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Co-creative Events: Analysis and Illustrations

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This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge inEvent Design: Social perspectives and practices on 9 September 2014, available online:

http://www.routledge.com/9780415704649

10 Co-creative Events

Analysis and Illustrations

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Introduction

The storyline to this chapter is of events as an increasingly enticing and sophisticated approach that organisations employ to achieve strategic outcomes. Renowned writers, such as Wood (2009) and Berridge (in Page and Connel 2012) endorse this view commenting upon the increased appeal of events as an instrument to achieve many and varied outcomes, hence the event inflation referred to by Richards (2013). This is consistent with the commentary of other writers who reflect upon the increased number, size, scope and significance of events (Bowdin, Allen et al. 2011; Getz 2012). Organisations, in many different settings, select events as their preferred approach to achieve outcomes that could ostensibly be achieved in many other ways, and as indicated below this is a growing tendency. The ensuing discussion evaluates this and through discussion and illustration of the co-creative possibilities of events, provides a context from which to interpret this trend.

Framed within the context of the growing primacy of experience (Pine and Gilmore 1998) we increasingly see observers, such as Gupta (2003) and Wood (2009), commentate on the widening range of outcomes that organisations can pursue through the adoption of enlightened event based approaches. Other analysts, such as Hamso (2012) and Vanneste (2008) focus upon the return on investment of events and how this can be realised through participant-centred event design. Pioneers in the commercial world such as Red Bull and Vodaphone invest heavily, and Microsoft, as an example, invest upwards of 25% of their marketing expenditure on events led activity (Fahmy 2009). The appeal of events is not restricted to the commercial world, but is equally apparent in the public sector, for example cities (Richards and Palmer 2010), and also in charitable organisations where events, such as Cancer Research UK's 'Race for Life', are at the forefront of charities strategies. Further evidence of the robust appeal of events is that the business event sector is generally heralded as having reasonably survived the recent economic difficulties in the world economy, although at the cost of significant changes in organisational structures and of radical innovations in the way in which event organisation is approached (Davidson 2012).

A recurring dilemma of the networked society that we live in, is the mass of information that is produced and the considerable challenge this presents senders as they struggle to engage recipients. It is within this broad context that we can begin to interpret the preliminary discussion above and the perceived charm of events. As Collins (2004) indicates, events can generate emotional energy by creating a mutual focus of attention. They also epitomise what Ramaswamy (2009), in his work around value creation, labels an 'engagement platform' given their capacity to unite organisations with their desired stakeholders. Given the challenging environment of preoccupied employees, customers, clients, tourists, and benefactors, events represent a refreshingly intimate, and crucially

participative, space. This is characterised as the co-creative ability of events, which is the recurring theme that is explored and illustrated in this chapter.

An inevitable consequence of their growing appeal is the delivery of more events and therefore a maturing of the event management field. McCole (2004), for example, talked about experience being the new battleground for marketers, as more and more organisations seek to purposefully create events, and refashion existing ones. As business people and consumers become acclimatised to this glut of experiences, expectations and behaviours evolve, so what was once a rousing experience for a participant can quickly become rather ordinary. Consequently there arises an impetus to refresh, and indeed 'imagineer', the event creation and delivery process. As participant antecedents and expectations flux and the competitive event marketplace intensifies, event creators must respond with insightful experience design. Accomplishing this demands consideration of many factors, at the heart of these is the co-creative makeup of events, which is discussed below and illustrated by the two events based case studies.

Fertile landscape for events

Implications of the network society conspire to create a landscape where the experiential, interactive, relational, and targeted qualities of events provide a refreshing antidote to more traditional marketing channels, and also new media (Crowther 2010). This is endorsed by the thinking of Roy and Cornwall (2004) who refer to the existence of 'marketing clutter', and similarly by Parson and McClaren (2009) who identify the hyper competition that characterises the marketplace. Therefore from the perspective of an organisation there becomes an imperative to have 'an obsessive focus on individualised interactions between the individual and the company' (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004:7). As a result we observe a shift in recent literature toward the priority of notions of participation, engagement, and experience. Equally we see a raft of research charting the character of Generation Y and their thirst for experience, preferably individualised, and also a democratisation of marketing whereby more control swings away from the organisation and toward the individual (Parsons and Maclaran 2009).

