AGAINST ALL ODDS: EMBEDDING NEW KNOWLEDGE
FOR EVENT CONTINUITY AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

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Ashbourne Royal Shrovetide Football (ARSF) is a sporting event that occurs yearly on Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday in the market town of Ashbourne, in Derbyshire. Sometimes referred to as "mob football," Shrovetide can arguably be perceived as the quintessential sensorial and fully immersive event, being played out across town and involving the entire community. The event is also a unique tourism spectacle and a tool for tourism destination positioning. This article presents some of the results of a larger study that looks at challenges in the matter of events safety and the impacts that this has on event survival and the sustainable development of local communities. Findings highlight the need to support communities to learn from events in order to preserve them as they are essential for the maintenance of a unique and inimitable community identity.

Key words: Heritage; Sporting event; Community; Well-being; Experiences; Tourism

Introduction

It is widely known that events make a significant contribution to the visitor economy, often helping the regeneration of places and spaces and improving destinations' images (Derrett, 2004; Getz, 2008, 2012; Getz & Page, 2016; Hart Robertson, 2015; Richards, 2007a; Richards & Palmer, 2010). Heritage festivals in particular are capable of attracting a wide range of culturally inspired and culturally motivated tourists who can become immersed and learn about the culture and historical context of the destination they visit. Accordingly, these events are often planned and managed in a way to maximize visitor numbers and tourist-induced benefits (Bennett, Taylor, & Woodward, 2014; Quinn, 2000, 2009). Yet as "relics" whose symbolic value is often far more meaningful than their practical enactment (Edensor, 2002), many traditional heritage festivals are arguably ill equipped to withstand pressures of cultural commercialization, aesthetization, and mediatization of cultural production and consumption. This is particularly the case with small-community heritage festivals, which often lack knowledge, expertise, and financial resources to carefully provide for external audiences (Bradley, 2014; Getz, 2012).

This article responds to the need for understanding how to support and preserve events that are essential for both the maintenance of unique and

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inimitable community spirit and sense of identity, and an increasingly commodified tourism industry (Derrett, 2003; Getz, 2007, 2008; Getz & Page, 2016; Hart Robertson, 2015). Arguing for the need to capture the salient, unique features of such an event, the article delivers a model of stakeholder participation for embedding "new knowledge" to ensure the event continuity and the community's well-being (Andersson & Getz, 2008; Beard, 2014; Dredge & Whitford, 2010; Getz, Anderson, & Larson, 2007; Richards, 2015). It does so by focusing on the Ashbourne Royal Football festival (ARFS), a heritage sporting event played annually over 2 consecutive days of the year—Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday—across the market town of Ashbourne, in Derbyshire.

Literature Review

Broadly speaking, all events are experiential, in different ways engaging participants' sensorial and cognitive abilities (Beard, 2014; Berridge, 2012). Yet an annual heritage sporting event played over 2 consecutive days across a small market town and among a large crowd of cheerful bystanders can arguably be framed as the archetypal memorable event capable of engaging all the senses. ARSF simultaneously offers educative, entertaining, absorbing, and immersive experiences to a wide spectrum of participants (Berridge, 2009, 2012; Page & Connell, 2010; Pine & Gilmore, 2011). As a dialogic and communicative vessel and a heterogeneous and porous space of interaction, ARSF allows each year for both the community and the individuals in it to engage in processes of culture and identity negotiation and renegotiation (Azara & Crouch, 2006; Edensor, 2007; McLeod, 2004).

Abram and Waldren (1997) pointed out that communities do not simply possess culture or identity. Rather, it is through the engagement with cultural practices that they get to know themselves "as communities." Thus, the careful orchestration of the series of complex value-laden rituals such as the choosing of the "turner uppers," the launching of the ball; the sporting of the team's colors, or the boarding up of the shops lay bare how each year the community's internal social structures: its cultural heritage values, norms, symbols, and traditions are negotiated, amended, and where necessary

contested. In this context, ARSF is inherently critical to the maintenance of community spirit and sense of identity (Derrett, 2004, 2008; Quinn, 2000, 2009). However, ARSF can also be conceived as a powerful medium to convey everything that is "other" (and seemingly authentic) to an ever-increasing number of visitors and tourists that each year make their way to the town, rubbing shoulders side by side with the players as they wait for the ball "to be turned," running eagerly towards or away from it against a convivial backdrop of singing, chatting, and drinking (Bennett et al., 2014; Getz, 2008; McCabe & Foster, 2006; Richards & Wilson, 2006, 2007; Selstad, 2007).

