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Creativity in events: the untold story

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Introduction

The relationship between creativity and events is an emerging concern for UK event management educators and academics. There has been some recognition that events can be creative and that leadership of creative brokering is important to success (Ensor *et al.*, 2007). There have been notable contributions in the area of event experience design (Brown and James, 2004; Berridge, 2007, 2010, 2012; Nelson, 2009; Brown, 2014; Beard, 2014; Tattersall and Cooper, 2014; Beard and Russ, 2017) but very little on the persons or processes involved (Berridge, 2014). It has been surprising that literature mapping out the event research agenda has not included creativity in their findings and recommendations (Mair and Whitford, 2013; Van Niekerk, 2017). Whilst design was added as a domain in the Events Management Body of Knowledge in 2005 and creativity labeled as a core value in response to academic and practitioner requests (Brown, 2014), robust research on the cognitive and affective processes of creativity in the context of event design has been lacking.

Brown and James (2004) acknowledge that the emergent profession of events was more likely to focus on management and planning. This is in part due to the institutions in which events management education first emerged, from academic faculties of business and management. As Bilton (2010; Bilton and Leary, 2002) has noted, when considering attitudes to creativity, context is key and Bladen and Kennell (2014) have identified that the pedagogy of events management education has followed particular routes that are shaped by the disciplines and background of those involved in its development. Whilst some aspects of management exhibit more creative approaches, such as marketing and promotion, the business school approach tends to favour empirical evidence, process, outputs and measurement over intangible value.

At the UK, macro level, the events sector has been recognized as part of the Tourism policy portfolio, with the inclusion of the Business Visits and Events Partnership (BVEP) in the Tourism Industry Council (2017) and ambitions for a Visitor Economy sector deal (BVEP, 2017) but only implicitly part of the Creative Industries. In recent reports calling for a review of the Creative Industries, there has been limited reference to events (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2013a, 2013b; Bakhshi, 2017), where they are typically identified as tools of engagement and communication and rarely the focus of creative attention. The assumption is that this is because events, at a micro-level, have not been recognised as powerful forces in their own right and that the consideration is about the content of events, whether a film festival, a games event or an award ceremony, rather than the creative nature of producing the event itself.

The aim of this paper is to uncover the complex, messy, creative and process-driven practices that are lived by those engaged with conceptualizing, planning, producing, curating and evaluating a creative output – an event. The paper focuses upon the practice of events management and the recognition of events within the creative economy as a whole. It firstly outlines the creative industries and creative economy context and then events

within this. It then moves on to the exploration of creativity at the micro level of events from the first qualitative stage of the research project *Creativity in Events*. The findings from interviews of practitioners gives voice to the untold stories that reveal the high degree of creativity in events. These could be used as evidence to influence the recognition of events as creative at the macro policy level. This is all part of the growing maturity and recognition of the importance of events.

The Creative Industries

The creative industries have been identified as being important to governments around the world for many reasons, including economic growth, exports, job creation, stimulating innovation and regeneration more generally (OECD, 2014). The measurement of the UK creative industries has been ongoing since the first Department of Culture Media and Sport's (hereinafter DCMS) mapping documents (DCMS, 1998, 2001). These have since influenced developments in other countries (Flew and Cunningham, 2010) and have been adopted by international organisations such as the United Nations Commission Trade, Aid, and Development (UNCTAD, 2008) and the European Union (European Cluster Observatory, 2013; European Union, 2017). There is a plethora of literature on the creative industries: defining them (Flew and Cunningham, 2010), contesting them (Galloway and Dunlop, 2007; Hesmondhalgh, 2008) and charting their history in the UK (Newbiggin, 2010) and other countries (Cunningham, 2009; Hartley *et al.*, 2015). There are contentions around the term 'creative industries' (O'Connor, 2011) and alternatives have included 'cultural industries', 'copyright industries' and 'content industries' (Throsby, 2008; Flew and Cunningham, 2010; ERDF, 2010; OECD, 2014).

Other arguments have focused upon the narrowing interpretation of the creative industries as a list (Potts and Cunningham, 2008). This is aimed at the work and measurements undertaken for the DCMS since the initial mapping documents (DCMS, 1998). Currently the creative industries are measured based on Standard Industry Codes and categorized into nine sub-sectors: advertising and marketing; architecture; crafts; design and designer fashion; film, TV, video, radio and photography; IT, software and computer services; publishing; museums, galleries and libraries; music, performing and visual arts (DCMS, 2017). This list has barely changed from the original 13 reports created in 1998 (DCMS, 1998). Calls to review and revise what are deemed creative industries have found their way into more recent policy advice reports, such as the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) in the UK (Bakhshi *et al.*, 2013a, 2013b). The broadening of approach has been acknowledged by the DCMS in their recognition of the wider creative economy (DCMS, 2016a, 2016b) and inclusion of the Cultural and Digital Sectors in the measurement of their contributions to the UK economy (DCMS, 2017).