Traditionally, literature portrayed organisations as using events with a fairly narrow focus, for example 'events are occurrences designed to communicate particular messages to target audiences' (Kotler 2003:576). Such depictions are accurate but unnecessarily limiting, given the wider possibilities of events. Prompted by the advent and development of experiential marketing thinking, portrayals evolved toward phrases such as 'special stages' (Yuan 2008), and 'brand hyperreality' (Whelan and Wholfeil 2006) which placed emphasis on the opportunity for organisations to stage experiences and performances consistent with notions of brand entertainment. This language is more expansive, reflective of the wider possibilities of events, but nonetheless the emphasis remains upon doing things to attendees, perceiving them, more typically, as a passive audience rather than much more active participants.

In more recent research, a need for a renewed perspective has been identified, which recognises the mutuality of the event space as a setting where, in addition to the above, organisations coalesce and interact with participants, hence such depictions as 'value creation spaces' (Crowther and Donlan 2011). Such phraseology implies a value creation potential of

events which is also reciprocal and extends beyond the communication of messages and the production of experiences. This evolution in the way in which events are conceived is not specific to marketing, but also extends to business events in the corporate and also the not-for-profit sectors. The challenging economic environment, the advent of new generations in the workforce and the development of Web 2.0 technologies have all forced event professionals to re-assess the function of meetings and events and their contribution to business success. In particular, the primacy of event legacy, perceiving events as longer-term investments, and also the importance of demonstrating their value, is leading to a shift to a more participant-centric approach in event creation. This logic underpins the emergence of a more holistic approach to event creation which extends beyond singular stakeholder groups and also moves beyond a more exclusive focus upon the time and space parameter of the physical event and involves a heightened concentration on the pre and post event phases. The event creator's role is consequently elevated as they design an elongated and multifaceted eventscape.

The emphasis indicated above is now at the centre of industry-led research and there are campaigns to raise awareness amongst event professionals and clients. Meeting Professional International (2012) is an example of an industry association that is more active in this respect. Indeed it can be suggested that the industry and practitioner community are leading in this shift, with the discussion still insufficiently covered in the academic event management literature. Academic perspective and conceptualisation needs to more fully evolve to interpret this evolution in the positioning of events as an organisational strategy. To achieve this it is helpful to examine the overlapping logic of various protagonists; the primacy of experience (Pine and Gilmore 1998), experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999), structural change from 'value in exchange' to 'value in use' (Vargo and Lusch 2004), and the swing from promise making to promise keeping marketing (Grönroos and Ravald 2011). These perspectives combine to provide a unifying lens through which we can interpret the context that underpins the new accord between events and strategy.

A Co-creative Space

Events can be considered a distinctly co-creative setting. Event scholars, alongside practitioners, are challenged to suitably articulate and interpret co-creation within an event context. Ramaswamy is a foremost writer in this area and it is useful to reflect on his overarching definition: *'Co-creation is the process by which products, services, and experiences are developed jointly by companies and their stakeholders, opening up a whole new world of value'* (2009: 6).

Expanding Ramaswamy's depiction Grönroos and Ravald's (2011) express the view that co-creation occurs when supplier and customer are involved in the same process of value creation. Both of these portrayals would suggest, somewhat unsatisfactorily, that any event, given the requisite congregation of people, would, to some degree, be labelled co-creative. Equally, inept design and facilitation can render events ineffectual, indeed more in keeping with a co-destruction, rather than co-creation, of value (Crowther and Donlan 2011). As a starting point it is therefore useful to concede that although all events are akin to co-creation, the starting point is a base level of co-creation by default, which is an indifferent position and one with limited impact in a competitive event landscape.

Therefore a more nuanced understanding is required, which is incited by a further sentiment offered by Ramaswamy: *'..true co-creation enables consumers to engage with the company at whatever stage of the process, and whatever level of involvement, they desire'* (2009: 12).

This provides a refined interpretation that moves beyond co-creation by default, towards what, at the other end of the continuum would be classed as co-creation by ambition. In this case the event creation process would be purposefully designed to be infused with co-creative possibilities from the pre event phase through until the post event stage, with co-creative opportunities purposefully generated to maximise the longevity and intensity of experience. The event consequently morphs into what Gronroos and Ravald (2011) characterise as one of an organisation's value facilitation process, interlinked with others. Hence the more recent lexicon of Crowther and Donlan (2011) who adopt the term 'value facilitation space' to adequately capture the present day possibilities, and utility, of events for organisations.