Discussions on the instrumental role that festivals and heritage events play in place making and tourism destination branding are not new in event tourism literature (Fox-Gotham, 2002; Richards, 2007b; Robinson, Picard, & Long, 2004; Yeoman, Robertson, Ali-Knight, Drummond, & McMahon-Bettie, 2004). Coleman and Crang (2002) and Robinson et al. (2004) highlighted their inherent spectacular and communicative nature; their ability to convey and reinforce highly aestheticized narratives of destination authenticity and cultural otherness in a "convenient, packaged and entertaining way" (p. 184) to provide places with the necessary edge to compete in tourism markets. In this light, ARSF is a "valuable" tourism commodity to be traded within the tourist economic systems and as such needs to be "professionally" managed for the benefits of internal and external audiences (Gronroos, 2006; O'Dell & Billing, 2005; Pine & Gilmore, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

It is widely accepted that, like any other form of tourism, heritage-based tourism needs careful management to minimize the likelihood of causing negative sociocultural impacts to the hosting communities (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Fyall & Garrod, 1998; Kausar & Nishikawa, 2010; Timothy, 1994). As Timothy (2011) pointed out "what communities fear most are the negative social and cultural impacts [tourism] brings with it. [Such as] conflicting use of social space; cultural change; cultural commodification or disharmonious resident-tourist or destination-tourism relations" (p. 151). Despite this knowledge, Getz (2008, 2012) highlighted how little empirical research exists on the strains the "touristification" of small heritage-based festivals

and events pose on the communities that own them. Importantly, where present, it problematizes the use of these events for tourist attraction, pointing at the need for these events to be carefully planned and managed not by external professionals but rather by the communities that own them if they are to deliver positive sociocultural and economic benefits (Azara & Crouch, 2006; Boissevain,1996; Bradley, 2014; Capriello & Rotherham, 2013; Filippucci, 2002; Odermatt, 1996; Waldren, 1996). Discussing the reasons that led to the cancellation of a traditional UK heritage-based event, Bradley (2014), for example, commented on how the local community was ill equipped to withstand pressures from increased visitors' attendance to the event. Despite this, the committee's decision to devolve the organizational and management responsibilities of the event to an external professional organization was not met positively by the community. Indeed, the author continues, the perceived loss of control, involvement, and ownership of these processes lead to waves of resentment, obstruction, and ultimately caused a community's outright rejection of the heritage festival altogether. It could be argued that these considerations are becoming critical to ARSF with the event increasingly framed by national and international media as an unmissable opportunity to watch "one of the last boisterous and dangerous heritage sporting event in the UK" (Butterfield, 2014). Yet, how prepared is the community of Ashbourne to withstand the inevitable pressures exacted by the increasing tourist presence at the event? How long before the development of a general ill-will against tourists? As mentioned, ARSF is completely different to standard football in the sense that the pitch is miles of field, with the boarded-up town of Ashbourne situated in the center.

The works of Azara and Crouch (2006), Boissevain (1996), Bradley (2014), Filippucci (2002), Getz (2012), and Waldren (1996) suggested that local communities are capable of actively negotiating, reappropriating, and, if necessary, contesting touristification processes of festivals "without losing the fabric of social relations and the meanings and values of their culture" (Waldren, 1996, p. 9). Building on these contributions, this research argues for the need to develop a change adaptive model of stakeholder participation to small heritage-based events' organization and management that embeds "learning