The Creative Economy

It has been identified that more creative people work outside the creative industries than inside them (Higgs and Cunningham, 2008; Bakhshi *et al.*, 2013a; DCMS, 2016b). The argument is that creativity is embedded in all sectors of the economy and that no single measure (such as employment) could provide a complete answer to the size of creativity in the economy (Holden, 2007; Cunningham, 2014; Cunningham and Potts, 2014). The measures implemented have been based upon the creative workforce, in part, because of the original DCMS definition of the creative industries as “those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (DCMS, 1998). This focus on the power of the creative workforce was also reflected in the creative class and creative capital work of Florida (2002), which has influenced many city and national creative policies (Carr, 2009). Measures have been updated to include both those that are creative within and outside the creative industries, minus those that are not creative in the list of creative industries to give a total view of the creative economy (DCMS, 2016a, 2016b).

There are those that argue that it is not just about the economic measures of creativity but that a wholesale review of how the creative economy is viewed is required. Hartley *et al.* (2015) see the creative economy not as a sector but as an ‘epoch’, the Creative era, the one after the Information era and coincident with the internet. They position creativity in systems not the individual. “The system that generates creativity is *culture* – not technology or the economy directly, and not individuals by themselves” (Hartley *et al.*, 2015, p.8). Is a review of sectoral designation enough to understand creativity in its entirety? So should events be seen as an important part of the creative economy? Should the sector be included as one of the creative industries? The reality is that, whatever list or attempts to define and scope the creative industries or even the broader perspective of the creative economy, there has been limited recognition of events, beyond that each of the listed industries use the creativity embedded in the events sector to market, communicate and showcase their individual industries often through experiential means.

Events and the Creative Economy

Events are currently not listed as one of the creative industries and because of the way the economic figures are collected through Standard Industry Codes (DCMS, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). Events are also not recognised as part of the wider creative economy because of the lack of Standard Occupational Codes (SOCs) that are event related (DCMS, 2016a, 2016b). Notwithstanding the complications afforded the lack of identification of events in SICs and SOCs, there are other avenues for exploring the macro position of events within the creative arena. The discussion in the event literature has been about events as experiences rather than about them being inherently creative. The emergence of an identifiable field of economic activity that revolved around the creation and delivery of experiences, the experience economy, was developed by Pine and Gilmore (1999). The events industry has since been identified as a key instrument for the delivery of experiences (Jackson, 2006; Berridge, 2007; Richards *et al.*, 2014; Getz and Page, 2016; Beard and Russ,

2017). The live nature of events make them adaptable to whatever content is being created, whether a film festival, a product launch or even a meeting where information exchange and networking are the objectives. Each of these events have to be created, produced and experienced. “By definition, events are experiential and the event experience must be designed” and the process of design is seen as creative (Brown, 2014, p.20). The experience design aspects are more clearly mapped in events management texts, for example through Silvers’ (2012) Model of Coordinating an Event Experience and the identification that strategic event creation is the new normal of the events management professional, necessitating a mind-set and approach based on purposeful design (Tattersall and Cooper, 2014; Beard and Russ, 2017). This focus on the experience is closely related to creativity and there is evidence that event theory is moving towards a better understanding of the discrete characteristics of the creative events professional, recognising that creativity exists both in the process of event planning (Matthews, 2016a, 2016b) and in the role of the event manager or leader (Ensor *et al.*, 2007; Bilton and Leary, 2002).

