

EVENT INNOVATION AND RESILIENCE DURING TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

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Introduction

There are perhaps not better times than those we are living in, to reconsider how practices and approaches to event innovation, and resilience may help us to chart a path to a more *sustainable* industry and societal practice for now and for the future. The impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the events sector globally and nationally have certainly been profound (see, e.g., OECD, 2021; Stewart et al., 2022). Yet, while these impacts remain to be fully unpicked, continued heightened economic and sociocultural instabilities remind us that the pathway to events' success (or failure) lies on the sector's capacity to *rethink* current approaches and practices to event planning, delivering, and managing as well as *build on* innovative stances with an aim of *strengthening* the sector's capacity and resilience in the face of externalities. It is with this in mind that this special issue set out to explore event *innovation and resilience during uncertainty*, a topic and area of investigation highly relevant to both industry and academia. The special issue offers eight unique research articles and three invited thought pieces from leading academics, which are sure to be a valuable reference

source and point of discussion for any researcher in the field of events.

Investing in Event Creativity, Innovation, and Resilience

Creativity, innovation, and resilience have arguably always been cornerstone features of the events industry (Jackson et al., 2018; Shipway & Miles, 2020). Yet so far studies on event innovation and resilience have often focused on crisis recovery (see, e.g., Ziakas et al., 2021) or viewed event innovation and resilience through the lenses of sector-based economic recovery (e.g., Bazzanella et al., 2021; Ke & Wagner, 2022). Moreover, theoretical and applied conceptualizations of event creativity, innovation and resilience have thus far often lacked a multidisciplinary approach capable of enhancing the understanding of the interplay of internal and external dynamics affecting the evolution of planning and delivery of events at times of uncertainty.

In this context the journal articles and opinion pieces included in this special issue represent both a response and a starting point for future research endeavors, bringing together a variety of multidisciplinary approaches and interpretations to event

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creativity, innovation, and resilience pertinent to rethinking our managerial and societal understandings of the function and place of events in our life. It is important to remember here that the act and process of *rethinking* is not about throwing existing knowledge and practices to the wind, or restart “from scratch.” It is about frankly *reflecting on* and, when necessary, boldly *questioning* and *resetting* our current stances, priorities, processes, practices, and relationships (e.g., with audiences, attendees, governments, and other industry stakeholders), with an aim of *investing* in the industry, communities, and societies we wish to represent.

This is the ethos that brings together the contributions of the authors included in this special issue. Whether *investing* in new paradigms, and ways of thinking (Pernecky and Faisal; Ali-Knight; Getz), through new knowledge frameworks (Kwiatkowski et al.; Wallace and Michopoulou; Glyptou), building on and sharing multidisciplinary approaches to create sector capacity and preparedness (Hemmonsbey and Knott; Rentschler et al.; Karadimitriou et al.), or investing in new markets, and opportunities (Lei et al.; Marshall et al.), these contributions remind us that crises such as COVID-19 yield not only challenges and threats but also bear opportunities for growth, transformation, and ultimately *hope* for a more sustainable event future. Finally, we would like to extend our thanks to all the authors and contributors that have made this special issue possible.

The Articles Included in This Special Issue

Investing in new industry and societal paradigms centered around event innovation, resilience, and sustainability (especially as we emerge from the recent pandemic) is firmly the focus of the three invited thought pieces by *Pernecky* and *Faisal*, *Ali-Knight*, and *Getz*. Together, these contributions raise important research questions, promote awareness, and encourage those behavioral changes needed to address current and future industry and societal turbulences.

- Pernecky and Faisal demand us to reconsider the way we are responding to the challenges and opportunities inherent the current age of “heightened vulnerabilities” and suggest this is the time

to (re)create, plan, and cultivate more inclusive and sustainable events. The authors forward the notion of “pragmatic hope” defined as the capacity to navigate the ever-changing event risk environment and to respond in ethical, imaginative, creative, and practical ways through the medium of events.

- Ali-Knight’s reflections on the reopening of the Edinburgh festivals post-COVID-19 remind us that festivals and events are at the very fabric of our society, intrinsically linked to people and places’ identities and that as one crisis fades away (e.g., COVID-19) and new challenges appear on the horizon, any innovative and creative responses must be imbued with notions of resilience and sustainability for all.
- Getz’s contribution suggests that in a world of “polycrises” and “permacrises,” event innovators should focus on adaptability, sustainability, and resilience, securing support through value creation and meaningful stakeholders’ engagement.

A call for investing in new knowledge frameworks for event innovation and resilience is contained in the articles by *Kwiatkowski et al.*, *Wallace* and *Michopoulou*, and *Glyptou*.

- Kwiatkowski et al.’s contribution for example offers us a novel context-based and empirically grounded framework that can be used to understand how event ecosystems change under unexpected circumstances and to promote sector-based crisis responsiveness, adaptability, and resilience.
- Noting the lack of research on complexity management in festivals and events, Wallace and Michopoulou provide valuable insights as to how notions and practices derived from the fields of project management, stakeholder theory, and event management can be combined to aid event stakeholders’ understanding of event complexities. The proposed framework, the authors argue, can become a useful tool for building sector capacity and resilience.
- Adopting a system thinking approach Glyptou’s article explores perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of academic events’ stakeholders during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and forwards a conceptual and operational model that

can inform management approaches during times of system disturbance.

The articles by *Hemmonsbey* and *Knott*, *Rentschler et al.*, and *Karadimitriou et al.* offer valuable knowledge on the gains that can be made (or should if not identified) in relation to sector capacity building and preparedness through the adoption of multidisciplinary approaches to the study of event innovation and resilience.

- A good case in point to illustrate missed opportunities is Hemmonsbey and Knott's systematic literature review of articles related to sport event tourism and organizational resilience, which not only shows the dearth of literature in this subject but also how future research agendas focusing on event resilience may be beneficial to the advancement of knowledge and practice in the fields of both sports and tourism.
- The article presented by Rentschler et al. examines innovation at times of festival crisis. Building on a longitudinal analysis of the Adelaide Festival approach to three distinctive crises that threatened the perceived legitimacy, resource base, and survival of this Arts festival, the authors discuss how governance mechanisms could help balance tensions among Arts festivals' internal and external stakeholders.
- Karadimitriou et al.'s article reflects on the disastrous effect the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the sports event sector. Focusing on the Athens' Marathon efforts to restart the event, the authors study the chaotic system of participants' decision-making, offering both theoretical and managerial contributions that can help academics and practitioners understand how to encourage event support participation, increase resilience, and assist in crisis recovery.


Finally, the articles by *Marshall et al.* and *Lei et al.* provide us with important reflections on the opportunities the recent pandemic-induced crisis has offered in terms of *investing* in new knowledge around markets development and attendees' behavior.

- Marshall et al.'s article focusing on the rise of solo event consumption at UK music events before


and in between periods of lockdown shows that solo event goers' attendees are indeed a key market to explore and invest on (and one not to be quickly confused with other forms of solo consumption). These attendees not only appreciate freedom and flexibility, but also relish deeper immersive and socializing event opportunities.

- Similarly, the article by Lei et al. offers novel research perspectives into fans' motivations for attending both virtual and physical music events. Especially focusing on the rise of event technologies and the growth of virtual events consumption observed during times of COVID-19 in the Asian continent, the authors forward insights into how to engage audiences, leverage event benefits through online platforms, and importantly maintain and reinforce emotional connections and relationships with fans.

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