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Partnerships, social capital and the successful management of small scale cultural festivals: A case study of Hobart's Antarctic Midwinter Festival

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Abstract

This paper uses a case study of the Antarctic Midwinter Festival held annually in Hobart, Australia, to analyse the ways in which cooperation, partnerships and social capital contribute to the successful management of small scale cultural festivals. It argues that the strategic use of partnerships evident in much event management practice is especially important in small communities, where issues with cost, infrastructure and market scale make it even more challenging to create the critical mass of thematically linked activities that characterise a successful festival. An emphasis on marketing, branding and relationships management in the context of a partnerships approach can help festival coordinators establish a bedrock of social capital to support a small scale cultural festival like the Antarctic Midwinter Festival. This approach can, however, have implications for succession planning as stewardship of the festival, and the social capital that supports the festival, is transferred to different coordinators down the years.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Shifts in Australian cultural policy in the past three decades have increased the profile of festivals as a means of celebrating a city's identity, building a sense of wellbeing amongst its citizens, and bolstering its competitiveness in attracting tourists and trade. Traditionally one-off or once-a-year events that bring people together to connect and celebrate, cultural festivals today come in all shapes and sizes. Local events run by community organisations, trade organisations and councils offer a forum for a day of fun, and for consolidating the social and trade relationships that exist in a community. Niche events celebrate the contribution one or more of a city's different communities – artistic, ethnic, social or geographical – make to its character. Larger scale sport, art and cultural spectacles can be subject to competition amongst capital cities for the chance to build their global profile.

This paper focuses on issues facing councils and other organisations seeking to produce a festival as one part of the plan for building a sustainable future for a smaller city or community. Much of the literature on community-oriented festivals to date has looked at the degree of formality with which they are programmed, managed and positioned in the marketplace (Lade & Jackson, 2005; Mehmetoglu & Ellingsen, 2005; Mayfield & Crompton, 1995; Getz & Frisby, 1988). Looked, in other words, at the way they are tailored to external market environments. The range of recipients of funding from bodies like Festivals Australia in recent years suggests many small cities have, with the help of cultural mapping techniques, managed to identify a facet of their artistic, economic, educational or environmental profile they can successfully build and market a festival around. For these smaller communities, though, a great idea, well grounded in local culture, with a little government subsidy, is not necessarily enough. In a small city, where there may not be an established event culture, it can be costly and challenging to try to pull together the critical mass of thematically linked activities that characterises a successful festival. Especially when the festival coordinator – it may be a local, an officer of the local council, or a coordinator contracted by the council to run the event – finds themselves working in a context without the systems, infrastructure, resources or target-market scale to make a focus on significant levels of sponsorship and corporate support a practical option. Whilst this is suitable for larger-scale sports, arts and food festivals, with a chance of achieving the national and international profile attractive to major sponsors, it can be counterproductive for coordinators of smaller events to focus exclusively on this strategy. Festival coordinators thus need to come up with new strategies to create a successful festival, with a trade, tourism or social benefit, for their smaller city.

This paper investigates one strategy festival coordinators use to create enough exciting programming for a successful event with minimal resources. It is best described as a partnerships strategy, based on cooperation, trust and social capital. The concept of social capital has been popular in community development literature of late (Emery & Flora, 2006), because it (like the events of which it is a part (Derritt, 2003)) is seen to have some potential to remedy a perceived decline in interpersonal cohesion in society (Putnam, 1995a; Putnam, 1995b; Putnam, 2000). This paper does not set out to critique the merits of the concept of social capital per se, or to speak to the ways in which the concept has been harnessed by

politicians, community development practitioners and theorists. Instead, it focuses on social capital in the specific context of small cultural festivals, arguing that coordinators can use cooperation, partnerships and social capital to encourage other organisations to contribute to their programming, especially in the context of smaller cities. This is not, of course, to suggest that large-scale events in major capitals can exist without social capital. In small cities, though, such capital can be more than just a foundation on which formally contracted programming, or community outreach programming, operates. It can be the critical factor in guaranteeing the participation of other people and organisations at their own cost, and can even see festivals become umbrella brands to which people are free to hitch their own events and exhibits with minimal vetting or control.

