, reaffirmation, or renegotiation. Of interest in this special issue is how, albeit different in context, the articles presented are strongly connected by participants' needs to come together to affirm aspects of their identity and lifestyle.

For example, the article by Webster and Ivanov sheds lights into a much less-studied type of lifestyle-based events and the motivations of people to attend them. Findings show how participants to *munch* events are more strongly motivated to attend for the desire to socialize rather than simply looking for sexual experiences.

Similarly, the article by Dodds, Walsh, and Koç suggests how people are increasingly taking notice of issues related to sustainability and that festival planners and organizers will need to integrate sustainability into their planning process in order to satisfy an increasing interest in the community to behave sustainably.

The idea of temporary and fluid event communities sharing similar values and attitudes is also well encapsulated by the article by Brown and Sharpley that attempts to explore who UK festival goers are and what is important to them in determining their overall experience. As the study points out, it is the quality and variety of things to do and activities beyond music, rather than music and the commercial add-ons, that positively influences festivalgoer's experience of music festivals.

With the proliferation of technology today, one might expect that events would progressively transition to the online realm. However, as the article from Wreford, Williams, and Ferdinand points out, event experiences are about people coming together and technology cannot substitute the real experience. Although virtual reality (VR) is a very important tool to enhance some experiences, it is the human encounter and coexistence in the same space that brings the value of events to the forefront.

The importance of coming together is not contested, but the process of doing so is. It is critical for academics and industry to meet and share knowledge and ideas about the industry they both serve, but as highlighted by the article by Chen and Tham, organizing events about events can bear significant limitations. However, it is important for people to get together and argue and debate about the topics that matter to them, and that is key to unpacking

and disentangling current issues that affect events and people who study or run them in this changing world.

Conclusions

Overall, this issue brings together a collection of scholars engaged in researching the ways events help us make sense of our chaotic life. From events that address "needs at the margins" such as bonding events; to events as important components of creative tourism and opportunities to valorize destinations; to events capable of reconfiguring space and place and bringing to life important parts of our recent history. The issue also brings a new light into the need to break free from traditional schema and management models, looking and opening up to the possibility to incorporate new stakeholders' models, and to address issues related to changing workforce patterns as well as to consider new external environment needs into the management of events.

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