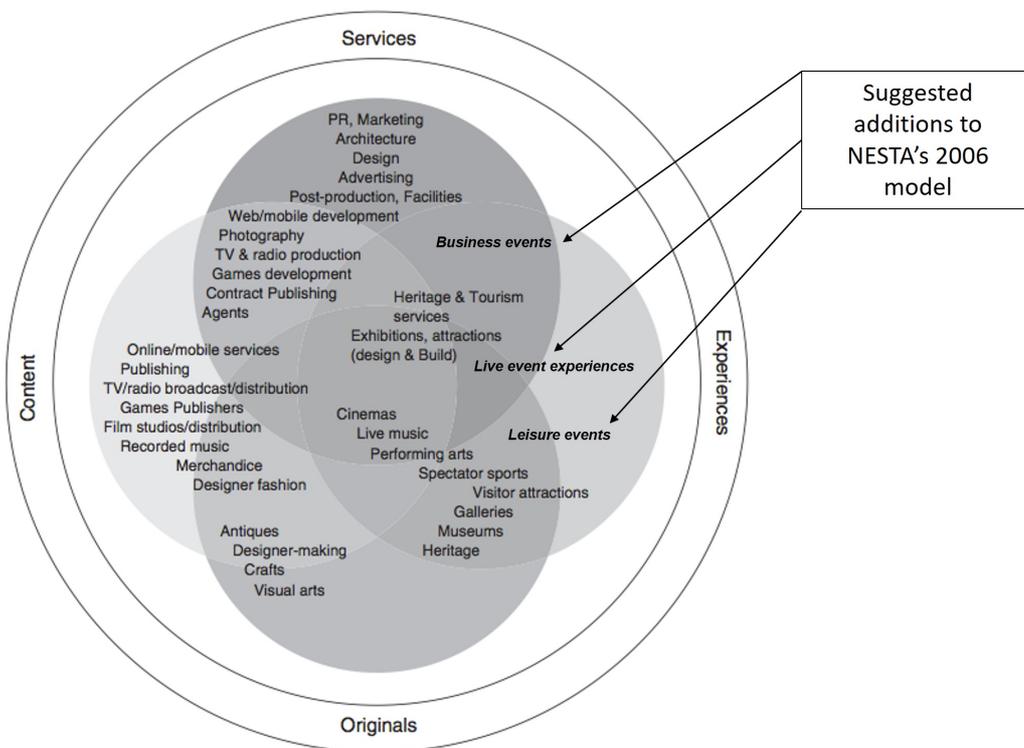


Figure 1. Adapted model of the creative industries (NESTA, 2006, p.55)

The special nature of experiences, as opposed to tangible creations, has emerged in some of the non-governmental discussions around creativity. In 2006, the UK innovation foundation NESTA argued that terminology used by DCMS since 1998 was problematic in that it privileged the economic aspects of creative production and was descriptive rather than analytical in its methodology. They proposed a complimentary and refined model (see Figure 1) that identified the synergies and distinctions between four spheres of creative industries

(Services, Experiences, Originals and Content) by “bringing together those sectors that have sufficient commonalities (in terms of business models, value chains, market structure and so on) as to warrant a common approach for policy” (NESTA, 2006, p.54). The newly identified sphere of ‘Experiences’ was clearly a space where events activity can be mapped. The NESTA team began to identify the experiential element with reference to synergies within the Services (e.g. Advertising and PR and Exhibition/Attraction build) and Originals groupings (e.g. live music, performing arts and spectator sports) but went no further (Carr, 2009; O’Connor, 2011; Bakhshi *et al.*, 2013b; Cunningham, 2014). Figure 1 indicates where the mapping could be extended to include live event experiences across both the business and leisure realms, and would anticipate that the Creativity in Events research project, once complete, will assist in populating this grouping further. The events industry is ideally placed to combine the creative and commercial imperatives that NESTA identify as fundamental to the future development of the creative industries and it is disappointing that this aspect of the model has yet to impact on the political and economic context in a manner beneficial to the positioning of events.

Researching creativity in events

Methodology

Since creativity is under researched in the events sector, literature pertaining to creativity in other areas was used to formulate the methodology of the Creativity in Events research project. It was discovered that the creativity literature falls into two main areas: firstly, focus on the individual and their creativity, especially in an educational context and the development of psychometric tests (Guilford, 1950; Abdulla and Cramond, 2017). Secondly, and more recently, the focus has been on the organisation or team in a business context, which identifies expertise, creative thinking skills and motivation (Amabile, 1982). One of the ambitions for the Creativity in Events project is for events to be recognised as creative in the UK. An appreciation of the methodology adopted by the DCMS (2016b) in identifying the creative economy required a focus upon the individual undertaking occupational roles in events. The intention was therefore to investigate creativity in the context of producing an event from a person’s job role rather than measuring the individual’s creativity or the creativity of the event produced.

In the academic literature the focus has been upon an individual’s creativity in an educational context (Sternberg, 2012; Abdulla and Cramond, 2017). This literature has been used as a basis for building the framework for the Creativity in Events research (Table I). Table I identifies the main components of creativity from literature on individual creativity. It is recognised that one of the earliest references to creativity was Guilford and his educational interest in the cognitive processes of creative thinking (Runco and Jaeger, 2012; Sternberg, 2012). Guilford (1950, 1984) based his research of creativity on individual perception, judgment/problem-solving and reasoning. More recent work has elaborated on this with the confirmation that creative thought includes the fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration of thought (Fasko, 2001; Tan *et al.*, 2012; Bialik and Fadel, 2015; Abdulla and Cramond, 2017). These factors are deemed to closely relate to divergent thinking

abilities (Guilford, 1984; Sternberg and Grigorenko, 2001; Bialik and Fadel, 2015), which have dominated individual creativity (Abdulla and Cramond, 2017). These form the components identified under the Cognitive rows in Table I.