The essence of this discussion is that although events represent a guaranteed co-creative platform, inadequate design and delivery diminishes the co-creative impression, and therefore the value creation potential, conceivably to a point where the outcomes for one or more stakeholders is actually indifferent or, even worse, destructive. The challenge toward co-creation by ambition is usefully articulated by Payne *et al*'s (2008) framework of co-creation which comprises emotional, cognitive and behavioural components. This conception indicates a requirement that experience creation through events is multifaceted, and therefore, what Kale et al (2010) refers to as 'empathising' becomes a key factor. The implicit lesson in Payne *et al*'s framework is that co-creation transcends the passive participation of listening or watching. More befittingly event design must be concerned with generating a sense of shared experience, or what Getz (2007) refers to as 'communitas', and also inciting an active and participative disposition.

This discussion concurs with the argument of Ramaswamy (2011) who places emphasis on mutuality, which he articulates as stakeholder centricity. It can thus be inferred that event imagineering should balance the aspirations of all stakeholders and seek to envision and activate event spaces to facilitate value creation for, but also between, the many participant groups. This interpretation advances conventional expressions of the event management role indicating that organisers have a duality of purpose. The first function being event managers as choreographers of the event setting seeking to generate the conditions where participants can journey through the event benefitting from opportunities to derive, or extract, their own value (Nelson 2009). They design the eventscape and in so doing purposefully craft a unique blend of setting, programme, theme and so forth, that best lends itself to the profile of stakeholders and *raison d'etre* of the event. The second aspect is the event manager as an enabler of co-creative exchanges, seeking to promote, or provoke, interaction between participants.

Therefore as the discussion so far indicates, for events to realise their co-creative potential informed consideration of all participant groups must underpin the event creation process. If organisers proceed without clarity of purpose and appreciation of what participant groups would perceive as valuable from the event, then the imagineering process exists in somewhat of a void. As indicated by Hamso (2012) clear objectives therefore need to be

agreed and be representative of the participants. In this case an equitable purposefulness informs the event which provides a robust foundation from which the design process can flourish.

Before moving to the next section which explores how co-creation by ambition can be achieved, it is appropriate to highlight a discussion that directly follows from the above but is inadequately addressed in the existing research. Commentary on the strategic value of events, event evaluation and Return on Investment (ROI) has progressed significantly in the last few years (see for instance the contributions by Hamso (2012) and the study carried out by MPI (2012)). However, this discussion typically focuses on the process and challenges of defining measurable event objectives from the event planner, and budget holder's, perspective. Much more concentration should be given to interpreting and acting upon wider stakeholder objectives, ensuring that the voice of all participant groups is adequately captured early in the event creation process, through, for example, working groups that encourage a transparency of objectives and the allow stakeholders to coproduce the event by being involved in the design process from an early stage. If participants are an essential component of the co-creative process then event creators must find approaches to, as Ramaswamy indicated, co-create at any stage of the process, preferably starting at the very beginning so that the event design can be mutually shaped. Activating participants at the earliest stages of the imagineering process enables a multiplicity of voices to shape the formation of the event, an occurrence that is strongly aligned with co-creation by ambition.

Activating the Co-creative Possibilities

Underpinning the above is the imperative for a strategic, inclusive and freethinking event creator who can 'extract' critical information for all stakeholder groups and as Ravn (2007) suggests, to then use this understanding purposefully to frame the event context and therefore to assist participants in realising their own aspirations and co-creating their individual output which will be valuable to them in their own way. A 'space' thus needs to be built where participants can connect with others, to this end recent literature by Wood (2009) identified fourteen different event platforms, under the canopy of experiential marketing events, each with their own strengths and limitations. This gives a flavour of the diversity of possibilities open to the event imagineer seeking to create an apposite setting given the specific configuration of outcomes required. The malleability of events offers the creator considerable scope to craft imaginative event settings and programmes that are tightly designed around the required stakeholder outcomes. Beyond decisions about the particular event platform that is adopted, the more extensive experience design literature (but also event design thinking with key writers such as Berridge (2007)) signposts many further considerations toward achieving a gainful event space. In accomplishing the challenge of co-creation by ambition the creator has many approaches they can engage with, and some are introduced below.

