Regional Event Tourism Funding Policies: A Strategic-Relational Critique of Current Practice

Abstract

Taking a strategic-relational approach we critique a range of event tourism funding policies and practices which seek to create regional and/or national event strategies. A multiple case study method combining document analysis and key informant interviews within selected regions provides insights into the political nature of event funding, the equity of its distribution and the decision processes involved.

Programmes were found to operate in a sensitive and complex context due to intertwined power relationships between policy and agency embedded within governments.

We conclude that to bring about broader benefits and legacies a paradigm shift is needed to rebalance economic and social outcomes within funder objectives and governance structures. This needs to include innovation in evaluation and wider more meaningful stakeholder engagement. The study shows that without fundamental change in policy, national and regional funding programmes are likely to continue to operate within their existing narrow remit.

Keywords

Introduction

An increasing number of national, state and regional governments have developed formal event tourism funding policies (Getz, 2008; Stokes and Jago, 2007; Tomljenovic and Weber 2004). These usually entail a bidding process for a limited pot of money allocated to select events which bring maximum *benefit* (e.g. tourist spend, inward investment, image enhancement, participation). Despite ostensibly similar aims, these policies differ widely in their approach with varying degrees of success. Although several case studies have been published (e.g. Garcia 2017; Nuccio and Ponzini 2017; Lee 2015; Tomljenovic and Weber 2004) a broader comparison of policies across different world regions is lacking (Getz 2008; Getz and Page 2016a).

We use the strategic-relational approach, developed from new institutionalism (Jessop 2001; Pastras and Bramwell 2013), to critique funding policies and practices across a sample of countries. Through this critique our aim is to more fully understand the political nature of event tourism funding, the equity of distribution and, the decision processes involved. The paper also explores the usefulness of the strategic-relational approach, used by Pastras and Bramwell (2013), in understanding the complex relationships and differing agendas of the organisations brought together in such event tourism strategies. This approach enables critique of the structures that guide and implement policy and their strategic-selectivity which "privileges some actors, some identities, some strategies, some spatial temporal horizons, [and] some actions over others" (Jessop 2005, 48). We therefore aim to shine a light on the aspects of event tourism funding policy that are often hidden and in so doing identify alternative, more open ways of prioritising and allocating support in this area.

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Context

Event tourism has proliferated in most developed countries with festivalization continuing despite austerity, recession, market saturation and increasing environmental challenges (Jones 2012). The bandwagon effect appears to be largely driven by policy makers' belief in the economic, and more specifically tourism, benefits that events bring (Wood 2017; Pugh and Wood 2004). However, most non-mega events have been created with different ends in mind, often as a celebration of culture and the bringing together of communities (Finkel 2009; Quinn 2010).

Large-scale sports events appeal to policy makers through their potential as tourist attractions and image changers (Grix and Houlihan, 2014; Grix and Lee 2013) whereas cultural events are seen as less universally appealing. Cultural events that do receive support therefore tend to be those with the most certain socio-economic outcomes thus leading to an increasingly formulaic approach to festival programming and design (Finkel 2009; Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris 2007). This instrumental approach is likely to disadvantage smaller events and those that do not fit with the policy maker's view of 'art', 'culture' and more commonly 'spectacle'. This is echoed by Jenkins' (2009) research in Ontario where funding was found to have been redirected by state government to "the marketing of culture to tourists" (341).

The changing emphasis to greater private sector funding can also exacerbate this effect (Méndez-Carbajo, and Stanziola 2008), creating tensions between legitimacy and efficiency in tourism public-private sector collaborations (Zapata and Hall 2012). Andersson and Getz (2009, 849) suggest that local government intervention is needed

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to create "a portfolio of local events more effective in attracting and satisfying visitors".

However, interventionism that favours the objectives of destination management

organisations (DMOs) may also neglect festivals of local value. Andersson and Getz

(2009) conclude that it is the underlying ideology and political processes, rather than

rational planning, which will have more influence on producing balanced portfolios of

events.

The use of event tourism as an instrument of soft power is also of concern where

selected organisations have been delegated authority to make decisions concerning

major events calendars and funding. This relative autonomy from government can lead

to "the emergence of secrecy and lack of accountability of such agencies" (Getz 2009:

595)

Despite these concerns, analysis of tourism destination politics in the academic

literature remains scarce (Pike 2017; Bramwell and Lane, 2011) and the relationship

between public policy and events not yet fully explored (Antchak 2017). Hall and Rusher

(2004, 229) also argue that "there remains relatively little analysis on the political

context of events and the means by which events come to be developed and hosted

within communities". Although many major cities and regions actively plan and

implement event tourism portfolios, the topic in academia is still under explored (Ziakas

2014; Getz and Page 2016a) with further investigation and comparative analysis of

diverse event portfolio strategies in different urban contexts needed (Antchak 2017).

This paper addresses these aspects from a new institutionalism perspective providing

structure to a critique of the relationships of the different agencies involved (Falaster et

al 2017). The differences in practice, history, individuals and collectives lends itself well

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to a strategic-relational approach (Jessop 1990) emphasising the 'paths' taken, interactions between actors within differing political contexts and the formal arrangements and informal cultural practices, alongside a view of the agency of those involved (Dalonso et al 2014). Actors in regional or national tourism strategies often have competing agendas, objectives and modes of operation (Bramwell and Lane 2011) This is particularly true within event tourism where complexity has emerged due to neo-liberal governance, in the countries included here, and power devolution to a variety of agencies including DMOs, local government, cultural, sports and other tourism bodies. However, they are now tasked with working together to develop coherent, successful and 'fair' event funding policies to enhance the tourism strategies for their region (Dalonso et al 2014).