from experience" at its core. Experiential learning is a transformative sense-making process that allows uncovering ways of *doing* and *being* in the world. Importantly, as Beard (2014) pointed out, in the context of events management, it allows to reflect and learn from experiences with an aim to create "new knowledge" that, in turn, may support the ongoing development of the community and minimize the risks deriving from the increased tourist presence (Beard, 2014, 2016; Beard & Wilson, 2006; Croy, 2009; Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, & Ali, 2003; Richards, 2015). Beard and Wilson (2006), Halme (2001), Ray (1998), and Stokowski (2002) suggested the first steps to deliver a change adaptive model arguably necessitates a review of values and beliefs held by the ARSF resident operational stakeholders in order to develop strategic management responses to the risks and challenges posed by processes of touristification. It is clear that within the community there may be different stakeholders, whom directly and indirectly contribute to the staging of ARSF (Pink, 2008). Crang (1997), Edensor (1998, 2001), and van der Duim, Peters, and Wearing (2005) highlighted that "community" is a broad umbrella term often used to identify stakeholder categories that may not directly interface with the event, as well as many categories that will have a more salient role in producing it and mediating it for consumption. It is those categories and the complex dualistic role that they play in the staging of ARSF as both locals and "managers," their constant shifts and negotiation between spontaneous and prescriptive roles and their ability to reflexively account for processes of cultural mediation and translation that are the focus of this investigation. The second steps demand an understanding of stakeholders' engagement with the learning processes with an aim to embed this knowledge in the event strategy as well as aligning the future event viability with community development agendas (Beard, 2014; Beard & Price, 2010; Beard & Wilson, 2006; Clarke, Raffay, & Wiltshier, 2009; Derrett, 2008).

This article responds to the need for further research on how to support communities owning processes of place making and tourism destination development through small heritage-based festival management (Derrett, 2003; Getz, 2007, 2012; Getz & Page, 2016). Experiential learning has been

identified in the literature as a useful mechanism to enable these processes to be recognized and incorporated within the fabric of the community (Beard, 2014; Beard & Price, 2010). The purpose of this study is to use the ARSF as a case study in order to identify the inherent challenges in managing and sustaining a growing heritage sporting event while retaining the value and the sense of an inimitable community identity. The role of experiential learning will also be examined within this particular framework.

Method

Given the exploratory nature of the study, the research adopted an ethnographic case study strategy (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). As Denzin (2003) and Hamera (2013) pointed out, ethnography allows researchers to focus on the "sensory elements of an event," attempting to understand not simply the why and the how but the context where performative interactions take place. The study incorporated aspects of autoethnography due to the inseparable connection between one of the authors and his personal experience of Shrovetide each year: as a spectating member of the community first and then, since approximately the age of 16, as a player of the game, thus informing his approach to the research.

Data presented in this article are first drawn from one of the authors' accounts of the staging of the event as it developed over the years. Participant observation is commonly understood as the quintessential ethnographic tool capable of capturing the nuanced and the fleeting of experiences (Cook & Crang, 2007; Tedlock, 2009). These observations helped to inform the subsequent seven semistructured interviews carried out with key community stakeholders responsible for the organization and management of the event. This approach allowed to reflexively account for one author's bias, which may have otherwise influenced the research outcome and as a result diminished the accuracy of the data collected (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Mruck & Breuer, 2003). Though limited in number, participants were selected because of their standing within the community and their strategic involvement and influence in the running of the event, thus allowing the researchers to carry out meaningful

analysis. These participants were four members of the Shrovetide Committee and three members of the players' committee. The deployment of multiple interviews allowed for clarifying key issues and identifying emerging themes, which could inform subsequent stages of data analysis. With the consent of participants, data were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim for further thematic analysis. Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions that firstly aimed to uncover the role the event plays in the maintenance of community identity and spirit. They were then subsequently asked to elaborate on current challenges and concerns posed by the staging of the event, specifically focusing on the increased presence of external stakeholders such as media and visitors, and finally they were asked to reflect on the impacts these challenges may have on the sustainability of the event and the responses that may be required to address them in the future.

