

THE SOCIAL VALUE OF FESTIVALS

Communicative Creativity
and Community Development



BARBARA MAUSSIÉ



The Social Value of Festivals: Communicative Creativity and Community Development

Barbara Maussier



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The Events Management Theory and Methods Series

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This book is an updated and expanded English version of the author's original Italian publication *Il valore sociale dei festival. La creatività comunicativa* (Franco Angeli, 2024), with new additional theoretical and empirical contributions for an international audience.

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Introduction to the Events Management Theory and Methods Series

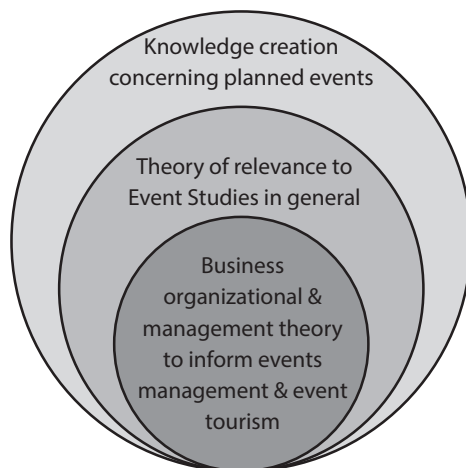
Event management as a field of study and professional practice has its textbooks with plenty of models and advice, a body of knowledge (EMBOK), competency standards (MBECS) and professional associations with their codes of conduct. But to what extent is it truly an applied management field? In other words, where is the management theory in event management, how is it being used, and what are the practical applications?

Event tourism is a related field, one that is defined by the roles events play in tourism and economic development. The primary consideration has always been economic, although increasingly events and managed event portfolios meet more diverse goals for cities and countries. While the economic aspects have been well developed, especially economic impact assessment and forecasting, the application of management theory to event tourism has not received adequate attention.

In this book series we launch a process of examining the extent to which mainstream theory is being employed to develop event-specific theory, and to influence the practice of event management and event tourism. This is a very big task, as there are numerous possible theories, models and concepts, and virtually unlimited advice available on the management of firms, small and family businesses, government agencies and not-for-profits. Inevitably, we will have to be selective.

The starting point is theory. Scientific theory must both explain a phenomenon, and be able to predict what will happen. Experiments are the dominant form of classical theory development. But for management, predictive capabilities are usually lacking; it might be wiser to speak of theory in development, or theory fragments. It is often the process of theory development that marks research in management, including the testing of hypotheses and the formulation of propositions. Models, frameworks, concepts and sets of propositions are all part of this development.

The following diagram illustrates this approach. All knowledge creation has potential application to management, as does theory from any discipline or field. The critical factor for this series is how the theory and related methods can be applied. In the core of this diagram are management and business theories which are the most directly pertinent, and they are often derived from foundation disciplines.



All the books in this series will be relatively short, and similarly structured. They are designed to be used by teachers who need theoretical foundations and case studies for their classes, by students in need of reference works, by professionals wanting increased understanding alongside practical methods, and by agencies or associations that want their members and stakeholders to have access to a library of valuable resources. The nature of the series is that as it grows, components can be assembled by request. That is, users can order a book or collection of chapters to exactly suit their needs.

All the books will introduce the theory, show how it is being used in the events sector through a literature review, incorporate examples written by researchers and/or practitioners, and contain methods that can be used effectively in the real world.

Preface

Donald Getz, PhD, Professor Emeritus, The University of Calgary

In an increasingly interconnected and post-industrial world, festivals and events serve as powerful catalysts for community cohesion, cultural expression, economic development, social innovation and communicative practices. They are often exploited as tools for tourism development and place or territorial marketing, giving rise both to great opportunities and to potential costs and political tensions. There are many possible social and cultural outcomes, positive and negative, and a strategic approach involving all stakeholders is necessary to ensure that social and cultural value is maximised from events and event portfolios.