The strategic-relational approach to event tourism strategies

The complexities of a policy level approach to event funding and the potential tension between culture and tourism suggests the need for a theoretical model that considers the multiple relationships between DMOs, tourism and culture departments, private sector, central government and the local community (Falaster et al 2017). Pastras and Bramwell (2013), drawing on Jessop's (1990; 2008) work, convincingly propose "new institutionalism" as a framework for understanding tourism policy, and argue that this also holds true for event tourism. Within this context a strategic-relational approach (SRA) seems most appropriate and has been used by Dalonso et al (2013 and 2014) to develop their "intertwining" model of events and public policy.

Key elements of the SRA are the historical policy context, the consideration of how 'paths' have been created and shaped and the level of dependence upon those paths. A changing view of leisure and recreation has also affected the funding and format of events and festivals with a shift from spontaneous sometimes disruptive celebrations of the past (Gotham 2002) to more formalised approaches claiming to be for social good (Coalter 1990). This shift from "ritual to regeneration" (Foley et al 2012, 27), via tourism, is a consequence perhaps of neo-liberal state policies and an increasing focus on economic, or at least measurable, value from an event portfolio (Wood 2017; Ziakas and Costa 2011a).

Interplay between agencies with often competing goals driven by market economies and competitiveness has created an environment where events and festivals have become a tourism commodity to be exploited. Cities and regions compete within a

global tourism market vying with each other to attract investment into, what they portray through events as, a culturally diverse and vibrant area (Hassan, Mean and Tims 2007). Events therefore, it can be argued, have been hijacked by a capitalist ideology that seeks to placate rather than to change (Rojek 2013). Rojek's (2013) critique, although based on the mega-event, highlights the need to review the value and purpose of event tourism within the changing political landscape and to be more sceptical of their promised worth to communities and society (Wood 2017).

Dalonso et al's (2014) intertwining model encapsulates some of the relational elements in event tourism, drawing upon new institutionalism. They recognise the multiple actors and stakeholders at local, regional and national level and how the intertwining relationships between these affects the occurrence and success of event support/funding over time. Jessop (2005) also argues for relativity, relationality and contingency as the core concepts of SRA, highlighting reflexivity in the development of structure and agency through a complex co-evolution that is driven by spatio-temporal relationality (see Figure 1).

As the focus of this paper is event tourism funding policies it is germane to highlight the potential for inequity resulting from what Jessop (1990) terms "structural selectivity". He argues that state structures "offer unequal chances to different forces within and outside that state to act for different political purposes" (Jessop 1990, 367). The state therefore has the potential to privilege some economic or political strategies over others. The exercise of power is largely based upon the interaction amongst these strategies with capital, or the state, seen as social relation (based on Marx's concept of capital and Gramsci's and Poulantzas's concept of the state as a social relation).

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[Insert Figure 1 here]

New institutionalism emphasises the role of individuals in making strategic choices but importantly also recognises that the environment or context is strategically selective (Jessop 2008), constraining individual subjective actions. Although Pastras and Bramwell (2013) adopted this perspective to critique a mega-event tourism policy (the Athens Olympics) it has not yet been applied to regional event tourism policies more generally. Such an approach is needed to better understand the institutional influences and intertwining relationships involved.

The complexity of the relationships created around events is often tied to their use as *tools* to further other policy areas (e.g. wellbeing, inclusion, culture, sport, tourism). Smith (2012) summarises this in three main policy principles, namely, policy related to events, events as public policy, and policy formulated to complement events. For example, cultural and tourism policy often informs events policy although we also see mega-events as the driver behind tourism strategies and cultural renaissance (Stokes 2008).

Lauermann (2014) also demonstrates how urban policy more generally affects and is affected by event tourism strategies, notably mega-events. He argues that such events necessitate an entrepreneurial approach which draws upon global expertise and that "imitating and innovating policy are both part of the entrepreneurial strategies of mega events" (p2650). Similarly, Smith and Fox (2007) and Richards (2017a) illustrate the importance of embedding event tourism policy within a broader urban regeneration policy. Nicodemus (2013) also advocates for 'fuzzy vibrancy' in creative placemaking and cultural policy with the need to bring a range of stakeholders including urban

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planners together to achieve this. Devine et al (2010) further highlight this in their study of the multiple and complex inter-organisational relationships found within sports tourism policy.

It has been argued that in creating regional and national tourism policies, local business and resident involvement can become lost as towns and cities, which have traditionally competed for tourists, are expected to form "alliances" (Halkier 2014). This potentially combines competing and conflicting groups to the detriment of any event tourism policy (Kimbu and Ngoasong 2013). Innovations can emerge, but it is only when NGOs, businesses and other private sector organisations are included in the policy making process that implementation is likely to be successful (Rodríguez, Williams and Hall 2014). Similarly, Ezedeuji (2015) advocates a strategic approach, for event-based rural tourism, which involves incorporating local values and the community ownership of events with government, not-for-profits and the private sector as partners providing business training and finance. This, he argues, will create a marketable brand identity whilst preserving the unique culture and heritage of sub-Saharan Africa.

Despite the broader policy implications of event tourism strategies there is much evidence to suggest a lack of, or at least difference in, strategic approach (Thomas and Wood 2003; Stokes 2008). One explanation for this is the need to react to event opportunities, suggesting that the inclusive participatory approach advocated in more general tourism strategies may not be appropriate when planning event tourism portfolios (Stokes 2008).

The perceived need for entrepreneurialism amongst those engaged in event tourism highlights the importance of considering the subjective decisions of individual actors (Pastras and Bramwell 2013) as this "may engender individualism more than collectivism, or at best, consultation with a smaller network of select stakeholders to shape strategies" (Stokes 2008, 261). Therefore, accepted tourism strategic approaches may not apply within an event tourism policy context as this requires greater flexibility and responsiveness depending upon location, timing, and structure. The strategic decisions and constraints of the environment could therefore be seen as dominating the strategic choices made by the individuals involved (Jessop 2008).