According to Fuson (2012) the event programme should be designed following a pace similar to a movie plot, with moments of action and moments for reflection. Speaking in a conference context, Tinnish and Ramsborg (2008) suggest that a safe environment should be created, which challenges participants intellectually and at the same time encourages experimentation and creativity. An element of surprise or unexpectedness can be interjected to capture or maintain attention, and different session formats should be included to match the attendee's level of experience and personal preferences. Moreover, time away from

formal activities should be included to allow participants to informally co-construct solutions but also to reflect and plan for their own daily activities and then share action plans.

Fuson (2012) goes on to emphasise how music, lighting and stage sets must support the development of the event story. Facilities such as the setting, furniture, equipment and ambient conditions have an impact on group cohesion and can facilitate the creation of personal relationships and of the emotional connections that are conducive to co-creation (Nelson 2009; De Groot and Van der Vijver 2013). Food and music in particular can be used to increase attention and performance levels and facilitate social interaction (Braley 2011).

The ideas introduced here, are aligned with some very useful literature in the area of experience design. Pine and Gilmore (1998) advocate five experience design principles of theming the experience, harmonising impressions with positive cues, eliminating negative cues, mixing in memorabilia, and engaging all five senses. The different dimensions of customer experience, such as sensorial, emotional, cognitive and relational, regulate attendee experience and can be impelled through the designing of a range of attributes which are posited to enhance the event experience, including innovation, integrity (Wood and Masterman 2007), personal relevance, surprise, engagement (Poulsson and Kale 2004), interactivity and dialogue (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2006). Although conceived around physical events, these experience design principles are equally as relevant and important for virtual experiences such as webinars.

Technology Boost

If event design is approached in the way advocated above, co-creation transcends the event itself and instead is elongated both pre and post which widens the possibilities, particularly using technology to enhance the co-creative impact of the event. Indeed pioneering approaches such as the unconference (Segar 2010) increasingly challenge the status quo of traditional tightly planned, and pre-defined, event programmes that strictly dictates content, format and timing of the event. Instead, participants should be given the opportunity of contributing to the imagineering of the event before the event date, for instance by recommending topics to be discussed, session formats and possible speakers. This way the programme can become closely relevant to the audience and engage them at a deeper level (Ravn and Elsborg 2011). Technology advancements and the advent of Web 2.0 in particular, can help event designers in achieving this.

Technology has substantially bolstered the opportunities that event creators have to generate co-creative events. As mentioned above, technology provides diverse opportunities to generate meaningful content and enable interaction, starting well before the event, continuing during and extending the life of the event after the on-site delivery is over. Kale et al (2010) for instance discuss the use of blogs and a Youtube competition to expand the experience and boost engagement. A more sophisticated application consists in combining the virtual and the live audience to deliver a hybrid event, a strategy that more and more organisations are engaging in this type of event due to budget constraints and also attention to CSR (Pearlman and Gates 2010). However, delivering an event that keeps the online audience as engaged as the live one is a major challenge since not all content is suitable for the virtual audience and remote attendees can become easily distracted. Therefore the content of the live event must be adapted to suit the needs of the remote audience. This can be

achieved for instance with shorter sessions, respecting the schedule and not running late, training the speakers and including a dedicated presenter/moderator to look after the virtual audience, transmitting their questions to the floor and in general keeping the event engaging to overcome the lack of personal and emotional involvement and create a sense of belonging (Fryatt, Garriga Mora et al. 2012).

The above discussion leads us to two illustrations providing real examples of co-creative inventiveness within events.