	TASK BASED INTENSITY For a particular event		FREQUENCY BASED INTENSITY For all events	
	NOVELTY: FORM	NOVELTY: CONTENT	NOVELTY: FORM	NOVELTY: CONTENT
COGNITIVE	Thinking about the end product.	Thinking about the elements needed to create the end product.	Thinking about the end product.	Thinking about the elements needed to create the end product.
Fluency	How many ideas were generated?	What inspired the ideas?	How often do you generate ideas for all your projects?	Overall, what are your sources of inspiration?
Flexibility	How many ideas were discarded?	Why were they discarded?	How many ideas do you discard on a frequent basis?	Why were they discarded?
Originality	Was a new solution ideated?	Was this solution original, transformative, a combination of other solutions, a variation on an implemented solution or imitation or an older idea?	How often do you ideate new solutions for projects?	Are these original, transformative, a combination of other solutions, a variation on an implemented solution or imitation or an older idea?
Elaboration	In what form was the idea communicated to colleagues and the client?	Once communicated did the idea change from feedback?	In what forms do you communicate your ideas to colleagues and clients?	How often are the ideas changed through feedback from colleagues and clients?
AFFECTIVE	Emotive responses to ideation to provide a solution.	Inclusion of organisational (current and historic) cultural narratives.	Emotive responses to ideation to provide a solution.	Inclusion of organisational (current and historic) cultural narratives.
Risk Taking	Did the idea conform to past and current organisational culture?	Has it disrupted established organisational culture?	Do all the ideas in general conform to past and current organisational culture?	Has the organisational culture had an impact on how you ideate in general?
Complexity	Was a creative solution hard to find within yourself?	How did you determine the elements used to create the solution?	In general, how are you inspired to create solutions?	How did you determine the inspirational elements used to create solutions?
Curiosity	Was the solution created from inspiration from external sources?	What inspirational triggers were used to create the solution?	Are all your solutions created from inspiration from external sources?	What inspirational triggers are used most often?
Imagination	Was the visualisation process spontaneous or took time to find?	Was this an emotional response to imaging the solution?	How often are visualisation processes spontaneous?	Are emotional responses used in general to imagine original work?

Table I. Exploring creativity in events framework.

Sources: Guilford, (1950, 1984); Williams (1971); Nilsson, (2012).

Williams (1971) modified Guilford's (1950) work by proposing the addition of the affective aspects of creative thought, based on attitudes and emotions and was one of the original to develop the Cognitive-Affective duality. "This is the insightful person who has the courage to be a bold risk-taker by venturing past the edges of the familiar, who is curious about other possibilities and alternatives rather than dealing with absolutes and permanencies, who uses his imagination to reach beyond artificial or limited boundaries and who is willing to delve into the complexities of intricate problems, situations, or ideas just to see where they will take him" (Williams, 1971, p.86). From the work of Williams, risk taking, complexity, curiosity and imagination were identified as core components of creativity to be explored with event managers and in the Affective rows of Table I.

The application of the main components of creativity identified and outlined in Table I are original in that they have been created to apply to those people working in events. A third dimension has been added to Williams' cognitive-affective dimensions (1971), that of novelty. Nilsson (2012) furthered the study of creativity in education by exploring a creativity measurement model based on novelty (Bialik and Fadel, 2015). He proposed looking at creative output in terms of the novelty of form and content, ranging from completely original work to imitation (Nilsson, 2012). This approach was used as a way in to identify both the cognitive and affective areas of the creative process and outputs of those working in events. These were identified in the framework under the Task and Frequency based columns, although the frequency nature of the questions in practice proved quite difficult to explore (Table I).

Methods

This paper covers the first stage of the Creativity in Events research project. This stage focused upon discovering the phenomenon of creativity in the context of planning and producing events. It was therefore qualitative in nature, with the use of semi-structured interviews as the preferred method of data collection. To run a robust pilot study, the events sector was divided up into discreet sub-sectors. The outdoor events sector was initially addressed and the ten participants interviewed worked in a variety of outdoor events (see Table II). These events varied from parades, festivals, carnivals and trade shows, including a variety of content, from sport, music, art, to product launches. The participants interviewed were asked for their own understanding of the creative process and then whether they thought that the event sector was creative or not at the end of the interview. The questions in between were based upon the theoretical framework (Table I) but applied explicitly to the work processes that the participants undertook. The interviews encouraged participants to talk about their experiences of organising one particular event (see Table II). Questions were also asked about the individuals approach to other events that they may have worked on (see Table I for the prompts for questions that were more general in nature).