Stokes (2008) provides a useful categorisation of event tourism strategy development using an agency framework resulting in three approaches - Corporate, market-led; Synergistic; and Community, destination-led. Within these we see the tension between community engagement and inclusion, and the demands of the market. The approach is both determined by and determines the organisational structure, processes, focus and decision criteria.

Other studies have explored the relational element of event and tourism organisations involved in event tourism. For example, Stokes and Jago (2007) suggest that three formats exist – separate; merged and mixed (merged and separate). In their study a more coherent event tourism strategy resulted if this was controlled by a merged organisation (event and tourism combined within an institution) or mixed arrangements (formal intra and inter-organisational linkages). Although, separate event organisation and tourism bodies create less strategic coherence it could be that they are potentially

more flexible and more successfully able to meet the differing needs of stakeholder groups such as the local community, artists, and cultural development agencies.

Getz (2009) has called for the development of a comprehensive policy for planned tourism events, arguing that "public policy pertaining to festivals and other planned events is generally fractionalized … not comprehensive … and fails to integrate events effectively with all the relevant policy domains" (62). There are clearly tensions which hinder the development of the event tourism sector, notably, festivals are often excluded from the dialogue between tourism and business (Maughan 2009) and disconnected from the cultural policy arena as they fall under the control of tourism policy (Quinn 2009; Garcia 2004).

One way to counteract such a tension between tourism and cultural agendas is therefore to ensure multiple voices are heard (Lee 2015). However, the benefits are longer lasting and wider reaching if the public, private and third sectors work in partnership, merged or mixed structures (Stokes and Jago 2007) and culture is repositioned more centrally in cross-sectoral agendas (Liu 2015; Garcia 2017).

The main themes emerging from this overview of tourism events funding policy relate to equity of funding decisions, who is party to and has influence on the decision, and the criteria on which decisions are made. These are discussed briefly below in relation to structure and agency and again within the analysis of the case studies.

Inclusivity and equity in funding

It would be natural to assume that equity in decision making and inclusivity of opportunity are desirable in any event tourism funding policy. However, the reality is far more complex. Policies may deliberately exclude certain organisations, types of events, geographical areas and, equally, approaches will seek to encourage the 'preferred' types of event and organisation (Finkel 2009; Quinn 2010; Horne 2015; Hall 2006). The structures developed over time create strategic selectivity and limit the agency of those involved. This is partly a consequence of the limited funding available but is largely due to the remit of the funding agency and the agendas of the organisations and individuals involved. This not only relates to public funds, as inequities have also been found in private sector funding of culture (Méndez-Carbajo and Stanziola 2008).

Several authors argue that festivals, notably arts festivals, are suffering an inequity in public sector support with some being favoured over others (Finkel 2009; Quinn 2010). Their research indicates that policy agendas can favour a particular type of festival, an easily consumed spectacle perhaps, which disadvantages more innovative programming leading to a homogenisation of content and approach. This might lead to the perception of a "dumbing down" of cultural content, "cultural substance being diminished as it becomes cultural spectacle" (Harvey 1989). This is often due to both the type of organisations involved in funding decisions and the formal and informal relationships between them (Stokes and Jago 2007). Whilst "there are, undoubtedly, some exceptions where the policy ambitions of individual arts festivals are closely interwoven into the broader policy frameworks operating in a city at large, in general, there is an urgent need to create new policy frameworks" (Quinn 2010, 266).

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Furthermore, the sports mega-event often takes precedence over all other tourism event types (Horne 2015; Hall 2006) pulling resources in, therefore, reducing funding availability to other event organisations. Others argue that such events are a catalyst for cultural events and that their legacy is often cultural rather than sports participation or tourism (Lander and Crowe 2010; Garcia 2004 and 2008).

As well as the potential exclusion of certain art forms and grassroots sports events there is also evidence to suggest that destination marketing policies often neglect host community involvement with representations of place created to suit the needs of a few interested parties (Pike 2017). Events policy within tourism is likely to magnify this feeling of non-inclusivity. For example, when events are parachuted in or created without community consultation or, perhaps worse still, seen as being appropriated for tourism purposes. This appears more likely to occur in policies led by a market-driven corporate approach (Stokes 2008) and when organisations and projects have competing power relations which constrain effective tourism strategies (Kimbu and Ngoasong 2013).

The size and bidding experience of organisations can also create inequalities in funding success. For example, smaller, one-off requests are more likely to fail a rigorous process of scrutiny whereas larger, stable organisations who regularly bid for funds and therefore have a good track record will be advantaged (Hazledine 2011). These organisations are often from outside the region and therefore the benefits to local communities are diminished (Whitson and Horne 2006).

To resolve inequalities in access to the decision-making process and prospective benefits from events Antchak (2017) calls for greater direct participation. Such

involvement of community groups, individuals and the private sector increases

collaboration between different actors and the distribution of tangible and intangible

resources (Presenza and Sheehan, 2013). Similarly, Getz (2009) introduces a principle

of social equity into event tourism strategy, requiring full integration of residents and

other stakeholder groups in the organisational process.

It would seem then that event funding can only be equitable and sustainable if cultural

policy is considered alongside tourism policy (Quinn 2009), if all stakeholders,

especially the local community, are involved (Antchak 2017; Getz 2009), if support is

provided to smaller less experienced organisations in bidding for funds (Hazledine

2011) and if destination marketing and tourism agendas are not pursued at the expense

of other community benefits (Pike 2017; Fazito et al 2016).These caveats may not sit

well with market-driven tourism policy makers.

Power and influence in funding

Power, influence and decision making in event tourism funding policy is determined by the programme structures and environmental context (Pastras and Bramwell 2013; Dalonso et al 2014). As others have found this is often a tourism-led policy involving DMOs, government tourism departments and to some extent the private sector (Getz and Page 2016b). This is then made more complex, but perhaps more effective, when cultural agencies and/or sports bodies are involved.