Co-creative Illustration 1: The FRESH Conference

The FRESH Conference provides an illustration of event whose design is consistent with the aspiration of co-creation by ambition, as reasoned above. It is coincidentally a conference targeted at event creators but its relevance is about how the event is designed so as to maximise the co-creative possibilities. FRESH defines itself as a "forum to learn from experts and other participants, both inside and outside the (*meetings*) industry". There have been two FRESH conferences so far (in January 2012 and January 2013) with the events designed to create a community that goes beyond the conference itself (FRESH 2013). An underpinning tenet of the event is that members share knowledge in innovative ways therefore the event is designed to imagineer a setting to facilitate this co-creative possibility (Ravn 2007). The participants are bound together by the common interest to increase the effectiveness of meetings and they are part of an informal, self-organised community that exists to identify examples of good practice and to share them across the members through dedicated websites and social media. The conference is the culmination of this relationship that is nurtured year-long (Fuson 2012). FRESH 13 was designed to allow participants to experience as many formats as possible, or as the organisers say 'to be totally immersed in different formats' (FRESH 2013). The different session formats were designed with clear link to the specified objectives to promote engagement and encourage varied forms of interaction where participants' contribution is not only valued but necessary. This emphasis on purposefully provoking participation and interaction through creative event design is emphasised by Berridge (in Page and Connel 2012).

When planning for FRESH13 the event creators did not have a pre-defined agenda instead they looked for input from potential participants on the topics to be discussed, session formats, and possible speakers (Ravn and Elsborg 2011). This was partly achieved through an online event, a few months before, using Synthetron (a real-time web-based application) where each participant can anonymously contribute. These contributions were then peer-reviewed with the objective of co-creating the programme (Synthetron 2013) and through this process the programme could become wholly relevant to their aspirations. This provides a good illustration of how events can be co-created, rather than exclusively produced by the event creator, and is consistent with the argument of commentators such as Vargo and Lusch (2004) who advocate the engagement of customer, client, and attendees in the development of products, services, and experiences.

Storytelling, practical activities and case examples were used during the FRESH conferences to analyse the components of a meeting experience. Within the event programme, a combination of (live and virtual) speakers and facilitators provided different ways of encouraging interaction and take advantage of participants' experience so that

activities were related to their own projects/problems and time for active interpretation was included, with support from peers (Ravn 2007; Nelson 2009). This quest to trigger individualisation is introduced by Masterman and Wood (2007) in their advocacy of the 7I's in the design of experiential events. These writers also emphasise the importance of embedding interaction where break-out sessions and informal activities are included where participants can network, discuss projects, develop joint solutions, plan for their own daily activities and then share action plans (Ravn and Elsborg 2011). One of the 7'Is is also innovation and this was captured in the FRESH Conference in 2013 where a bogus 'corpse' was hidden under a white sheet, which added an element of unexpectedness and allowed participants to collectively immerse themselves in the process of 'dissecting' meeting owners and understanding what their expectations are (Tinnish and Ramsborg 2008; FRESH 2013).

Movable furniture and changing room layouts are an integral part of the design of the FRESH conferences and delegates are asked to reflect and identify how, as Vanneste (2008) argues, they are used to enhance motivation, learning and networking. Food and music in particular were discussed, and used, to increase attention and performance levels and to facilitate a more co-creative setting (Nelson 2009; Braley 2011). Some pieces of music were especially composed by an "experience creation designer" for the event, with one piece, for instance, aimed at encouraging brainstorming (FRESH 2013). These examples of creative events design, employed to trigger heightened engagement and co-creation, are captured in the discussion of 'creative set-up', in the fascinating work of Visit Denmark with their 'meetovation' concept (VisitDenmark 2013).

Technology plays an important role during the event, and organisers make sure that it is used with the clear and specific purpose to enhance engagement and interaction. To extend the event beyond the physical audience a virtual component was embedded in the programme, where online delegates could view sessions on the conference website and to facilitate co-creation they were assisted by dedicated moderators to communicate amongst themselves and with the live audience through an App, and also via Twitter and a dedicated online platform with embedded video/audio and text chat. Virtual MCs and facilitators were looking after the online community and made sure that they were kept involved and engaged providing them with exclusive content (Fryatt, Garriga Mora *et al*. 2012). Social media, particularly, is used to extend the life of the FRESH conference with organizers continuing the conversation with participants with follow-up news and articles from speakers and other conference contributors including the posting of pictures and videos (Kale, Pentecost et al. 2010).

The main objective of the FRESH conferences is to promote discussion on the value of meeting design and advance the knowledge of meeting designers on the tools available to create effective meetings that achieve stakeholders' objectives. These objectives are achieved by facilitating a setting where participants can co-create their own programme, actively contribute with their own personal and professional experience and engage easily with fellow attendees and organizers pre, during, and post event. This case study shows how meaningful and long-term results can be achieved when an attendee is embedded in the context in which he/she is co-participating.