To understand the part this partnerships strategy plays in small festivals, this paper starts with a closer look at how shifts in Australian cultural policy have changed the face of cultural festivals in the past three decades, the sort of festival programming expected by audiences today, and the steps festival coordinators can take to encourage partner producers to help them create a critical mass of programming. It then offers a case study of one event, the Antarctic Midwinter Festival held annually in Hobart, Tasmania. The Antarctic Midwinter Festival celebrates Hobart's identity as a gateway to the Antarctic continent and its seasonal climate – seasonal, not cold, given there is also currently a push to market the fact that Tasmania sits on the same latitude as Spain (cf. Launceston City Council, 2004). The Antarctic Midwinter Festival has had more success with this than other ventures in recent years – the prime example being the short lived Antarctic Adventure, a permanent display along the lines of a science museum for tourists and students. A good idea and a good grounding in Hobart's unique history notwithstanding, in a city of less than 200,000 the Antarctic Midwinter Festival does still face challenges finding and funding the critical mass of acts, activities and exhibits it needs to attract audiences of 40,000 over a 10 day period. This makes it an ideal example to tease out the issues central to this paper. In analysing the Antarctic Midwinter Festival, this paper looks particularly at the ways in which marketing, branding (to establish a strong cultural signature for Hobart and this event), and relationships management are critical to the success of a partnerships strategy. In doing so, it shifts the focus to the internal marketing mix that McCleary (1995) identifies as critical to a festival's success, exploring the potential it has to attract partner producers as well as audiences, and so build social capital around an event. The paper concludes with a brief consideration of the issues this strategy – based on trust in the festival coordinator, the festival and fellow producers – presents for succession planning, as festivals are transferred from one coordinator to another over the years.

The Changing Face of Cultural Festivals

As analysis in anthropology and other fields has shown, festivals traditionally provide a forum for celebrating community and seasonal change (Alomes, 1985), as well as a time-out-of-time in which challenges to social authority are briefly sanctioned (Bakhtin, 1994). Festivals are thus, traditionally, as Bakhtin (1994) argues, "not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people" (p. 198). The emergence of new cultural and community structures in the twentieth century has not spelled the end for the public celebrations of a city's art, culture and heritage festivals provide (Boissevian, 1992). But their nature and function has shifted as cultural priorities and policies shift. In particular, a shift in emphasis from elite arts to community engagement in the arts in Australian cultural policy since the 1970s has contributed to the growing importance of local festivals. The Australian events calendar is now dotted with festivals, placemaking and heritage projects in which the public directly participates (Druett, 1998), as well as elite international sports and arts festivals, in which both are important indicatators of a city's

liveability. While these festivals are not the medieval carnivals Bakhtin described, as themed celebrations (Getz, 1997) with an emphasis on social, skills and economic development, they do still strive to "embrace all the people". Themes typically come from a city's colonial history (filtered through contemporary perspectives), its environmental features, or its economic features (Boissevian, 1992; Alomes, 1985).

Cultural policy in Australia has continued to evolve in the 1990s, shifting from a supply to a market orientation, particularly since the *Creative Nation* policy produced by the federal government in 1994 (Rentschler, 1998; Radbourne, 1997). This means festivals are now positioned to build cultural capital, to strengthen the entertainment, tourism and trade profile of a city, and so contribute to its economic capacity (Quinn, 2005; Derritt, 2004; Boissevian, 1992). The festival's portrayal of a community's values thus becomes more than a means of consolidating its identity, and forging functional links. It serves a broader range of urban objectives, selling the city to locals, tourists and the skilled newcomers it seeks to attract. This shift has also, according to Skinner and Rukovina (2003), resulted in a change in festival management structures. Festivals are, they say, bigger, better, and rely on more paid professional staff than ever before, thanks to a shift from grants to self-generated funds and sponsorship, along with a greater focus on audience satisfaction (a strong focus in arts and cultural practice across the board, as Rentschler (1998) and Radbourne (1997) suggest). Audiences expect a greater range of facilities, a greater range of activities, and greater variety in both favourites and new features.

This shift prompts the question at the core of this paper. How do smaller cities wanting to create a festival, with all its attendant social and economic benefits, do this? The concern is not necessarily lack of a distinctive heritage to tap into. Current thinking suggests even the smallest community can map important facets of its artistic, architectural, trade, scientific or educational traditions, crystalising an identity to showcase to itself and to others (Druett, 1998). But, whereas large festivals may have the financial subsidy to pay for a critical mass of programming, or an audience pool large enough to make a push for significant sponsorship a practical option, small festival producers may find it challenging to find enough programming in the local area, let alone pay for it. This means small festivals, with small levels of subsidy, need a coordinator who will look for other ways of establishing an engaging program of events. When a festival coordinator cannot fund enough activities, one way of bolstering the program is with partner produced events and exhibitions, an approach which relies on the coordinator's ability to use trust-based networks, rather than traditional, vertical, transactional relationships, to build a strong program for the event, and to persuade people to be part of it.