Findings

This section presents and discusses the findings of this study. Firstly, an historical and ethnographic account of the event is forwarded with an aim to enhance the reader's understanding of the contextual nature of the study and to begin unpacking the role this festival plays in the sustenance of community identity as well as the intrinsic and extrinsic challenges to the game continuation faced by the community of Shrovetide. Secondly, the findings emerging from the interviews with the seven key event stakeholders are presented and examined. To facilitate understanding they are categorized according to "the six dimensions of learning" metaphor developed by Beard (2014) and Beard and Wilson (2006). Thus, the article first discusses how respondents understand the sociocultural context in which Shrovetide takes place. Then it examines participants' understanding of the challenges that the staging of the event presents. Finally, it concludes with a discussion of the tensions between resisting, accepting, and learning through change.

Case Study Context

Sometimes referred to as "mob football," ARSF is believed to have originated from the tossing of

a severed head into the gathered crowd after an execution and is recorded as having been played in the town as early as 1683. The game has the right to place "Royal" before its name, having twice received royal assent: once in 1928 from HRH King Edward VIII, and again in 2003 by HRH Prince Charles. The game consists of two teams playing over a 3-mile long and 2-mile wide area (almost fully encompassing the built-up town), aiming to score a goal at one of the two old mill sites that mark each end of the play area. The teams are named "the Up'ards" to indicate those born on the north side of the local river Henmore, and the "Down'ards" to designate those born on the south side of the river. On both days, the game starts at the local car park, where the ball is launched or "turned up" from the Shrovetide plinth at 2 pm following a reading of the rules, the singing of "Auld Lang Syne" and the British national anthem. Each day, the game is started by "the turner upper" or the person chosen by the community to throw the ball into the expectant crowd. This is one of the biggest accolades that the town can bestow to any individual. The ritual is deemed as important as the scoring of the goal by the players.

There are very few rules of the game, yet all must abide by those. The game lasts for a maximum of 8 hr, finishing at 10 pm if no goal has been scored. If a goal is scored before 5 pm, a second ball is turned up on that day following the goal scorer returning back to the town, and the goal being added to the records. The ball used is not like any standard regulation sports football; it is much larger and made with a cork interior and leather exterior, which is painted to the design of the "turner upper." Once the ball is scored, it is repainted in the liking of the scorer, who is allowed to keep it. Players must not hide or transport the ball in motorized vehicles and they must in all cases return the ball to the town public house whether or not a goal is scored. Furthermore, they must not trespass on people's property, intentionally cause harm to others, or play in the churchyards, memorial gardens, or on building sites (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Playing the game in the river Henmore.

The event is organized and run each year by a collective or committee through a series of formal and informal agreements with the players, the district and local councils, the police, the fire and ambulance services, a host of volunteers, and with the support of the local community. It is arguably on the strengths of such agreements that the event is organized and managed. For example, the local council does not approve the construction of any scaffolding in the town during the period surrounding the game to prevent the risk of people climbing and falling from the scaffolding. Local players provide the committee with information about potential hazards to locals, visitors, and properties so that they can be handled appropriately in advance of the game. A host of trained community first aiders volunteer their time to attend emergency calls and provide care until an ambulance arrives. A local medical practitioner makes himself available as on-call doctor for both days, keeping a log of all those who receive medical attention. A small number of retired players and lifelong supporters of the game volunteer in marshalling the game over the 2 days, helping to minimize health and safety risks to participants, vehicles, and properties. For example, they divert live traffic to alternative routes to avoid congestion, or stop the game if a vehicle becomes trapped in the middle of the "scrum." Shop owners allow the boarding up of their front windows in preparation for the 2-day event and local primary and secondary schools align school holidays to coincide with the running of the event to allow children to attend.

Although the exact numbers of attendees is not known, it is estimated that between 3,000 and 5,000 people attend the turning up of the ball every year on both days of Shrovetide and the numbers only seem to increase in recent years. Although many will be locals attending the event, many more will be either first-time visitors or tourists visiting friends and relatives.