Pike's (2017) review of DMOs emphasises the highly political and often less than constructive nature of destination marketing organisations which are often comprised of private-public partnerships. Similarly, Kerr's (2003) study of the politics and power of tourism in Scotland heavily criticised the DMOs. Denmark, often lauded as leading in national event tourism strategies, has been hampered since the 1980s by the governance style of Regional Tourism Boards (RTBs), which feature "geographic localism and short-term interests" in decision making (Halkier 2014, 1664). Others have commented on the 'collaborative thuggery' often inherent in multi-stakeholder decision processes where the destination brand strategy is shaped to suit the needs of a few individuals (Nardi, Marzano and Mendieta 2016).

Fazito et al's (2016) study of tourism discourses and policy in Brazil also highlights the power inherent in 'discourse coalitions'. In their Foucauldian inspired framework, meanings (in this case tourism and development) become narrative and are cemented in storylines which are then given legitimacy through the power of particular agencies. These are supported by other actors creating a discourse coalition resulting in policy

outcomes and action and 'winners'. This process of policy development again highlights the potential for certain groups' voices to be privileged through strategic-selectivity and through relational path development over time (Jessop 2005).

Decision-makers' desire for social legitimacy also constrains funding decisions. For example, festivals often create a tension between legitimacy in the eyes of customers and the need for market success. Chaney and Marshall (2013) suggest that profits and commercialisation require differentiation, but that society often demands conformity (society can be customers but also sponsors, funders, government supporters). They argue that a highly institutionalised environment will seek social legitimacy over distinctiveness and that a little-institutionalised environment will be enabled to seek distinctiveness before social legitimacy.

Tension between public and private sector actors can also create power relationships which affect decision-making. This can be the latent coercion applied to event managers by tourism organisations in that "funding manipulates the event managers to make certain changes to their event that are not congruent with the core focus" (Kelly and Fairley 2018, 342). Events may also be *encouraged* to leverage tourism benefits for the region but without gain to their own organisation. However, the reverse is often true for mega-events where the event organisation (e.g. IOC, FIFA) drives the tourism funding strategy (Horne 2015).

It appears therefore that event tourism policy and strategy decisions are highly contingent on structures and power but are also influenced by the environmental context and the goals of those involved. The strategic-relational approach therefore provides a useful lens through which this complexity can be explored (Jessop 2008).

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Material and methods

Event tourism funding programmes proved to be a sensitive research context. This was unsurprising given the high-level policy and power relationships surrounding event tourism funds which in many cases are headed by government ministers. As such, the research was viewed with suspicion, making academic critique challenging.

To mitigate these issues, analysis of programme information and documentation was combined with supplemental interview data to explore the "strategically selective context" alongside the, undoubtedly carefully crafted, narratives of some of the main actors involved.

Purposive sampling identified funds across different governmental levels and geographic contexts. This approach benefitted from unique access to one national programme, afforded to the authors through a separate event tourism study. This opportunity sparked the authors' curiosity to critically examine similar programmes and helped identify several comparator funds; others were added from interview information in a snowball-sampling manner, and extensive documentary and online searches completed the sample (see Table 1).

[Insert Table 1 here]

However, interviewee recruitment proved extremely difficult due to the political sensitivities outlined. From the outset, the research was not intended to constitute a global audit, rather, programme insight and broader evidence scoping offered a unique lens to examine structure and agency within different geopolitical contexts.

It is a limitation, that this approach only identified examples where English is the native or an official language. The cases (see Table 1) also exhibit a geographical and administration bias towards nations within the United Kingdom. However, among these geopolitically similar examples, differences can be found in their approach, validating their inclusion.

In total, ten programmes were selected. Local funds i.e. city scale or smaller were excluded, as the purpose was to understand strategic government programmes i.e. national, state or regional. A further justification for this is that national funding structures, application processes, and regulatory requirements are often replicated at the sub-government level. However, it should be noted that Events ACT, although regional in remit, is primarily focused around Canberra, Australia, as a capital city.

For each programme, publicly available information was collated in a case report, primarily from government and funding websites. Key information included applicant documents, organisational structure and governance, contact details, lists of previously funded events, and case study/media reports. The reports were organised under seven headings (see Figure 2). These cross-case criteria were intended to reveal the structural, operational and process elements of each programme.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

Supplemental interviews were then conducted to complement the documentary review and provide primary insight. To obtain an informed strategic view on policy and process, representatives with high-level roles e.g. director of events, head of investment/event development from each programme were invited to participate in an interview. Although

this narrowed the pool of potential interviewees in an already sensitive context, it was considered necessary to ensure insight was only obtained from individuals with strategic oversight and decision-making power or 'agency'. From the ten cases, four representatives from Events ACT, EventScotland, Event Wales, and Sport England agreed to participate. Although small, the sample was considered appropriate for conceptually examining a politically sensitive context, when combined with extensive documentary evidence.

Semi-structured interviews lasting between 45 and 60 minutes were conducted in September 2018. The interview schedule mirrored the cross-case comparison themes (see Figure 2), enabling verification and discussion of the structural, operation and process information within the secondary data. Participants were invited to review their case report prior to the interview and 'member-check' their transcript for accuracy post-interview. To protect their identity, it was agreed that quotes would only be associated with their organisation and not their specific role.

Analysis was conducted in two stages, firstly case reports and associated documentation were mapped to the policy, process, evaluation framework structure inherent within all the case funds (Figure 2). The documents were then examined in detail to identify information relating to the strategic-relational themes of 'agency' and 'structure' within the framework. Coding was conducted independently by the authors and cross-checked to compare interpretation and inter-coder reliability. Analysis of both documentation and interview transcripts focused on developing conceptual interpretations from the empirical evidence, framed by the theoretical ideas from the SRA (Bryman 2004, Decrop 2004). The interpretations that follow are therefore based

on several sources of evidence and the views of several influential actors (Pastras and Bramwell 2013).