Trust, Cooperation and Social Capital

Though the term social capital has only recently come into popular usage through Bourdieu's (1986) differentiation of the forms of capital, and the subsequent work of Coleman (1988, 1990) and Putnam (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2000), the ideas about social interaction it carries have been current since Durkheim's and Marx's foundational sociological theories (Farr, 2004; Portes, 1998). Social capital is defined as a resource that comes from relations of mutual recognition, responsibility and obligation between people, relations that given people access to capital they can bargain with for benefits (Coleman, 1990; Bourdieu, 1986). "Social capital refers," as Putnam (2000) suggests, "to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trust that arise from them" (p. 19). People participate in social relations, pool their passions, ideas and resources, in anticipation of some return (Dasgupta, 2005). This creates a currency of trust whereby they commit to working together, and risk ostracisation if they do not carry through this commitment, or carry

out the obligation with due competence (both being fundamental to the trust relations in play (Atkinson & Butcher, 2003)). Social capital has been differentiated into the tighter structure of the bonding capital that exists within a group, and the looser structure of the bridging capital that establishes ties with other groups (Narayan, 1999), and the term entrepreneurial social capital has also been used to describe the use of bonds, bridges and goodwill in economic development (Emery & Flora, 2006). Because it is based on social relationships which will disintegrate without regular replenishment (Colman, 1990; Putnam, 2000), social capital is more a circular process than a thing, a process that produces, maintains and is produced by strong community ties. Which is why Hawkes (2001) suggests it may be better described as a lubricant of society than a glue for it. Governments have seized on the notion of social capital, seeking to increase it to hold together and heighten the impact of capital-building exercises in other areas (Emery & Flora, 2006), and to move beyond traditional market transactions into more transformational relations.

Not all theorists see social capital as an effective component of community development strategies, though. The difficulty is that this type of bond is not a formal, measurable, controllable bond of the sort that guarantees the 'proper' behaviour of the people involved. For Bridger and Alter (2006), the shifting, changing, isolating and dislocating structures of modern society make it difficult for people to feel they can count on future return from cooperation today. They make it difficult for people to trust that their cooperation will result in some sort of reciprocity or shared obligation, and this means the networks on which social capital depends are diminished.

While this is an issue, it is clear that many people involved in cultural development are still interested in shaping relations between people, encouraging them to act in a way that will establish loyalties across the geographical, class, ethnic or educational lines that have, as Bridger and Alter (2006) suggest, conventionally tended to diminish the potential for trust, cooperation and social cohesion. Festival coordinators seeking to build social capital amongst partners contributing to a critical mass of programming can take steps to counteract this lack of trust, and create bridging networks. The critical thing, as Atkinson and Butler (2006) argue, is to avoid generalisations about how beneficial social networks can be, and instead identify specific factors that build the trust, bridges and social networks that will encourage partner producers to commit programming to a festival.

This discussion will focus on three factors contributing to trusting relationships amongst partner producers, all connected with the internal marketing mix.

The first factor is the festival coordinator's ability to frame the festival, its function, and its experiential properties, as part of a strong cultural signature or brand. As analysis of the Antarctic Midwinter Festival will show, a strong brand can help persuade partner producers that they will benefit from investing in the festival, even in a shifting, changing, transitory event climate. It can help persuade them that the personal, experiential and/or economic payoff of participating in the festival once will also lead to a longer running relationship, with further benefits for them in the future.

The second factor is the festival coordinator's ability to identify the most suitable government, corporate, community or arts partners to bring under the festival's umbrella, in order to increase its artistic and administrative capacities, and its community links. Because, as Dasgupta (2005) notes, while theorist tend to think of networks as things that exist, they do still need to be established. The festival coordinator needs to find partners that may be able to fulfil their own objectives by participating in the festival, making pitches to people with similar passions, or a similar market. They need to avoid partner matches that overwhelm a festival's current identity, seem strange in the context of the festival's current identity, or seem too much like commercialised money-spinners.