Belonging Through Doing

All participants interviewed were very keen to highlight how ARSF is not just a yearly event in the town's calendar but rather a way of life for the community. This is the case for the many children who often begin attending from a very young age with family and friends and then move on to participate as players in the game following in their father's footsteps. This is also the case for the many elders for whom this event is a way to nostalgically retell the stories about the time they or a family member played in the game, and for the many returning to town for the 2 days, often bringing their spouses, families, or friends with them to watch the event. Significantly, it is a coveted social occasion for the whole community and an opportunity to reinforce a sense of belonging to a real and imagined community through direct and indirect participation. It is indeed the myriad of individual and group interactions with the game that help bind together the community making sense of the event and renegotiate their sense of belonging and identity. It is in this context that is possible to interpret interviewees' emphatic comments on how everybody in the community had a role to play in the organization of the event. For example, the district council was praised for:

> They support us very well, morally and also giving us a lot of unseen help for example in clearing the phenomenal amount of litter in the town over the two days. (4 Member of the committee, 58).

Players reflected on their role as marshals before and during the event:

> We will walk the course of the game between the Sturston and Clifton (mills) and note any potential hazards, bridges walls. We will try and identify as much as we can beforehand. (3 Player, 9)

Similarly, the local radio broadcaster was identified as essential in enriching the experience of those Asbournians who, for various reasons, could not attend the game:

> They do a local service and they have people right around the hug [i.e., scrum] who are reporting back to the radio station as it happens. That reporting is important for those people who do have an interest in Shrovetide but can't get there; maybe elderly people or people that are infirm . . . some of them may be old players. They have got a visual over the game through the radio commentary. (1 Member of the committee, 27)

Sensing and Feeling the Change

Yet, undoubtedly the event is changing due to a range of external and internal pressures. It is in this light that it is possible to understand interviewees' concerns for a number of perceived threats to the continuation of the game. For example, a specific portrayal of the game by the media was highlighted as a main contributor to an increase in visitors' numbers and importantly in visitors misunderstanding the ethos of the event, often ending up in getting involved in the game:

> Well we don't want to change the nature of the game in any way . . . [but] I suppose the popularity of the game, numbers are . . . well . . . they don't get any smaller let's put it that way. (1 Member of the committee, 290)

> I mean, in the last so many years we've had buses . . . it's been advertised as a beer festival and things like that in all the magazines. So, I can see why they [tourists] come to Ashbourne for the two days. (2 Member of the committee, 71)

> The problem is that the game is so unique that publicity tends to generate more people to come and have a look and even take part and that develops then to the numbers of people playing which is a huge risk for the future of the game. (4 Member of the committee, 20)

> I hope it doesn't get any bigger than what it gets now really; to be honest because there's a lot . . . from a regular player's point of view the fact that we get so many people makes the game difficult [to play] and a lot of people go flying in and don't know there's a knack to playing the game. . . . they go in not knowing what they're doing and then quite easily get injured and if someone got seriously injured, it could affect the game. (2 Player, 27)

> I always say it's a local game for local people and that's how I'd like it to be. I know we can't control everybody but personally, from a player's point of view, I'd like the game to be played by local people and if you ask most of them [other players], they would like it to be just local people [who play]. It's easy for local people to know exactly what there are doing and what's happening. But from an outsider point of view it's not. [For example,] it's difficult getting through to them that you have got to back off [or] people will get injured. (3 Player, 13 and 55)

Governmental cuts to the local police force, many of whom regularly attended the event and could understand the game intricacies, as well as difficulties in recruiting local marshals, were also identified by the interviewees as a source of concern for the continuation of the game:

> [Police] it's absolutely essential to the game . . . but we are mindful of the fact that costs are increasing and they [government] want to further reduce the amount of police that they have committed to Ashbourne giving us more responsibility. (1 Member of the committee, 253)

> Police is absolutely essential, and I guess they ultimately have the power to stop the event if they think is necessary. (1 Player, 79)

> Previously we've always had at least one member of the police support team with fairly extensive knowledge of the game. This year for the first time in many, many years, there was no single policeman in the command structure that had ever seen it before. So, the worry was, that they just didn't appreciate [the game] and therefore we spent a lot of time explaining what the game was about. (4 Member of the committee, 120)

> [We have to provide marshals, but . . .] I don't understand why more older people don't give their time. I know I can personally say that I will do, when it comes to. I will become a marshal because we really need the marshals. (3 Player, 95)