Findings and Discussion

A Strategic Relational Perspective on Event Funding Policy

To examine the structure and power relations within the sample programmes the findings are presented from a strategic-relational perspective through the lenses of agency and structure. This follows a policy – process – evaluation chronology mirroring the structures inherent within the case programmes (see Figure 2).

Agency within event funding policy

Understanding the policy context underpinning event funding programmes represents the starting point for examining the rationale for their introduction. The political use of events undoubtedly influences funding criteria and is often centred, at a regional or national level, on image building. For example, events became a major focus of Northern Ireland's post-conflict tourism strategy albeit with mixed results (Devine, Boluk and Devine 2017). The propensity for events as a way of projecting a desirable image through media coverage to the wider world can be a key funding determinant however, such media focus can backfire when events expose underlying regional tensions. Use of mega-events in particular as soft power (Nye 2008; Grix and Houlihan 2014) is a diplomatic strategy followed by several large and developing states (e.g. Beijing Olympics; South Africa World Cup)(Rowe 2012). For these governments the successful bidding and delivery of a sports mega-event "signals and boosts a shift from regionally

based emerging power to embedded global power" (Grix and Lee 2013, 536) and for political parties to showcase their legitimacy as global leaders (Tomlinson 2010; Rowe 2012).

The importance of destination image as a policy driver is apparent from the interviews with EventScotland and Event Wales, and notably the notion of enhancing destination image internationally for political gain. This power relationship is laid bare in the following quote relating to EventScotland's vision:

> "The driving vision is 'Scotland the Perfect stage', which is the national events strategy, importantly it's not VisitScotland or EventScotland strategy, It's Scottish Government strategy, which is uniquely different to most event organisations in the world". [Event Scotland Interviewee]

The political importance of a national strategy, overseen and managed within central government was also articulated by Event Wales who stated that following the publication of EventScotland's strategy in 2002, Ministers "were keen to develop one for Wales". Although Welsh Government funding for events existed prior to their national strategy, the programmes lacked political oversight through fragmentation of delivery and misalignment to a common vision.

The historical contexts of these examples highlight the importance of event funding as a political leveraging tool for enhancing destination image. Furthermore, it demonstrates that development initially followed a "path shaping" (Jessop 2005) process of reflection, horizon scanning and imitation. Based on an Australian funding model, considered world leading at the time, the EventScotland programme was developed after a failed

bid to host the 2008 European Football Championships. These examples provide a linear illustration of the "event bandwagon" effect (Wood 2017), where political agency underpins national strategies, with EventScotland pursuing a model developed by Australia and in turn Event Wales following EventScotland.

These actions also acknowledge perceived political advantages of developing a national programme, and the implications of falling behind other nations or regions. Drawing on Dalonso et al's (2014) model, these findings suggest that funding programmes are not only *intertwined* at the intra-governmental level in terms of political stakeholder agency, but also at inter-governmental level through inspiration and imitation. However, notably, in contrast to Lauerman's (2014) entrepreneurial premise, inspiration replaces innovation in these examples, resulting in imitation with minimal innovation. Formal, intertwining through inter-governmental agency was also identified among the cases, evidenced by the memorandum of understanding, between EventScotland and New Zealand Mega Events, to share knowledge and best practice.

Policy objectives also appear homogenous and static across the schemes, for example, Event Wales has retained the same overarching objectives to invest in events for economic impact and international profile for ten years with no foreseeable plans to change:

> "There is now, slightly more emphasis around the softer benefits around social impact, access, participation, and community engagement, but overall we drafted a strategy in broad policy terms, so it could be flexed to take account of different policy environments, but the focus remains the same and is relevant to today".
> [Event Wales Interviewee]

Similar consistency was found for Events ACT, when asked: *Do you think you will fund similar events in the future?*

> "I think it will remain largely the same. I think the only thing we might do is look at whether we portion off some of the funding to focus on new events". [Events ACT Interviewee]

Objective inertia highlights two interrelated aspects; firstly, it exposes the long-term strength of political agency in directing programmes toward economic development, potentially at the expense of community and social outcomes, by maintaining economic outputs as core objectives. Secondly, whilst overarching objectives provide flexibility for event fund administrators in terms of the operation and management their funding portfolios, inclusion of politically neutral objectives also provides some security against changing political environments, which could threaten funding allocations. This need for stability and consistent political support was articulated by EventScotland:

> "You also need good support from the board and political support. We have been fortunate to receive long-term cross-party support for the event sector and sustainable economic growth agenda". [Event Scotland Interviewee]

Funding continuity was identified as a key challenge over the next decade with interviewees raising budgetary concerns, primarily relating to overreliance on public funding to support events, often against a backdrop of budget reductions. Themes included *implementing efficiency savings* and *the need to work with a greater number of partners*, e.g. local authorities where support may not be financial but through in-kind services. Financial innovation was also discussed as a development goal for

EventScotland including trialling new approaches to risk management and event

funding, beyond grant funding, such as underwriting and profit sharing. Financial

models involving venture capital investment and 'venture philanthropy' may guard

against uncertainty in public sector funding but may also favour events which are

palatable to private sector investors (Quinn 2010). This could lead to a negative

influence on integrity and programming. However, it is increasingly likely that public

investment will be based on an ability to draw down private money through sponsorship,

investment or donation (Wood 2017; Mermiri 2011). Judging success on the amount of

private sector 'match funding' received also offers an alternative metric for evaluating

events (Lin, Stein and Goldblatt 2011).