Co-creative Illustration 2: MADE Entrepreneurs Festival

MADE describes itself as a festival of entrepreneurship which has occurred annually in Sheffield UK, for the past three years. The emphasis on festival, as opposed to conference, is noteworthy and underpins the vision of the event to become a more co-creative setting. Brendan Moffet (Festival Director) suggests a stereotype that conferences can too often be 'dull very dry, very dusty', and that the vision for MADE is 'indoors, outdoors, there is corporate, there is cultural, so the mix makes it feel like a festival rather than a business conference'. In doing so they take a theme (entrepreneurship) that would typically be housed in a conference setting and inject all of the notions of entertainment, space, and freedom that is more familiar with a festival setting. This intentionality of design is important in triggering the experiences that the event designer foresees (Darmer and Sunbo 2008).

The event is underpinned by a variety of objectives from different stakeholders and there is also a disparate range of attendee groupings at the event, consequently, and in order to facilitate an eventscape that provides a mutuality of outcomes there is a design need to create different spaces and a more wide-ranging engagement (Fuson 2012). Michael Hayman, MADE Chair, refers to it as 'Glastonbury for Entrepreneurs', after the renowned UK music festival (SevenHills 2013). Brendan reflects upon the success of MADE in year one, particularly in terms of media coverage and corporate sponsorship, but bemoans that the event became primarily a 'promotional vehicle' and that 'felt like a hollow victory' as it only hit the narrow external promotion oriented objectives, primarily though PR generated activity. The inference being that it neglected to provide a rich and co-creative experience for core stakeholders, and attendee groupings, such as regional businesses people and the student audience. It was therefore reflected that year one of the event was too heavily stage managed with the event participants much more passive and detached.

Responding to a question about the staged managed approach Brendan expressed that their role needs to evolve; 'we need to just be a facilitator, we need to just let it (the event) breathe'. He went on to reflect how there is a need for them to 'devolve ownership' to broaden the base of the event and actively engage the stakeholder groups in content development (Whelan and Wholfeil 2006). Brendan's view is that

> 'the mistake we made in the first year of this event was that we went to stakeholders for support and sponsorship and we didn't have them fully engaged, so they weren't contributing and co creating. So I think the step forward in 2011 was this co creation thing. Because actually the truth for us in to be a facilitator instead of doing everything ourselves'.

He went on to discuss how the first year's event missed the opportunity to trigger a more holistic event design approach and focus upon greater legacy. Hence, as he expresses, they sifted to a more stakeholder centric approach in year 2 to purposefully generate more 'residue after the event'. In Year 1 the post event debrief exposed some strong views from somewhat disenfranchised stakeholders, therefore 'we have been much more involving with some of those stakeholder groups which gives it (the event) more depth'. This revised outlook is notably consistent with the spirit of the discussion in Richard and Palmer (2010). One specific development of the event from the first to second year was the closer involvement, in the imagineering, of the council's enterprise team; Brendan reflects how their participation 'undoubtedly adds value in its fusion of disciplines'. As an example the council team were free within the event programme to create many different opportunities and spaces to connect

the local and regional entrepreneurs with the high calibre business leaders and politicians in discussion based sessions. A further example of the progression is:

> 'when Peter Jones (celebrity entrepreneur) comes to Sheffield and he talks about British dreams, the future of enterprise and inspirations, the key thing is to have the young people of the next generation on the front listening to him and being inspired, that was the big difference'.

This, and other similar design decisions, inspired much stronger engagement with local educators and students which increased their involvement with the event. Another good example of this progression, in year 2, was the fuller involvement of the University of Sheffield who used the event to collaborate with participants to plan a new MSc in Entrepreneurship. They engaged in direct research and other activities with attendees, the idea being that the degree was created by entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs. A key aspect of co-creation is creating engagement and involvement between participants who would not ordinarily unite, in many respects this is an underlying charm of events in that they can, when adeptly curated, trigger these opportunities.

