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Community Outcomes

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Learning objectives

- Identify different types of community outcomes of events.
- Define key terms and concepts relating to community outcomes of events.
- Understand the complex nature of community outcomes of events.
- Apply a range of social and cultural theories to effective event creation.

Introduction

Chapter 1 provides a teasing introduction to this chapter by referring to the ‘outer layer of consciousness’ required by event creators. Ignorance, or perhaps disregard, for the wider outcomes spawned by an event is inconsistent with the notion of Strategic Event Creation, and indeed contemporary business practice. Consequently, along with the previous discussions of event hosts, attendees, sponsors and partners, we now discuss the host community as a similarly significant stakeholder whom event creators must first identify, interpret their concerns, needs and expectations, and then engage with proactively in their designing of the event. This narrative follows on strongly from Chapter 2, which advocated placing locality at the heart of the stakeholder centric approach. This proposed recalibration of stakeholder management is important if event creators are to fully recognise and realise the possibilities of progressive host community engagement. This chapter seeks to map some of the outcomes, considerations, and approaches that event creators must engage with in order to positively contribute to host communities and in so doing forge stronger and longer term relationships.

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There exists an intriguing dichotomy when considering the wider, and often indirect, outcomes produced by events. In one sense there exists a moral argument about the need for event creators to act responsibly and work to ensure that the event they are creating is at the very least neutral for the host community in an economic, social/cultural, and environmental sense. Where negative externalities inevitably follow, such as disruption, noise pollution, and so forth, these should be counterbalanced by positive contributions through the event to the host community. Equally there is also a very persuasive strategic argument for the event hosts, and other internal stakeholders, to benefit considerably by engaged and motivated communities. Through progressive event creation, or 'community animation' (see below) outcomes far beyond those provisionally identified can be realised. In this way communities become influential and positive stakeholders, who demonstrate a vested interest in the event, and the event host's success.

A recurring argument in this chapter is that our traditional way of viewing events in established typologies is in some respects unnecessary or perhaps distorting, as we deal with event types in silo. By adopting an outcome obsessed lens we should begin by perceiving the desired outcomes, for the host organisation, attendees, partners, but also, and importantly, the host communities. It is therefore proposed to move beyond these traditional typologies because, even though the event types and scale are varied, there is a substantial cross-over, as argued by Dickinson and Shipway (2007), regarding the outcomes for host communities. Instead it is beneficial to apply a matrix of four interdependent considerations that should preoccupy event creators, whether they are designing a community festival, international conference, or large music event. It is suggested that anticipating and planning host community outcomes using this process enables event creators to responsibly and effectually facilitate their relationship with host communities regardless of the type of event. Therefore, each of these should be prominent in the creation of events and the shaping of the many decisions, activities, and actions that constitute the event design.

- 1 Positive and negative outcomes** - the very nature of events as gatherings of people that are often extremely observable and resource intensive means that event creators are inevitably challenged by a combination of potentially positive and negative outcomes.
- 2 Intended and inadvertent outcomes** - there exists a tension between outcomes that the event host aims and anticipates to happen, and those that inadvertently occur although they were not planned or previously predicted.
- 3 Stimulated or not stimulated outcomes** - linked to both of the above to identify opportunity areas where the event can make a beneficial contribution to the host community and seizing these usually through community engagement.

- 4 Mitigated and unmitigated outcomes** – again, by anticipating and interpreting 1 and 2 above, and building relationships with the host community, the opportunity exists to implement approaches to diminish outcome areas that would negatively impact the host community.

In reading the remainder of this chapter we consider how the case studies, illustrations, and academic discussion are reflective of the above practicable process. Strategic event creators must internalise the host community as fundamental and adopt approaches through which to deal with the above considerations and opportunities. A useful illustration of event creators taking very seriously the concerns and interests of the host community is evidenced below in the thoughts of Claudia Connelly, Operations Director for WRG Creative Communication, who reflects upon the integral role of the community as a key stakeholder. WRG were appointed to event manage the first two stages on the Tour De France in the UK in 2014.

Industry voice: Claudia Connelly, Operations Director for WRG , UK

The event was particularly successful in its engagement with the host community. For Stages One and Two of the Tour de France, the local authorities were the event organisers and were therefore able to actively engage and interact with the local community from the outset. This kind of local knowledge and early engagement was key to the success of the event. The response from the local community before, during and after the event was overwhelmingly positive. There was undoubtedly an influx of spending brought to the area by the many spectators who travelled far and wide to watch the event. There was also a feeling of positivity towards the event from the local areas; they were genuinely excited to host such a prestigious event. We were blessed on the weekend itself with beautiful weather and the footage of the event was stunning, which I have no doubt will help attract more visitors to Yorkshire in the future.

There were inevitably some negatives to the event from a community perspective. Large scale disruption was unavoidable, the event required a huge amount of road closures across the county. This had a far reaching impact on residents, businesses and blue light services. Active and early stakeholder engagement was key to minimising disruption as much as possible. If event planners want to connect their event to the host community then early engagement is key. It's imperative that event organisers listen and respond accordingly to the community's needs, their knowledge and support is invaluable to the success of any event. An event without a positive legacy is counterproductive and negates the point of hosting a free, un-ticketed event for the local community in the first place.

Event creator - a community animator

In considering the host community as a foremost stakeholder, and undertaking the above four considerations, the strategic event creator becomes an animator of community outcomes; whether these be economic, environment, or socio-cultural. The argument is that whatever the event, there exists a sliding scale of activity that the event creator can activate in different ways to ensure the event provides appropriate focus upon the host community. This only occurs through the event creator, or creation team, actively stimulating these activities, hence the term 'animation'. Smith (1999) discusses the concept of animation, stating that in English 'animation' is mostly associated with moving images, e.g. film and cartoons. However in French and Italian, animation has a further meaning, whereby animators are informal educators, community workers, and arts workers, seeking to make a positive contribution. Interestingly, and with considerable parallels to event creation, Cabaniss (2007) states in the UK several orchestras employ musicians or composers as animators. The animator's task is to ensure that audiences have the opportunity to connect to the orchestra and its music in new ways, while helping the orchestra to connect with the communities where they play. Applying this more directly to the role of event creator, host communities are given the opportunity to engage more fully with an event and benefit and perhaps learn from it in ways that they may not have done under more traditional approaches where host communities are perhaps considered as relatively inconsequential bystanders.

By embracing such a role, event creators will underpin the longer term sustainability of the event and future events and make a positive contribution to the community. A conference might do this in a fairly modest manner by simply engaging with local suppliers and exposing delegates to the heritage of the area and in so doing provide opportunity for added injections of monies to the local community. A sports event might involve local children in outreach activities and perhaps engage some of the unemployed as volunteers. Whereas the event creator of a large public event, such as a community festival, would orchestrate a whole range of host community outcomes as the community is a key recipient of the event. In such a case their animation might involve local groups bringing content to the event, raising profile and monies for local causes, donating some monies generated to a local initiative, and generally using the event as a direct means of impacting what we later refer to as civic pride.

By seeking to actively involve the community, to whatever extent on the sliding scale, the collaboration this creates leads to a more co-creative emphasis. This sharing is underlined by Smith (1999), who in the context of community participation refers to improved knowledge and a shared sense