The author, Barbara Maussier, delves into social capital, social exchange, social representation and social leverage theories to advocate for festivals and events as agents of social change. Planning and design advice is provided. Theory of change models are advocated, and the process explained for creating social value. What is provided is both theoretically sound, and practical for planners and designers, with the casual pathways and indicators thoroughly explained. The case of Giffoni Film Festival in Italy provides real-world evidence of how cultural festivals can foster inclusion, intercultural dialogue, wellbeing and community cohesion while also generating tangible benefits for the city. This detailed, well-researched case is the highlight of the book, reinforcing the theme through concrete evidence. In the concluding chapter, key concepts are emphasised and future research directions articulated. Notably, the links between place or territory and the social values of events are stressed.

The book is part of growing recognition, indeed a paradigm shift, in which events are valued not only for tangible, development-related goals, but as opportunities for social innovation and community transformation. Furthermore, this book explores practical strategies for planning festivals that prioritize social value. These include designing events that promote inclusivity and accessibility, fostering local ownership and participation, and leveraging the event platform to address social issues such as inequality, marginalization, and environmental sustainability. It also discusses the importance of creating lasting legacies—whether in the form of strengthened community networks, increased cultural understanding, or improved urban spaces—that extend the benefits of the festival well beyond the event itself

The author, Barbara Maussier, has distinguished herself academically and through active participation in numerous Erasmus exchange programs. These experiences enabled her to build a solid network of scientific and professional relationships across different contexts, including England, France, Spain, Italy, Canada and Brazil, contributing to a broad and comparative vision of the phenomena under study. We first met in Italy and remained in contact as she completed a Delphi study on the future of events, culminating in a highly valuable publication for the field: *“Il futuro degli eventi. Scenari creativi nella società del tempo libero”* (Hoelpi, 2018). The project brought together a panel of eleven experts from different disciplinary backgrounds, among whom I had the privilege of being included, generating a rich and stimulating exchange on the possible developments of the events sector. Barbara clearly has a passion for events, which she sees not only as a field of study but also as a space for generating social value, fostering innovation, and creating connections between peoples and places.

About the author

Barbara Maussier is a sociologist with a PhD in Communication Sciences and extensive experience in research, teaching, and institutional consultancy at the intersection of culture, sport, tourism and social change. She is currently an adjunct lecturer at the University of Rome 'Tor Vergata', where she teaches Sociology of Communication and Sociology of Tourism.



Her academic career includes international teaching experience at the Catholic University of Murcia (Spain), where she lectured for three years, contributing to the development of comparative perspectives on sport, tourism and cultural processes. Since 2004, she has combined academic research with applied work as a communication and organizational consultant for public institutions and private companies. In this role, she has designed and implemented strategies for cultural events, tourism development, and institutional communication. More recently, she has served as a senior expert at the Italian Ministry of Tourism, supporting the PNRR Task Force on strategic priorities, including social inclusion, gender equality, and sustainable tourism development. Her research over the past decade has focused on the sociology of culture, sport and leisure, with particular attention to the capacity of events and tourism practices to generate social value and foster local development.

She is currently a research fellow at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata," where she is involved in projects such as "Roma Smart Tourism" funded by Roma Capitale and "Sport Practice in Triathlon: Mapping, Needs, and Experiential Tourism" funded by the Italian Triathlon Federation (FITRI). These projects aim to strengthen the integration between tourism, digital innovation and experiential practices, with measurable impacts on territorial attractiveness and community engagement. She has published widely in national and international peer-reviewed journals, including *Sociologia*, *Studi Organizzativi*, *Sociologia del Lavoro*, and *Ciencia Cultura y Deporte*. Her work contributes to ongoing academic and policy debates on the role of cultural and sporting events as drivers of social innovation and sustainable development. Among her most recent publications are *Il mondo in divenire. Un dibattito aggiornato sulle previsioni di Jacques Attali* (Armando Editore, 2020), addressing contemporary global transformations and *Il futuro degli eventi. Scenari creativi nella società del tempo libero* (Hoepli, 2018), which explores the evolving role of events as drivers of creativity, social interaction, and innovation within contemporary leisure-oriented societies.

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Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my friends and all those who, throughout my academic and professional journey, have inspired and stimulated my interest in such a multifaceted and creative field as festivals. These encounters and collaborations have enabled me to better understand the central role of leisure and cultural practices in contemporary societies, as well as their evolving social functions.

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Barbara Maussier, April 2026