Policy consistency and political support for national programmes has undoubtedly been

beneficial, providing security of resourcing and enabling longer-term planning and

implementation. Indeed, there is a greater focus on identifying changes, which may

disrupt policy implementation than enacting any significant changes to policy. This is

summed up by Event Wales as:

> "We evolve and tweak the direction, but the overall thrust of the policy remains
>
> the same, the policy drivers remain the same, it's not really limitations of policy,
>
> but rather it's looking at the challenges in delivering that strategy and policy."
>
> [Event Wales Interviewee]

Contextualised within institutional practices, these programmes originated from 'path-

shaping' actions, driven by political agency to compete with other regions and nations

on a world stage. Once established, they broadly conform to a pattern of 'path-

dependency', tied to the strategically selective context of tourism and economic

development, most evident from the top-down power structures and ministerial control within programmes. This also contrasts with the autonomy of some national programmes identified by Getz (2009), as agency restricts opportunity for path-shaping to occur at delivery level as actors are preoccupied with policy implementation. Where agency for change was found, it could be viewed as 'path refinement', restricted to peripheral or incremental changes to encompass new events, social impacts, and community engagement. Whilst interviewees regarded current approaches as fit for purpose, budgetary constraints, social impacts and community engagement represent future challenges, requiring faster and greater path-shaping action.

Structure within event funding policy

Political intertwining also extends to programme governance structures, where structural selectivity processes implement, maintain and emphasise funding policy. Funding teams are typically small, with a lead figure managing around ten people. Positioned within semi-autonomous departments most are embedded within tourism or economic development functions with ministers often presiding over final funding decisions.

External stakeholders and structures also influence structural selectivity, with programmes often chasing the same or similar events. Actors described the availability of event 'shopping lists', notably these were more readily available for sporting events than cultural events. The close partnership between Event Wales and UK Sport quoted below exposes structural differences between sports and arts/cultural event opportunities.

"At any given time, we can consult UK Sport and they can provide a list of probably over 100 events which are looking for a host destination. Nothing like that exists for the arts or cultural sector to our knowledge" [Event Wales Interviewee]

This highlights the potential for policy and structural inequality to occur simply through 'convenience', supporting assertions by Hall (2006) and Horne (2015) that sports mega-events can take precedent over other event types. Although the models operate defined funding calls, most also exhibit flexibility to react to new opportunities. For Events ACT this manifested itself as a form of policy and structural opportunism, capitalising on national sporting successes by bidding to host future tournaments. All interviewees emphasised that they strive for a balanced event portfolio to address potential policy and structural inequality. Research by Ziakas and Costa (2011b) and Ziakas (2014) advocates for this approach, and in these examples, portfolio balance was found to be influenced by awareness of inequalities such as geographic spread and public perception. For EventScotland, this question of social legitimacy (Chaney and Marshall 2013) can only be answered by an increased focus on "painting a narrative picture" to justify public expenditure. This perspective aligns with the connection made by Chien, Ritchie, Shipway and Henderson (2012) between event publicity and resident commitment, where resident support is "conceptualized as a social dilemma" (451), contingent on perceived personal and collective benefits accruing from an event.

Similarly, Event Wales articulated that their fund was perceived as a major events sporting unit due to events such as the Champions League Final or Volvo Ocean Race "grabbing all the media attention", despite supporting an equal number of sports and

cultural events in recent years. The implications of such perceptions are that they may discourage non-sporting events from applying reducing public support and therefore social legitimacy for event funding.

Programmes also vary in their approach to addressing portfolio balance. Events ACT do not weight or filter events but rely on receiving a variety of applications that "always seem to result in a balance between sport and cultural events". In contrast, EventScotland enforce a spend ratio of no more than 60:40 in terms of sport or culture or vice versa per annum. These findings demonstrate inherent structural selectivity, notably through ministerial control of funding decisions and integration within government tourism functions, where economic returns are often prioritised. Social legitimacy, through awareness of public perception, also appears central to issues of inequality such as geographic dispersion and portfolio balance.

A Strategic Relational Perspective on Event Funding Processes

Power and influence also determine assessment criteria, in turn affecting the equity and fairness of funding distribution. It is therefore important to consider how applications are assessed, the expectation on event outcomes or impacts, and the emphasis on benefits to whom.

Agency within event funding application processes

Application processes attempt to balance robust assessment whilst minimising the administrative burden for applicant and funder. This is particularly important considering the small size of many funding teams. As a result, agency is typically concentrated among a few individuals responsible for assessing and submitting applications for

ministerial approval. To aid the process, several funds recruit independent panels with members drawn from external organisations and government departments associated with the arts, sport, culture and recreation. This approach broadens the decision-making profile but does not alter the path-dependent assessment criteria used, or the potential for ministers to veto decisions.

Agency within governance was also explored. Here, internal and external audits are typically used to assess fund activities. Annual reviews are also commonplace; however, these are generally limited to path-dependent, incremental process changes, mirroring the policy consistency previously identified.

Structure within event funding application processes

Structural selectivity

Except for the Sport England fund which solely funds sporting events, all the programmes separate business events from tourism and cultural event funding programmes. Interviewees revealed that business events were considered separate entities managed by business focused teams, and therefore did not align with the sporting and cultural programmes typically managed by or closely associated with national tourism agencies. Within these contexts, business events, although separately funded and managed, appear marginalised, suggesting that business tourism is a low priority for national tourism organisations in these examples. This finding supports the view that events policy is often fractionalised and not integrated within all the relevant policy domains (Getz, 2009, 62).

Time sovereignty

Although the programmes consistently segregate business events, they diverge in their structures and application processes. Time sovereignty, through application calls and entry points, was found to be a function of programme characteristics with a number of variations across the schemes. TNI, New Zealand and the RoI operate schemes with one call per year, whereas Singapore has a single open call with no specified entry points, and Sport England operate four calls per year. Among the schemes, Scotland stands out for operating a complex system of call and entry points. For example, its National Events funding programme has three, Beacon Events Programme, two, and Clan and Winter Festivals, one.

