

# **Book Review:** Yeoman, I., Robertson, M., McMahon – Beattie, U., Smith, K., Backer, E. (eds) (2014) *The Future of Events and Festivals*. Oxon: Routledge

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Abstract:

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**Purpose** – This review critiques the recently published The Future of Events and Festivals edited by Ian Yeoman, Martin Robertson, Una McMahon-Beattie, Karen Smith and Elisa Backer. It provides an overview of the publication, highlighting the key themes and issues explored as well as recommendations for its use

**Design/methodology/ approach** – In assessing the text the review reflects on the progress made within the field of Events Studies and also the growth in publications in Futures Research. The review also considers how this text can be used by readers and makes recommendations for improvements in future editions.

**Findings** – The text represents a comprehensive introduction to a range of perspectives on the future of events and festivals. The chapters are both broadly conceptual and contextually focused. Possible inclusions for future editions are specific sections targeted at academics and practitioners or focused on specific themes, as well as comparisons between the futures of events in developed and developing countries or those countries that have only recently begun to host mega events.

**Originality / value** – The review considers the contribution that this text makes to events research, the audiences that the text is best suited to and possible improvements for future editions.

**Keywords** – Events, festivals, futures, research, tourism

**Paper type** – Book Review

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The Future of Events and Festivals marks a new chapter in the progress made in the study of events and festivals. A number of researchers have observed the significant developments that have been made particularly in the last three decades or so. Page and Connell (2009) for example, have highlighted the emergence of a number of key research themes such as event impacts, event planning and management, event audiences and event evaluation. Getz (2008) also observed that events as a phenomenon have and will continue to hold the attention of researchers in a range of disciplines - notably, sociology, economics and marketing - and that the number of theoretical perspectives from when they are studied will increase in years to come. So perhaps this new publication can be seen as part of this progression in the evolution of event and festival research, particularly when one considers that the closely related field of tourism, has already caught the eye of futurists. Gossling, et al. (2009), Yeoman (2012), Postma, et al. (2013) and Leigh, et al. (2013) provide recent examples of publications which consider tourism futures.

So what does this new text on The Future of Events and Festivals offer to events research? Perhaps first and foremost it offers a new perspective by which events and festivals can be understood. Although, events and festivals are featured in a number of subject domains, a key short-coming that has been identified is an over-emphasis on “consumer motivations and economic impacts” which tend to make studies somewhat short-sighted in terms of their focus (Getz, 2010, p. 20). This text allows readers to look ahead beyond immediate concerns such as developing audiences and increasing economic gains. It provides a space for reflection and to think about the legacies that today’s events and festivals will leave for future generations.

The twenty chapters of the text are authored by an impressive twenty-eight contributors from fields such as events management, geography, hospitality, marketing and tourism and together they provide a range of perspectives on the future of events and festivals. The text is divided in three sections. **Section 1** allows readers unfamiliar with futures research to get to grips with the perspective and understand the different approaches researchers take when writing about the future. Whereas some authors view the future based on probabilities or on what is most likely to happen, others are more speculative, fantastical and extreme. Yeoman, et al. (2015) alert the reader to this dichotomy in their introduction which proves to be a useful ‘heads up’ for the chapters that follow, which include a chapter on one festival’s future progress towards sustainability (Wessblad, 2015) and a chapter which presents a vision of a Woodstock featuring centenarians as the headline acts (Yeoman, et al., 2015). **Section 2** is broadly titled “Contested issues, thoughts and solutions”, which is where the editors have a great deal of scope to improve the text in future editions. A possible value add would be to divide this section into distinct themes such as major/mega events and local or community events or perhaps to group chapters along the lines of theory versus practice, with brief introductions about how the authors illuminate the areas within each section. Additionally, it would be useful in this section to provide some comparisons of event and festival futures in developing countries or those countries which have recently entered the mega-event arena, since the text is strongly biased towards events and

festivals in developed and Westernized countries. Given the recent challenges of New Delhi, which struggled to meet deadlines in preparation for the Commonwealth Games (Pandey, 2010) and of South Africa's World Cup, which was plagued with concerns about crime and security (BBC, 2009), it stands to reason that the future of events and festivals in these countries will be quite different from those which do not have these issues. **Section 3** titled "What does this all mean?" features a single chapter which provides a series of cognitive maps to focus the readers on the themes raised by the text. These visual representations are very useful summaries of the text's key 'take aways' and serve to stimulate thinking about future directions.

The variety in the chapters makes the text relevant to a diverse reading audience, including: experienced events and tourism researchers, who may be attracted to the text's more theoretical offerings, such as the piece by Getz (2015); event professionals for whom practical questions, such as the future of event volunteering, considered by Lockstone-Binney, et al. (2015), may be of greater relevance and also novices, who may find some of the more fanciful chapters entertaining reading.

In summary, *The Future of Events and Festivals* provides readers with a comprehensive overview to a new perspective in events research. The diverse and often intriguing contributions in the text make it a welcomed addition to a growing and dynamic field of study.

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