Participant	Event	Type	Job Title
P ₁	Bournemouth 7s, Dorset, UK	Mixed sports festival	Events Director, Diamond Sporting Group
P ₂	Larmer Tree Festival, Dorset, UK	Music festival	Director (and owner)
P ₃	Bournemouth Air Festival, UK	Visitor attraction	Festival Director / Head of Resort Marketing and Events, Bournemouth Borough Council
P ₄	Arts by the Sea Festival, Bournemouth, UK	Arts festival	Cultural Development Manager, Bournemouth Borough Council
P ₅	b-side, Portland, Dorset, UK	Multimedia arts festival	Executive Director
P ₆	Regent St, London, UK	Product promotions	Production Manager, Wilde Ones
P ₇	Beach events, Bournemouth, UK	Sports events	Senior Volunteer Manager
P ₈	Derby Carnival	Parade and charity	Event Production Manager
P ₉	Lord Mayor's Show, London, UK	Ceremonial	Pageant Master
P ₁₀	Philippines show, London, UK	Experiential	Production Director, Audience

Table II. Interview Participants

The ten interviews were transcribed and analysed through a heuristic method of coding. This process looked for key words identified in the margins. These were then categorized and patterns and duplications identified through a process of toing and froing between the primary, secondary and tertiary coding and the original transcripts themselves (Saldaña, 2015). One researcher undertook the initial primary and secondary coding. These category codes were reflected upon; how they might interact and interplay. This was done through the process of pulling out key highlighted sections of the transcripts and analytic memos were used to reflect on what was 'seen' by the researchers. These were checked against the team's understanding and a confirmatory stage undertaken. Having more than one researcher enhanced the checking process and so improved the credibility and trustworthiness of the results discussed here (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This initially resulted in 27 codes in the first cycle of coding. These were then categorized into seven, second cycle, codes (Table III). These appear similar to the eight components of creativity in

Table I, which was not surprising given the positivist approach to the questions in the semi-structured interviews. On further analysis and description of the codes it became apparent that there was overlap between risk-taking and curiosity codes and that the risk-taking code was more about the cultural environment within which people worked. The final coding identified six facets of event creativity that are discussed in the Findings section. These should be seen holistically and not just individually and so they are brought together in Figure 2.

First Cycle Code	Second Cycle Code	Final Cycle Code
1. HIGH involvement 2. LOW involvement 3. Volume of Ideas 4. Idea generation frequency 5. Creative Process	1. Fluency	1. Fluency Idea generation and the inspiration to generate ideas.
6. Flexible work practice 7. Restrictive work practice 8. Novel production 9. Adaptation	2. Flexibility/Originality	2. Originality Flexibility and originality of ideas and solutions to creative conundrums and the flexibility to adopt or discard ideas.
10. Form of visualisation 11. Projection of ideas 12. Effective communication 13. Ineffective communication	3. Imagination	3. Imagination Emotional responses to the visualization of ideas.
14. Form of communication 15. Idea development 16. Idea moderation	4. Elaboration	4. Elaboration How ideas are communicated and elaborated on by colleagues and clients.
17. HIGH risk 18. LOW risk 19. Workplace culture 20. Creative work practice 21. Untested/implemented ideas	5. Risk Taking	5. Environment The organisational culture of risk-taking and curiosity.
22. Creative workplace environment 23. Non-creative workplace environment	6. Curiosity	

24. Source of inspiration		
25. Creative problem solving	7. Complexity	6. Complexity The elements that make up the creative concept or solution to a design problem.
26. Effective solution		
27. Ineffective solution		

Table III. Creativity in Events qualitative coding cycles

The vignette (Figure 2) is used here in a similar way to a metaphor (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Miles *et al.*, 2014) or poetically. The vignette saw the practice of ‘in vivo’ coding, which was going back to the actual words used by the participants. These bring back together the different categories and demonstrate the interrelationship between them to illustrate the complexity of the practice of creativity in events management. A vignette was chosen because it describes action (Miles *et al.*, 2014). The focus of this research was on identifying creativity in the process of event management that is active and not about opinions and feelings. “A vignette is a focused description of a series of events taken to be representative, typical, or emblematic in the case you are studying. It has a narrative, story-like structure that preserves chronological flow and that normally is limited to a brief time span, to one or a few key actors, to a bounded space, or to all three... A vignette can range from being as short as a single paragraph to as long as a chapter” (Miles *et al.*, 2014, p.182); it gives the reader a “sense of being there” (Saldaña, 2015, p.125).

Findings

Participants confirmed that they thought that events, by their nature, are creative. “*The events side is inherently creative*” and this is encapsulated by the following quotation:

I think everything that happens in the festival environment is creative, all the way from kind of coming up with new concepts and new ideas, even planning new festivals and trying to pitch something brand new, the delivery of the marketing materials and sales materials, to that real kind of impact when you get on site, and the wows and you’re taken away.

It is about the process and practice of creativity “*I think innovation and creativity are inherent to each other*”. It was also not seen as something that the participant did as an individual and that it has to be seen as holistic and that “*It’s taking true innovation and working with good people to complete that and deliver it so that it wows people. I guess that’s what creativity is*”. Although people demonstrated creativity, it was accepted that the event is far bigger than one person “*the events industry is about the whole of the event and however creative somebody could be, that’s not the whole of the event*”. The overall creativity has been encapsulated in the following vignette.