The adoption of different application cycles was attributed to resourcing and timing contexts. For example, it can be beneficial for complex schemes receiving many applications to have different entry points, to reduce the administrative burden compared with a single call. Conversely, an open call for a single scheme with no set entry points can disperse applications to similar effect. Timing and number of calls was not considered an issue by the interviewees, as noted by Event Wales' more personal approach:

> "We don't go in for formal bidding rounds, we like to have an initial discussion if someone comes up with an event proposal, we'll sit down and have a conversation with them to get a feel for whether it is something we think we should support, and if it will meet the funding criteria." [Event Wales Interviewee]

Online application systems are used by all funds for efficiency. However, applications for the Singapore scheme are only issued following discussion with a fund representative. The remaining cases encourage early discussion and or attendance at information workshops. Scotland's Beacon Events programme also requires applicants to complete a pre-application template prior to a possible submission. In addition, Events ACT, highlighted the benefits of technology through widespread use of the 'SmartyGrants' system across regional government for collating applications.

Call communication was also found to be an important facet of structural selectivity, with the programmes taking different approaches. A key aspect is their perceived reputation which influences how the programmes are publicised. Both Event Wales and EventScotland were found to place significant stock on their profile:

> "It tends to be word of mouth, we like to think we have a presence and most people are aware of our existence. We don't go out like EventScotland, they announce their bidding rounds because that's their funding model, but we don't do that. Also, being part of the national tourism agency helps, there are tourism forums and people in the tourism industry that are aware of the funding we provide". [Event Wales Interviewee]

> "We have been quite successful in embedding 'Scotland the Perfect Stage' into people's psyche, so when people speak in Scotland and internationally about events, they use that as the vision for the programme we deliver". [Event Scotland Interviewee]

Use of proven communication networks was also emphasised by Events ACT after external advertising had failed to reach new potential applicants. These channels typically include programme websites, social media, mailing lists, external industry contacts and other government databases such as arts, sports and recreation. None of the interviewees felt that the processes potentially excluded applicants, citing the openness of the programmes and the volume and variety of applications received as evidence. However, oversubscription and variety does not necessarily imply the absence of exclusion or inequality, particularly considering concerns around public perception of the programmes. Nevertheless, the outreach activities conducted by most schemes, indicate that applications are received from organisations unfamiliar with the application processes.

Pre-application support varies by programme but represents an important aspect of structural selectivity for managing equality, diminishing the advantage of process familiarity between new and previous applicants. Applications for the Singapore scheme and Scotland's Beacon Events programme are only issued following pre-application discussion. Others such as TNI, Auckland Major Events Fund (AMEF) and Sport England hold pre-application workshops or offer opportunities to discuss potential applications. For Events ACT, public meetings are used to help manage expectations and guide applicants to the most appropriate fund, whilst minimising the burden on applicants at an early stage. For Event Wales, outreach addresses competency and capacity issues which may hinder applications, for example supporting smaller national governing bodies to host international scale events.

Eligibility

Applicants are required to be legally constituted organisations or businesses within the respective fund territories. TNI, Scotland, New Zealand, and RoI schemes also require a track record of event delivery. All schemes adopt similar criteria requesting, as a minimum, a funding business case. Larger funds (e.g. the New Zealand Mega Events Fund) require further documentation such as marketing plans, risk assessments, economic and feasibility studies, endorsements and hosting agreements. Sport England funding is also tied to governance criteria and physical activity outreach objectives of National Governing Bodies. It is also restricted to short term outcomes.

Repeat funding and long-term support also represent structural themes. Interviewees articulated the importance of balancing one-off, inaugural, and repeat events, emphasising that anyone can apply providing they meet the criteria. Conversely, funders also routinely assess track-record and experience, aspects which favour repeat events, or previously funded organisations. This may lead to what Hazledine (2011) argues happens in a front-loading system where the same organisations are funded each year and such recurrently funded organisations become "enfeebled and complacent". Interviewees discussed balancing support for potential growth events with assessment of long-term viability without public funding. Contracts are also used to ensure grants do not support core functions or prop-up unsustainable events. Furthermore, repeat funding is typically restricted to new business case objectives. Reviewing repeat and new events was raised by Events ACT as a future objective. However, repeat events are often structurally more desirable to funders as they provide calendar continuity and economic outcomes typically greater than one-off events (Wood

2005). The benefits though can often be overpromised and largely economic with events utilised as a neo-liberal entrepreneurial tool where social inclusion is frequently used as a synonym for individual employability (Vanwynsberghe, Surborg, and Wyly 2013).

Temporal and economic selectivity

Event timing and portfolio balance are further structural considerations with TNI, EventScotland, New Zealand and RoI encouraging events which take place outside of peak times. Although all schemes focus on economic impact, the RoI adopts a stronger instrumental approach, incentivising applicants to develop events outside of the peak and shoulder periods (June to September). The scheme specifies lower bed night seasons and reduced private sector funding contributions as an incentive for developing events which extend the tourism season. Such strategies underline the political agency and structural selectivity focus on events as tourism attractions and drivers of economic development. The Texas Events Trust Funds also adopt an economic selectivity approach, whereby local and state government contribute financially according to the estimated increase in tax receipts generated from the event. In this approach the fund works with the applicant (city or county) to establish the amount of incremental tax gains likely to result from the event. Values are derived from expected attendance data, spend criteria, and verified post-event by attendance data.

However, direct interventions such as temporal and economic selectivity can have longer-term implications, as warned by Moscardo (2007, 30) who found that:

"The need to demonstrate economic benefits in order to gain and maintain government event funding may have directly resulted in changes in the nature of the event. In turn these changes resulted in limited community involvement and thus detracted from longer term positive regional development outcomes".