The organisers express the notion that MADE is a canopy under which a rich mix of event spaces, and impromptu meeting spaces, coexist. Along with more traditional platforms such as the main conference hall, sponsored dinners, exhibition spaces, speaker's corners, they facilitate a fringe programme. Approximately thirty organisations host fringe gatherings in assorted venues, of different shapes and sizes, throughout the city, the event therefore boasts unlikely meeting places such as city centre pubs and community centres, with such venues making the event more inclusive to the many and varied participant groups, which includes school children, students, young entrepreneurs, and media, in addition to the more traditional business and political audience. A guiding principle for the event, according to Brendan, is that they provide attendees with the opportunity to forge their own bespoke journey through the event, with participants pursuing whichever route fits with their motivations and expectations. The challenge is therefore to facilitate many and varied 'stages' (settings) where participants can derive their own value and also co-create with other participants in both formal, informal, typical and atypical settings.

As a final reflection on the MADE festival, and in line with earlier discussion, the co-creation extends beyond the parameters of the 3 days and the venues, with a growing number of sponsors and partners are keen to be involved. Brendan reveals how in year one the criteria to accept a sponsor was purely based around the monies they could put in and the prestige they would bring. However as the festival has grown the opportunity has been to insist on the sponsor bringing content to, and beyond, the event. Therefore the organisers can shape the activation approaches that sponsors use to cohere with the essence of the event. So for example Intuit, a US accounting software business, 'did a boot camp, outside of the event, as part of their sponsorship'. Without this their involvement would not have made sense as they had no previous brand recognition among the audience.

Concluding Thoughts

These two illustrations signpost an imagineering process which is driven by a fixation with outcomes, these become highly transparent and direct the event design process. The outcomes

emerge from appreciation of all key stakeholders whose interests combine to determine the recipe for the event. In forging co-creative spaces, the approach advocated through this chapter doesn't subscribe to traditional conventions of how things are done, but it embraces a steadfast commitment to reinventing the inputs, processes, and structures to best achieve the aspired outcomes. This raison d'être has far reaching implications for the profession, placing emphasis on the strategic imperative, with the event imagineer being outcome obsessed and stakeholder centric.

Recognising that an event is a mutual space that is populated by stakeholders with many and varied desired outcomes is fundamental to a proficient imagineering and facilitation process. The pursuit of what this chapter refers to as 'co-creation by ambition' impinges upon the activation of participants within and also beyond the time and space limits of the event. One of the implications of this approach is that for stakeholders to be actively engaged in the co-creative process their social and emotional involvement should be purposefully embedded all the way through. For example within the event programme there should be no distinction between 'formal' activities, where cognitive development takes place (i.e. attendee 'learn' something) and 'informal' moments, where networking or social activities take place. To achieve a rich experience that enhances value beyond the time of the event itself, the programme should be a continuum of activities that involve participants on a rational, emotional and social level (Payne, Storbacka et al. 2008; Ravn and Elsborg 2011; Fuson 2012).

As the events landscape matures, along with people's consumption of experiences, a much more purposeful and sophisticated approach to event creation must prevail, certainly for the frontrunners. This chapter, and the illustrations, suggest that this progressive approach must supersede the more outmoded input oriented psyche, and also the tactical, and managerial event manager that has been unearthed in recent studies (Pugh and Wood 2004; Crowther 2010). The label of event organiser, planner, and managers should be discarded, along with their associated stereotypes, and replaced by more befitting characterisations such as experience designer, facilitator, or perhaps imagineer.

To end, and inspired by the illustrations, here are five precepts for event imagineers seeking to foster an event setting that embodies co-creation by aspiration, rather than, the less inspiring, co-creation by default.

1. Identify and interpret the value aspirations of the participant groups and place these at the heart of the event imagineering process.
2. Using precept 1, envision the outcomes and resolutely manipulate the inputs to imagineer an event setting that maximises the opportunities for actors to realise their outcomes.
3. Compulsively engage the participants in the context as well as the content of the event. Democratise the event creation by involving the participants in the imagineering process.
4. Recognise the rich unpredictability of co-creation and provide space and time with the event setting, and beyond, for participants to co-discover and co-innovate. Perhaps realising outcomes neither they, nor you, anticipated.
5. Share, with all stakeholders, the purpose and value of the co-creation process that you are trying to stimulate so as to rouse a higher level of engagement and participation.

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