VIGNETTE

Taylor was sitting at the computer in the shared temporary site office working on a bid for grant aid for future events. Working with templates and spreadsheets was not a favourite but one where Taylor's writing skills came to the fore. It was good to reflect on past successes and to communicate future aspirations against somebody else's set criteria. Well, it was if thinking about it positively rather than the chore that it had become. It was challenging in a different way to dealing with the sub-contractors currently erecting the festival site outside of the window. The rain was pouring down and Taylor knew that their wet-weather contingency plans might not be robust enough to survive the inclement weather. No, think about the box on the screen in front and let somebody else worry about the growing mud. Actually, that's an idea for the children's playground, a mud-pie area where a bake-off type kitchen could be built and different puddings, pies and cakes could be made using mud. Taylor's mind wandered back to childhood memories... No, back to the form because the deadline for applications was the end of the week, the day that their biggest festival opened its gates to thousands of revelers.

Before another word could be typed, Jo burst in and said that there had been an invasion of travellers onto this year's festival site, just where the traders' stall street was about to be erected. There was a standoff between the travellers and the marquee company which Jo needed Taylor to – well, what? Taylor grabbed the site plan off one of the tables and went outside with Jo. Taylor was running through options as they made their way across the site. Knowing that there was no way of getting an eviction order in time Taylor had a rough plan by the time they reached the small gathering of caravans where a group were having an heated conversation.

By the time Taylor returned to the office, the caravans were being moved to create a semi-circle that would form the overall pattern for what was originally a straight high street formation. Taylor felt surprisingly contented with this. The plans had been redrawn to take account of the travellers and the plots required for the other traders who would be arriving to set up the next day. Everyone had been appeased and a sense of authenticity had been added to what was becoming a rather monotonous trading offer. The theme for the festival this year was *Travel* and whilst this could be met as everyone had travelled to the festival and there were artists on the programme from across the world, there had been limited consideration of how relevant mobility and travelling was to some communities. Taylor always felt part of a nomadic outdoor event community, who met up at festivals and even exhibitions and conferences but had not really pondered on the significance of this. No time for that now because that form still needed completing. The interruption had however given Taylor an idea for that application that would give depth and significance to the festival being proposed; an argument for public funding for what was often criticised as something too hedonistic and commercial.

Figure 2. Creativity in outdoor event story

The vignette (Figure 2) illustrates the main findings of the research in a fictional narrative. These findings are itemized and discussed below, with examples of the voices of the participants. For reasons of anonymity, the participants have not been identified. Each of the participants referred to the process of creating and producing an event as well as the event itself. This study has identified six facets of creativity directly related to events and their nuances are discussed below (Table III). The overall characteristics relate to both Williams' model (1971) and Guilford's measures of creativity (1950, 1984; Sternberg 2012), as identified in Table I. Given the breadth and scope of the research, what is also clearly identified are the processes of creativity (Stuhlfaut and Windels, 2012) but within an events context. Associated with the context of outdoor events, the importance of the environment was also identified as a relevant characteristic by the participants (Amabile and Pratt, 2016).

1. *Fluency*

There is a pattern to event creation and the power of creativity is dependent upon the experience gained over time. One participant described how this was more exciting than the event itself:

...within my own creative practice, process is actually the exciting bit and [I am] less enamored by the final product than I am by the process, so that's quite an interesting relationship.

The fluency related to a process that was in operation whoever was involved with it. This included the audience of the event because they also committed themselves to the process of the event. The familiarity with the process and a particular event created a base for experimentation and creativity over time. Whilst an event director had responsibility and the power for creativity, it was trusted relationships over time that empowered others to be creative and audiences to know the event beyond a line-up of acts and activities.

2. *Originality*

Many of the activities described were about changing and adapting things; doing things in different ways to ensure that an event is different each time. This quote demonstrates how it is not just aspects of the event that change, but also the people involved:

I had to change my way of thinking, had to learn lots of new processes and tasks and things like that, but new, when you're in an industry that works completely differently to the last one you've worked in then it's a change of mind-set to help you kind of fit into that as well.

There is an interesting juxtaposition of flexible and restrictive practices. The latter does not always hinder creativity but can result in creativity because you have to address this as a problem and overcome it or circumnavigate it. For example, limited funds mean that you have to find alternative ways of raising funds or achieving the same result but in a

different way through an original approach to the problem. A site or venue may have particular restrictions, of geography or regulations and so you have to be creative to make the most of what you are permitted to do. These are often about the unexpected, the disruptive and about being “out of the ordinary”. The latter quote was related to road closures and their affect on the spatial normality.

3. *Imagination*

The mind-set identified by the participant above can be further explored in the facet of imagination, of where the ideas and differences that are part of producing events are generated. It was very much a toing and froing procedure but also one where the actual experiencing of something aided the practical part of the process. This was often an externally facilitated intervention:

I think if you can go and see something before you book it then that really, really helps, then you get an idea of the space it needs and the staging and the technical requirements as well.