The third factor is the festival coordinator's ability to create the management and communication systems that will best support the interpersonal and interorganisational bridges on which this partnership strategy is built. Differences in motivation, priorities, professionalism and resources amongst partners contributing to a common goal can cause strain at the best of times (Ostrower, 2004). But this will be compounded if there is a lack of transparency, integrity or trust, or lack of commitment to promises made. Festival coordinators need to clarify goals, roles, relations, projected benefits, and periods of commitment from the start (Ostrower, 2004). They need to make certain partners are positively disposed to each other, willing to put their own reputations on the line, willing to agree to incentives and conditions, and, ideally, willing to commit for the long term (Dasgupta, 2005). Making this happen can, for festival coordinators, mean moving from transactional leadership to more creative, charismatic, transformational leadership within horizontal rather than vertical networks (Dasgupta, 2005).

The Antarctic Midwinter Festival

The Antarctic Midwinter Festival began in 2001 after a proposal from the Australian Antarctic Division, the agency responsible for representing the federal government in Antarctica, for a one day event on a winter weekend. The brief was to showcase the contribution the Australian Antarctic Division, the international players in the Tasmanian Polar Network, and the more than 800 Antarctic administrators, academics and scientists make to the city, and to offer the community a chance to meet people working in the Antarctic sector in Hobart and on the continent (Laskey, 2005; Tasmanian Department of Economic Development, 2005; Tasmanian Department of Economic Development, 2004a). In this respect, the Antarctic Midwinter Festival has characteristics of a niche event designed to celebrate a uniquely Hobart trade, and a community- or council- run festival designed to consolidate Hobart's social and trade relationships. It is designed to contribute to the viability, vitality and liveability of Hobart, and thus of Tasmania as a whole, at both symbolic and concrete levels.

In today's festival climate it might be assumed that the local Hobart City Council – the level of government closest to the community, with the greatest interest in cultivating the community's identity (Stevenson, 2000; Mercer 1998, 35; Dixon-Ward & Atwell 1998; Hawkins & Gibson 1995) – would take responsibility for running a small city-based festival like the Antarctic Midwinter Festival. It has, however, been run under the auspices of Antarctic Tasmania, a division of the state-level Tasmanian Department of Economic Development from the start, because Hobart is a small capital, of a small state, and because the festival is pulling artefacts and technologies associated with Hobart's Antarctic history together to promote economic, social and political agendas important to the liveability of this small state as a whole. After being assigned to the Executive Officer of Antarctic Tasmania in 2001, and to a Station Master from the Australian Antarctic Division in 2002 and 2003, the festival director position was put to tender in 2004, with the contract awarded to David Laskey. Laskey was tasked to breathe new life into the festival, without losing the features that had already gained support. To do this he had to develop an innovative festival management model that gets large outcomes with limited financial resources (Laskey, 2005). In 2005, for instance, Laskey had an operational budget of about $40,000 from the Tasmanian Department of Economic Development (increasing to $55,000 in 2006 (Tasmanian Department of Economic Development, 2005)), with smaller but still significant funding from the Hobart City Council, the Tasmanian Polar Network, and in-kind support from newspapers, airlines and hotels to create a critical mass of activities for 40,000 people over a 10 day period (Laskey, 2005; Tasmanian Department of Economic Development, 2005). In other words, less funds to showcase the state capital Hobart than some of the larger

municipalities in Sydney and Melbourne spend on suburban events. Although Laskey does seek sponsorship for the Antarctic Midwinter Festival from organisations like the Tasmanian Polar Network, he does not necessarily see this as a primary focus in managing the success of the festival, given it is a niche event with a mainly Hobart market, and given the other demands on local sponsors from events like his own larger Summer Festival (Laskey, 2005). Instead, Laskey has concentrated on curating a core program of iconic events that make the Antarctic Midwinter Festival brand strong enough that partner organisations will see it as beneficial to contribute to a parallel program of partner events under the festival's banner to create critical mass (Laskey, 2005). The first step in making this model work has been a rebranding which broadens the festival's scope beyond the scientific orientation of the first few years to a broader celebration of Hobart's identity targeted to local families and tourists (Laskey, 2005; Tasmanian Department of Economic Development, 2004b). He has been using the Antarctic Midwinter Festival's core and partner programming to re-image and re-imagine the city of Hobart – that is, to provide images, impressions and experiences only possible in Hobart, as Australia's "stopping point" (Tasmanian Department of Economic Development, 2005) on "the way south" (Antarctic Tasmania, 2002 p. 16). These include images of ice, fire, animals, people, the polar technologies that have opened up the continent over the past century, and the changing seasons linked to the southern Winter solstice (Bruce, 2002).

