10 Leveraging Legacy

After a year of great challenges and difficulties for our industry, the research about the value of MICE events, their direct impact and legacy for their communities and destinations is becoming more relevant today than ever.

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The highly infectious nature of COVID-19 meant almost every part of the world experienced some sort of seclusion as a result of preventive lockdown measures that began in 2020. In this context of limited mobility within and across countries, business events were cancelled or rescheduled (Achakulvisut *et al.*, 2020; Viglione, 2020), leaving hundreds of thousands of people who had previously derived their income via roles connected to the staging of business events (directly or indirectly) out of work. At the same time, millions of industry associations, researchers, businesses and delegates around the world have been left without access to the many benefits of conference, exhibition and trade show attendance.

As the business event sector confronts the challenges which lie ahead, the case studies in this book remind us of the power such meetings have to stimulate economies, generate knowledge, foster collaborative relationships, drive innovation and support job growth. They are powerful tools for educating, connecting, provoking thought and driving change (Foley *et al.*, 2013; Foley *et al.*, 2014; Edwards *et al.*, 2017). Beyond this, the case studies and theoretical considerations presented demonstrate the potential business events hold to contribute to such things as achievement of global sustainability initiatives, implementation of important soft diplomacy strategies, creation of knowledge spirals, with impacts reaching well beyond the event itself, and the establishment of specialist industry hubs, or nodes, in host regions. As our understanding of the full potential of business events to create such legacies increases, such outcomes are being planned for, and are beginning to be documented; an important objective of this text.

Whilst most people acknowledge that business events generate connections and enable knowledge creation and sharing, the case studies presented in this

text demonstrate that business event organisers are becoming *intentional* about creating positive, long-term legacy outcomes, and it is this *intentionality* which has the potential to increase the value of the industry. Networking already occurs during business events because like-minded individuals are gathered in the one place discussing cutting-edge concepts, but how many *more* networks could be formed, or how much *stronger* might these networks be, if they had been strategically planned from the outset? Business events already create partnerships and collaborations because of the shared social spaces and opportunities participants experience, along with the innovative attitudes those experiences inspire. But how much *more* successful or common might those collaborations be if there was intention and planning around their inception? Diplomatic affairs, foreign trade relations and local research environments or economies already benefit from conference activities because of the knowledge and information being shared. Still, the question remains: just how much *more* powerful might those benefits have been if event designers had been *intentional* about ensuring such legacies were created, managed and monitored? Finally, how much more support might public and private entities provide for business events if the industry as a whole was able to initiate systemic changes and invest in the development of tools, processes and practices which encourage, support, measure and leverage the legacies generated?

This concluding chapter reflects on the success factors discussed throughout the book, the ways in which business event legacies were leveraged and the challenges and barriers encountered in the process of planning for and achieving those legacies. It also offers some suggestions on ways the sector might seek to better plan for, evaluate and formally report on legacy, and lessons learned from each chapter.

How legacies were leveraged in the case studies

The business events presented throughout this text had a number of things in common, not least of which was their clear intention at the outset to achieve identified legacy objectives. The Business Events Sydney (Chapter 2) and ICC Sydney (Chapter 6) studies differed slightly from the other case studies. Chapter 2 identified common legacy outcomes across a range of different conference, industry and delegate types, while Chapter 6 detailed the benefits of an overall operational legacy approach by a large convention centre.

Each of the event-specific case studies had certain elements in common. They all had a foundation of at least one particular legacy outcome, they all incorporated innovative ideas into planning for those legacies to occur, the linking of local and global networks were priorities in each case, and all gave consideration to conducting research to document their legacy outcomes. Together, the cases provide a solid foundation upon which to build greater understanding of how to create legacies via business events.

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Intended legacy outcomes were clear at the start

Each business event presented in the case studies was designed to generate legacies of much greater significance than direct tourism expenditure. The Sarawak event (Chapter 3) had multiple intended legacy objectives (assisting the goal for Malaysia to become a developed nation by 2020; promoting Sarawak as an international meetings destination; upskilling the Malaysian business events industry; increasing awareness about the plight of the orangutans; and supporting Malaysian children's education), as did London Tech Week (Chapter 4) with its ambitious plans to (amongst other things) place London at the tech heart of Europe. Knowledge generation for those working in heart health across Europe was a very significant planned legacy outcome of the EuroHeart Care Conference (Chapter 5) and ICC Sydney's Feeding Your Performance program had a wide range of legacy objectives including supporting local industries, contributing to regional economic development and generating social capital. The Fintech Corner at the SIBOS conference (Chapter 8) aimed to drive collaborations between small local startups and larger, well-resourced global players to support the Geneva fintech industry, while Chapter 9 was very clear that trade, the exertion of diplomatic relations and stimulating the ongoing off-season economy in Punta del Este (by building a local business events industry) were driving motivators for the event. Essentially, each of the events studied exemplified the notion that there are many more significant legacy outcomes deliverable via business events than tourism expenditure. The legacies were strategically planned for and initiatives were put in place to ensure they would be achieved.

Intended legacy outcomes involved or benefited a range of stakeholders

Most of the events discussed in the text made reference to a range of stakeholders who would benefit from the intended legacy outcomes. Whilst the scope of the research was in some cases limited, almost all chapters referred to multiple stakeholder groups being involved in the planning stage and working together to create successful outcomes. Examples of collaborations between event organisers and local suppliers can be found in ICC Sydney (Chapter 6), which thoroughly documents stakeholder groups involved in the Feeding Your Performance program and the ways in which they benefited from legacy creation; Malaysia (Chapter 3), which discusses collaborations between convention bureaus, tourism boards and local organisations; and Punta-del-Est (Chapter 4), a collaboration of business event organisers and government agencies and associations.

Innovative ideas

One of the success factors evident throughout the case studies was the incorporation of innovative ideas into event design. Chapter 3, for example, incorporated some innovative social events into the conference program designed to achieve