There was evidence that other events and activities stimulated new ideas, especially when content was programmed, as illustrated by the quotation above.

4. *Elaboration*

The ideas generated through the imagination facet also needed to be elaborated upon and implemented. The process of elaboration is one of the places where different organisations and people have to work together to realise an idea. This form of collaboration demonstrated elements of conflict and friction in some of the participant descriptions. These were however seen as part of the process to develop, grow and come to a decision on aspects of the event. This dynamic and organic nature of creativity was challenging but also rewarding. The taking apart and rebuilding an idea was evident as part of continuous improvement and refinement. There was no one ideal way of communication identified, with a number including, brainstorming, mood boards, sharing of videos, meetings and emails were mentioned. One characteristic was the importance of visualization, of

...visually impactful stuff that we can share with people, so like mood boards and we have CAD designers in house so we try and conceptualise what we want as well.

Constant improvement and refinement through these communication processes was seen as key to success, because “*creativity is thinking of better ways of doing stuff or interesting ways of doing stuff*”.

5. *Environment*

The existence of an organisational environment in which individuals were prepared to take risks was seen as an important aspect of creativity. This feature was discussed far more than being risk-averse.

...everybody can be creative in any way you want, what they need to be able to do is have the culture or environment in which they have the ability to do that...

There were some instances mentioned where even greater risk could perhaps have been taken given the limitations of a space or a resourcing constraint e.g. finance. Part of the nature of risk was related to the strength of curiosity encouraged by the cultural environment of the organization. This empowered participants to 'see' the potential of something, such as "*part of Regent Street in London being seen as ideal as event space*". This was part of a culture of openness and seeing possibilities rather than closing down options. This culture was very much created by the environment within which people worked. The nature of curiosity was dominated by the sources of inspiration that generated creativity in the workplace to decide what type of activity could be organized that would be disruptive, immersive but safe and acceptable to the authorities.

6. *Complexity*

An overwhelming aspect emerging from the interviews was the complexity of being involved with events. This was more about the affective nature of creativity and how people felt about what they did. It gave energy to the interviews as a motivational force for being involved in events in the first place. It was about having the ability to create structure out of chaos; bringing logical order to a given situation and being able to see the missing parts. The vignette demonstrates this. In the main it was about the complexity of creative problem solving as illustrated by these quotes:

...you've got to encompass your creativity with your logistical know how and that's one of the things, as long as you have to be really creative to be, to get around a logistical problem...

...we'll look at what we could do or what we'd like to do and how we would do it at the same time and can it be done and how can it be done and if that can't be done, this is what can be done.

The nature of events meant that things could not be overlooked or ignored. So, priorities and the significance of decisions were about quick thinking and thinking through possible consequences of that decision, at whatever stage of the event process somebody was in.

Discussion

The main observations of these findings, is that creativity cannot be taken in isolation and that there are some interesting characteristics that require reflection when practicing, researching and learning about events management. Whilst the facets identified relate to both the cognitive and affective elements of creativity, they have to also relate to conative elements (Getz and Page, 2016); the behavior and action of event managers.

The creative and the pragmatic

The tension between the creative spark of ideation in event design and the pragmatic requirement of planning for event deliverables is largely unresolved in the literature to date. Negus and Pickering (2004) discuss this dichotomy, highlighting that the divergent creative is a product of a modern preoccupation with individuality, which has skewed a more holistic appreciation of creativity as both an exceptional and a mundane phenomenon. Bilton (2007) extends this argument by highlighting that creative endeavour requires both divergent and convergent thinking to flourish, and that perhaps the tension between these seemingly opposing thought-systems is necessary for creative output to be produced. Bilton (2007) identifies the characteristics of creative thinking as: thinking through or into a problem, continuity, digging a deeper hole, being systematic, formal and focussed, working within constraints and working with conscious process. Whilst these authors are working outside the direct field of event management, the idea that creativity is also present in the process is clearly germane to the aim of this research project. In the event context this is not just about the individual being both creative and pragmatic but all those involved. As a result there was evidence that having processes in place for both was important.

The creative event process

The way to manage the creative and the pragmatic is to have processes in place that support and magnify creativity at the same time as ensuring that the event is created and produced on time and within the finite resources available. More than any project management, events have to be available on the day advertised. People are expecting something creative and inspirational and the unexpected also has to be factored in. Much of this creative energy was gained from inside the event itself and those involved with it, in whatever way. External influence was evident for Imagination, when new ideas were sought after. Again curiosity and risk taking depended on the environment in which an individual worked. Only then did the process open up to other events, technologies, artists and ideas of ways of doing things. There was limited criticism of the constraints and restraints afforded by outdoor events and that any obstacles were seen as something to overcome and get through, a part of being a creative event manager. This discovery resonates with the affective nature of creativity identified by Williams in the classroom, where the “broad area of esthetic concerns for feeling, beauty, and form ... are the processes which cause the pupil to operate as much by feeling as by logic, because he is able and willing to deal with fantasy, imagination, and emotion in terms of things that might be – heuristics” (Williams, 1971, p.86).