One emphasis has been on images of the Midwinter Solstice coming mainly out of community participation in the festival's core program of events – the annual community arts project building giant penguins and petrel lanterns, the parades, parties and markets in Salamanca square with snow, ice sculpting, drummers, firetwirlers and warm mulled wine, the Midwinter Dinner established to link to a more bawdy event on the continent itself, and the Huskies picnic in the botanical gardens that closes the festival (Antarctic Tasmania, 2005; Laskey, 2005). The idea is to use this celebration of Hobart, the only Australian capital seasonal in this way (Bruce, 2002), to link into the lights, lanterns, fire, colourful characters and feasts traditional used in solstice celebrations like Christmas.

Another emphasis has been on scientific images of Southern Ocean exploration, this time coming mainly from partner events like discovery days at the CSIRO, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, and the Antarctic Base Station at Kingston (and, in 2004, tours of the Aurora Australis icecutter), Screen Tasmania's *The Longest Night Film Festival*, and other displays of artefacts, archival footage and artworks at the State Library of Tasmania, the City of Hobart Gallery, the National Archives, the Maritime Museum of Tasmania, and the Hadley's Hotel where Antarctic explorers like Roald Amundsen stayed. The idea has been to shift the emphasis from polar technologies to the people who use them, in the past and the present, in Antarctica and in Hobart (Laskey, 2005; Antarctic Tasmania, 2005).

Laskey has tied all these polar images together with a logo scheme based around a family-friendly cartoon image of polar creatures cavorting with people on the Antarctic ice, transitioning up into the Hobart harbour around which the festival's activities take place.

A strong cultural signature for the Antarctic Midwinter Festival is not just a means to an external marketing or economic end. It establishes a level of interest, legitimacy and momentum, and what Petitdemange (1998) would call a "human soul" (p. 56). It contributes to a sense that people's investment of time, effort and ideas in the event will be rewarded, in an immediate way through connection, celebration and learning, and in a more ongoing way as the connections translate to strong community, corporate, artistic and educational links in the city of which the event is part (Derritt, 2003). A strong cultural signature for the Antarctic Midwinter Festival thus gives Laskey a greater scope when it comes to the second step in making this model work, the courting of other organisations he thinks will be able to share in the benefits the festival brings, the profile it brings, and the potential for networking it brings,

by creating partner events. In his tenure as director of the Antarctic Midwinter Festival, this has helped Laskey broaden the circle of partners he is actively working with to plan and create programming to include the Hobart City Council, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, the National Archives of Australia, the CSIRO, the Maritime Museum of Tasmania, community artists, even local theatre companies and football clubs who have put on midwinter events that coincide with the festival and create a critical mass of events in Hobart. Laskey is also constantly making connections with new potential partners, putting as many irons in as many fires as possible (Laskey, 2005), and seeing to partnership and production logistics only after interest has been sparked. New possibilities include programming opportunities with the University of Tasmania, new links with artists who have participated in the Antarctic Fellowships Summer Program, and new links with authors through an Antarctic Literary Festival. These new possibilities are important not just to inject new life into the festival, but to limit the possible impact of any one partner pulling out, a process which might otherwise diminish or destroy the commonly held social capital accrued to the event. Branding, and a constant effort at bringing new events under the brand, thus become a way of future-proofing the festival (Laskey, 2005), protecting the social capital.