And uncertainties regarding the committee's ability to secure public liability insurance in the future were also highlighted by the participants:

> Well, I'm pleased to say that at the moment that nobody has gone down that road, you know to claim against us or what have you. (2 Member of the committee, 109)

> Well it's in the back of everybody's mind and we all talk about it. We hope that someone doesn't just come in and [claim]; or the insurance just turn around and say, look, we can no longer insure you . . . and you know, it's in everybody's mind that it could happen. We hope it doesn't; it won't happen but if it does, we're either going to have to play it unofficially or . . . or it could end it [the game]. You know, and it's a shame if it did but either that or we're going to have to raise a lot more money that what was needed to carry it on. (2 Player, 103)

The Challenges to Accept and Embed New Knowledge

Despite clearly sensing the main threats to the event's sustainability, all participants pointed at the struggle to understand and proactively respond to those challenges by reflexively incorporating learning from the experience. For example, discussing the growing number of national and international media presence they openly acknowledged the struggles to obtain the community's support in controlling the event's public image created by the media:

> What we don't do is, promote the game at all. So, we don't go to the media, we don't go to, the radio stations and say, "come to Ashbourne and play Shrovetide." In fact, we actively discourage anyone that, to come and play because it's a local game for local people. [But] we are at great pains to educate not just the players but the general public in that the game is theirs. It's Ashbourne's game and they have a responsibility through things like Twitter and through Facebook and through whatever film interviews they give, to portray the game in the best possible light, because you know these things are very easy to lose. (1 Member of the committee, 16, 31 and 32)

Similarly, participants reflected on the challenges to recruit new marshals:

> I'd say the difficult part is [. . . that] you have to be reasonably fit to be a marshal . . . and if one is reasonably fit until they are about fifty-five, fifty-six, even sixty . . . they will still view themselves as probably being able to play a bit. . . . So, you are never going to get many younger marshals unless there is a player that say I don't really want to play I just want to support the game. [But they are] going to be pretty far and few. (2 Member of the committee, 213, 215, and 217)

> I think, I think they will do in time but a lot of the young ones just want to carry on playing don't they; and a lot of the older ones are ones that have played and don't do it as much [but] I think in time people will. (1 player, 67)

And on frailty of "the ad-hoc" agreements such as for example the one with the local doctor to enable the committee to secure public liability insurance participants:

> the fact that the doctor puts himself there [is available on call] for the love of the game, also gives us a higher cover than what we could buy. (1 Member of the committee, 273)

Though expressing a strong desire to understand and respond to the issues facing ARSF continuity, participants' responses clearly pointed out at how their dual roles as both locals and "managers" and their constant shifting between the official and local persona was arguably both a strength and a weakness to provide effective responses to these issues. Thus, it is in this context that it is possible to interpret comments such as:

> Well, we may need to adapt but the committee's number one aim, number one job, is to keep this game being played as it, i.e. in the streets, in the town, as indeed it has been from time immemorial. We resist change . . . and so we don't want to add any more rules. (4 Member of the committee, 126)

> I hope, I hope that everything will just carry on how it is, you know. In the last few years we seem to just be having a bit of a squeeze put on us, to keep ticking boxes; . . . I hope it carries on and long may we keep on playing it. (1 Player, 129; 135)

> I think, well, I don't know where it's going to go. I hope it's going to carry on the same as it has been doing, I don't think it's going to change that much. . . . Let's keep it going, that's what we need to do. Because I mean it's nice for me that I've got one now but . . . you want to try and help other people get one. (2 player, 99 and 169)