Creative familiarity

There was constant reference to the experience of those involved in the events, whether the managers, the artists, contractors or audience. It was about doing what was expected and building upon that with surprises and novelty for each event. This was not just about the particular event but also about how people did things and who they were. Personal relationships and trust were an important element of this. It was not about having a finite plan that everyone had to adhere to but a particular role or part to play that people got on to do but in a collaborative fashion. This collaboration was evident through engagement, involvement and immersion in the event. It appeared that this was a result of processes of communication and shared vision of what the event was or could be. There was evidence of a reliance on freelancers and subcontractors but they became very much part of the family that provided an event and over the years they came to trust them because they understood the culture and vision of the event. The collaborative nature of creativity discovered runs counter to the individual creativity of educational research (Guilford, 1950; Williams, 1971) but which is recognised in more organisational literature (Amabile, 1992; Amabile and Pratt, 2016), creativity (Abdulla and Cramond, 2017) and more recent views of creativity in education as being related to problem-based learning (Nilsson, 2012; Bialik and Fadel, 2015).

Conclusion

This paper has identified that not only is there more to understand about the nature of creativity in an events setting but that focusing on creativity has important implications for theory, practice and education. From an illustrative vignette, identification and discussion of 6 facets of creativity, there are three main characteristics about creativity in events:

1. there is a blend of divergent and convergent thinking and both are a requirement for successful events;
2. this is a social and collaborative process that includes other people, whether they are part of the event team, contractors or the audiences themselves;
3. an event being of a temporary nature with limited time and resources has assisted with generating a particular type of creativity that has resulted in events that are unique, familiar but ever changing.

The findings of this study confirm the claims that “the world of events, no matter how dynamic, exhibits repeated patterns of behaviors and responses to the practices and techniques implemented” (Brown, 2014, p.16). It also exhibits creative thinking and practices even within these patterns and restrictive practices of activities such as health and safety concerns. This potential conflicting pressure was discovered to be motivational for the participants. A better understanding of the relationship between divergent and convergent thinking and practices would provide greater insights into how much freedom to encourage. The challenge of working in events is energizing and from this study came both the creative nature of the work but also the confidence of processes, plans with familiarity of people and previous successes. Participants appeared more excited and motivated about their work when they were being creative. They expressed feelings of being engaged with a process that was both fluid, controlled and pushing boundaries beyond the constraints.

The implications for practice and education are that the complex nature of events should be recognized and supported. This is by having processes that assist with the planning of an event but which also build in flexibility and are adaptable. Ways of encouraging open-mindedness and collaboration are key to success and engaged stakeholders. A communicative and creative environment assists with this, as does the ability to build trust between all of those involved with an event. How to deal with tensions, negotiate and problem-solve are all key skills that need to be nurtured and practiced. Confidence grows with experiences of dealing with risk and so challenging situations should not always be avoided by taking a risk-averse approach. Excitement and passion are generated by the freedom to explore and navigate through the event management processes. This is not an individual journey but one of collaboration and trust and so teamwork is important in all educational and practice-based environments. It is important to encourage risk-taking but to be aware of potential implications to ensure that all events are safe, secure and successful.

For future research, there is a need to take an even more holistic view of the nature of creativity in events. This paper focuses on the supply/production end of what the DCMS identified as the supply chain in the original Creative Industries reports (DCMS, 1998, 2001) and not the event itself. Current knowledge recognizes that the shift has been away from the supply or value chain to a more ecological, network approach. The concepts and practice of consumer engagement, co-creation and consumer culture theory also require that the nature of creativity in these contexts and not just at the point of consumption, the event experience, should also be the subject of future research. The current views of Florida (2017) also hint at the need to better understand the collective and social consequences and nature of creativity in communities. The temporary event communities are an emerging area of study that could usefully consider that nature of creativity in the experiences being developed and produced.

What this paper identifies is that events have not been, but should be, part of the ongoing discussion of the creative industries and creative economy. Given the inherent nature of creativity in the events sector, organisations involved in their success could make a case for being included in future creative industry activities and reports in the UK. As the creative industry reports of the UK Government (DCMS, 1998, 2001) influenced the approach to the creative economy in other countries, this study could influence the way that events are recognized in the future. Events are far more than tools in the marketing or tourism armory and the research and analysis of the creative industries could be applied to events as well. As digital creative technologies have resulted in a change in the UK Government Department title to Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, there is potential for events to gain greater recognition and influence.

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