Naturally, it is difficult to balance the interests of many different stakeholders, to be sure each gets a chance to showcase their collections and passions, and to create their own new networks, under the festival's banner, without dissipating the distinctive image and identity Laskey has started to define for the festival, or risking the quality of the programming. Not least because Laskey is working with so many different partner organisations, with such different priorities and degrees of professionalism, and there is such a difference in the degree of formality with which the different relationships are defined. While the Antarctic Midwinter Festival has some contracted sponsorships and subsidies, many of the partnerships and relationships it relies on are informal, grounded in promises and trust. Accordingly, the third step in making this model work has been managing the balance between formal control and informal collaboration to create synergies without too many surprises (Laskey, 2005). One critical consideration here is the fact that the partner produced elements are often safe events at safe venues (Laskey, 2005). There are fewer unanticipated risks in these regulated activities, both for Laskey and his overall program, and for the partners themselves (Laskey, 2005). An activity outside this category was the Australian Antarctic Division's Aurora Australia tours in 2003 and 2004, and Laskey believes the boat not being in harbour in 2005 may have been a blessing both because of the risk, and because reliance on this one feature of the festival year after year may have become counterproductive anyway (Laskey, 2005), letting too much of the festival's capital accrue in one area. Laskey has also been pursuing initiatives to define the relationships between the Antarctic Midwinter Festival's diverse programming, partnership and sponsorship categories more strongly, so all producers will know what is being invested in the mutually held capital, in what ways. He has differentiated the Antarctic Midwinter Festival's own core events from other events, including through a bar chart in the 2004 and 2005 programs (Laskey, 2005). He has also begun defining the cash or in-kind support behind the sponsorship categories more strongly, using the Expeditioner, Husky and Penguin categories (Laskey, 2005; Antarctic Tasmania, 2005). All of which suggests transparency is an important factor in creating the trusting, collaborative relationships that will produce and replenish the Antarctic Midwinter Festival's social capital.

Partnerships, Social Capital and Succession Planning

As this case study of the Antarctic Midwinter Festival suggests, a partnerships strategy, whereby a festival coordinator creates a strongly branded event, encourages partner producers to contribute programming to the event, which strengthens the event, and

encourages still more partners to come on board, can be a way of generating large outcomes with limited resources. It is a strategy dependant on the festival coordinator's ability to create transparent, trusting relationships and social capital amongst partners. One significant questionmark over this strategy, however, is its implications for succession planning. In today's festival management climate it is common for a coordinator to spend several years with an event, and then pass control to someone new. It happens with local festivals, as well as large-scale international arts and cultural festivals. It also happens in event management organisations (councils, arts centres), where control of an event may be rotated each year. This is, most would argue, positive for the momentum of cyclical events, as well as for the careers of those who manage them. The questionmark, in the context of this paper, is what then happens to the social capital that has accrued to a festival, its coordinator, and its network of partner producers. It is an issue foreshadowed in this case study of the Antarctic Midwinter Festival, with Laskey's wariness of allowing the energy invested in the event to accrue around a single element of the program, such as the Aurora Australis. And yet – as Bridger and Alter's (2006) concern that social capital diminishes as face-to-face contact decreases in a technologically mediated society indicates – trusting relationships are rarely generated in a 'faceless' way. Trust is attached to specific people, specific things, or specific brands, with specific characteristics that people can identify and feel comfortable with. Which is why branding was such a vital factor in Laskey's effort to build positive relationships with potential event partners as well as with audiences. Is there, then, a risk that a director like Laskey will carry the accrued capital with him when he leaves the festival? On the one hand, this is a concern. On the other hand, though, it is worth remembering that other networks, other loyalties, have also been built up as part of the process. And because social capital is not a concrete, mathematically quantifiable thing, the amount of loyalty Laskey takes with him does not necessarily decrease the amount of loyalty that remains with the festival, and the network of partners. The next step in researching the part social capital plays in the successful management of small cultural events, then, is empirical study of the shifts in the social capital surrounding a festival that take place when there is a change in leadership. Do partners stay with an event through changes in leadership? What factors drive their decisions to stay or not stay with an event? Questions that can soon be asked of the Antarctic Midwinter Festival itself, as Laskey leaves to pursue other opportunities (Tasmanian Department of Economic Development 2006), and new festival director Anne Kerr takes the reins for the first time in 2007.

Conclusions and Implications

This paper has used a case study of the Antarctic Midwinter Festival held annually in Hobart, Tasmania, to analyse the ways in which cooperation, partnerships and social capital contribute to the successful management of small scale cultural festivals. It has shown that an emphasis on branding, marketing and relationships management in the context of a partnerships approach has helped the Antarctic Midwinter Festival establish a bedrock of social capital that supports the festival, and the positive image of Hobart's Antarctic history and connections the festival conveys. This approach has encouraged people to participate in the event, pooling their passions, ideas and resources in anticipation of cultural and economic returns. Which, in turn, has helped extend the festival's programming to include a far wider range of community-oriented activities, events and exhibitions to bring life to the city over the ten days of the festival. The case study shows that relationships based on shared passions and responsibilities can, as the literature on social capital suggests, bring ongoing benefits for producers, partners, participants and audiences. Moreover, it raises the possibility that the multidimensional loyalties created as part of this partnerships approach may build capital that continues to benefit the festival, the community and the city even as staff and stakeholders change over the years.

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