Discussion and Conclusions

Beard (2014) argued "the human capacity to want to learn something is exceptional, and the desire for knowledge and knowing is particularly significant to the event experience" (p. 133) as indeed an understanding of the issues is vital for making meaningful changes to the way an event is organized. However, the author continues, little attention is paid to how "deeper human psychology such as our sense of being; our value systems and views of life influence actions" and change (p.134). Findings suggest that acknowledging the organizers' dual roles and sense of identity as both "event professionals" and members of the local community is an essential step in enabling these stakeholders to begin making sense of and responding to change in a way that is relevant to both locals and invited

guests as key stakeholders now and importantly in the future (Andersson & Getz, 2008; Dredge & Whitford, 2010). It is clear from the comments that all the interviewees share both a deep attachment to ARSF and a deep knowledge of the event and of how it has continued to exist through the years. This knowledge is arguably grounded in prior experiences that need careful deconstruction and reflection to enable these categories to negotiate, adapt, and respond to change both at individual and social levels. Indeed, as Beard and Wilson (2006) pointed out: "the past consists of banked emotional experiences and these can both drive forward or restrict new learning from experience. Elements of change represent the unknown, and can cause concern about the future: the comfort zone becomes overstretched" (p. 188). Within this framework, a further review of the strength of the current formal and informal agreements in place with other stakeholders is necessary, looking for example at developing strategies aimed at building community trust, openness, and increased communication and sharing of ideas for the future. As Beard and Wilson (2016) stated "to boldly ask are we doing the right thing?" (p. 248) may be a difficult but necessary step to learning thorough change and learning to lead the change.

The main goal of this study was to contribute to support small communities' understanding and owning of complex processes of place making and tourism destination development through heritage events management and, in so doing, ensuring event continuity and community well-being. It is widely accepted that small traditional heritage festivals are ill equipped to withstand pressures of touristification, often lacking knowledge, expertise, and financial resources to carefully provide for external audiences (Azara & Crouch, 2006; Bradley, 2014; Derrett, 2003, 2008; Getz & Page, 2016). Despite acknowledging the issues, the literature has highlighted how this is still an area of limited research within the event tourism discipline (Getz, 2008, 2012). This study directly responds to this need. Building on the works of Azara and Crouch (2006), Boissevain (1996), Bradley (2014), Filippucci (2002), Getz (2012), and Waldren (1996), the findings of this study confirm that communities are not passive receivers of processes of touristification but are capable of responding to them

with an aim of safeguarding their inimitable sense of identity. However, findings suggest communities should be enabled to negotiate processes of change by capitalizing on learning through experience. Furthermore, operational stakeholders should be supported in the understanding of their dual role as both local residents and event organizers and managers as indeed they play a key role in translating and mediating change for the community. This dual role, their "sense of being," if not carefully recognized can act as a barrier to event change management. Yet change management need not be a negative response to perceived external threats; rather a transformative and enabling process.

The findings have industry implications as they can inform community approaches to small heritage-based event design and organization management, and may enable these communities to maintain their heritage. This study confirms the relevance of the metaphor of learning through, belonging, sensing, feeling, thinking, and being as enunciated by Beard (2014), Beard and Price (2010), and Beard and Wilson (2006) for event management and destination development. Although acknowledging that this is only one of the many analytical models to deconstruct the event experience (see Capriello et al., 2013), this concept and process can deliver a new set of cognitive actions for the community to help enhance the event and to embed spatial and physical settings for the development through encompassed action, an identified and embedded sense of identity, and the eventual dissemination of a promulgated destination brand (Ray, 1998). Ultimately, by reducing concerns within the resident community, a revival of interest in heritage events is anticipated, more specifically the dissemination of learning from ARSF. At the same time, a reduction in concerns over safety and safeguarding of property for the majority of local stakeholders can be expected (Getz & Page, 2016). Moreover, the destination and its staged event can move from being a vernacular and parochial specialist heritage event to being a model for communities' development through tourism nationally and internationally, attracting new knowledge and social capital (see Getz, 2012; O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002; Quinn, 2005; Weaver & Lawton, 2013).

However, it is to be noted that this study has focused only on uncovering the views of key resident

operational stakeholders to ARSF. Thus, the study suggests that to embed "new knowledge" for event continuity and community well-being requires further investigation of the positions of stakeholders, such as the councils, the police force, local business owners, the resident community, and the visitors themselves (Hede, 2007). This focus would also allow to better evaluate the community buy in and engagement with a marketized and valorized model of destination development through tourism commensurate to future expectations (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Jago et al, 2003; Reid, 2011).

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