Furthermore, smaller community focused events, are more vulnerable to pressure to secure grants (i.e. leverage tourism benefits) diverting them from their core purpose. In this context, objectives shift from "running an event in celebration of a core activity to marketing a destination for tourism gain" (Kelly and Fairley 2018, 342). The application of economic criteria to assess success or failure at the funding stage can thus lead to a vicious cycle, where the need to emphasise economic return leads to a distancing of the community from the event and less effective community and regional development.

Strengthening the links between applicant-predicted and funder-expected outcomes was found to be a focus of the TNI, EventScotland and New Zealand funding schemes. Whilst these schemes do not offer incentives, they stipulate minimum expected outcomes for aspects such as: event revenue, visitor numbers, return on investment, minimum ticket sales, and the number of out-of-state visitors. The ACT AMEF scheme also stipulates that applicants may be required to conduct an enhanced feasibility study prior to receiving funding, providing additional accountability.

Despite all the funds employing similar assessment criteria, targeted interventions, as used by the RoI, illustrate how structural selectivity influences event timing, applications and economic development.

Geographic selectivity

Even when benefits to host communities are argued for via leveraging the benefits of a major event, these are often used politically to appease local communities. In reality, a very small amount of overall expenditure is directed to leveraging and the benefits often limited to already privileged geographical areas (Smith 2014). The leveraging model is not questioned here but, it is argued, that events need to strategically develop a greater geographical reach and dissemination of benefits to areas unlikely to be able to host events themselves (Smith 2009). We therefore might expect to see the wider dispersal of leveraged benefits beyond the event location included in the assessment criteria of funding applications.

Geographic selectivity was found to be a concern, with several programmes operating funding streams tiered to different spatial scales. For example, the National and Beacon programmes operated by EventScotland are regional in focus to counterbalance the International Events Programme which gravitates towards Glasgow and Edinburgh. The following accounts by EventScotland and Event Wales interviewees demonstrate the power of public perception to influence structural selectivity decisions:

> "We took a view in 2003 when the organisation was established, that we wouldn't fund events in Glasgow or Edinburgh through these programmes because we wanted to address seasonality and geography, as well as the genre niche spread across the country. That approach has never been challenged because we were fearful the whole funding pie would go to the two big, economic and demographic areas". [Event Scotland Interviewee]

A similar perspective was presented for Event Wales:

> "We also try to achieve a geographical balance, because we are criticised for taking everything to Cardiff, so we have a similar challenge to which the Scots face in Glasgow or Edinburgh in terms of hosting events outside main cities". [Event Wales Interviewee]

In addition to operating different geographical funds, EventScotland also has a target to work with every local authority in Scotland every four years, further demonstrating the need for path-shaping action to address geographical selectivity.

A Strategic Relational Perspective on Event Funding Evaluation

Policies for evaluating success also affect who applies and what gets funded. This includes the requirements for evaluation and outcome expectations. It is also important to explore compliance, feedback and communication and how this influences future policy and processes.

Agency within event funding evaluation

Post-event evaluation may be an extra cost for funded organisations demanding expertise which they may not necessarily have. If undertaken internally they have the potential to be biased and if undertaken by external agencies or funding bodies this adds to the process complexity and potentially creates bureaucracy which is off-putting to smaller organisations. Evaluation timing is also questioned, as longer-term impacts and wider legacies are rarely assessed due to funding cycles (Thomas and Wood 2003; Wood 2017). Similarly, intangible, but often more valuable outcomes will be the most difficult to assess and are often assumed rather than measured (ibid).

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For Events ACT this difficulty was expressed in relation to their mixed objective programme which promotes tourism and non-tourism aspects such as civic pride:

> "It is often easier to measure quantitative aspects around visitation etc. than a one-off event in the city which attracts 10-12,000 people and builds civic pride. Measuring the quantitative and qualitative impacts is one of the biggest challenges we have with this fund" [Events ACT Interviewee]

This statement acknowledges the difficulties associated with capturing intangible impacts, particularly using short-term methods such as post-event surveys prevalent within event evaluations. Furthermore, it reinforces political agency toward economic and tourism impacts as accessible and tangible measures of success, perpetuating inequalities between events with economic and non-economic outcomes. Even for tourism orientated funds operated by EventScotland, social impact was described as "an area which is not fully understood i.e. how we make lasting change to people's wellbeing and confidence?" As discussed earlier in this paper, to address future challenges around social impacts, community engagement and public perception, funds will need to take greater path-shaping action. In EventScotland's case, a research project linked to event volunteering was proposed as a starting point.

However, for greater change to occur, a shift in political agency to broader objectives is required to weaken the nexus between economic impact and funder Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

> "The key reporting data is around how many visitors we attract; how much they are spending and what international overseas media exposure Wales and the

Wales brand get out of supporting the event. Those are the internal KPIs we use to justify our annual budget and investment in events." [Event Wales Interviewee]

Despite the close economic association between outputs and funding, interviewees considered success and evaluation broadly, encompassing indicators from financial auditing to visitor and stakeholder evaluations and impact studies. This point was emphasised in relation to EventScotland, "there are no single indices, different measures are required for different events" [Event Scotland Interviewee]. In reality, variations mostly relate to event scale, with larger events unsurprisingly requiring more comprehensive evaluations. EventScotland and Event Wales also consider metrics such as international television broadcast figures important for enhancing destination image. Measuring "transformational change" was also discussed as an area of interest for EventScotland, although even here, monitoring primarily relates to destination or community economic development rather than non-economic outcomes.

Financial auditing represents the cornerstone of evaluation for the programmes with funders focusing foremost on accountability and adherence to financial rules governing public expenditure. Pre- and post-event evaluation are also typically financially focused with funders requiring ticket sales and visitation figures as a basis for economic impact calculations. For larger events, independent assessment of financial accounting and impact is generally required, for smaller events compliance typically requires submission of internal accounting documents. Other requirements were found to focus on pre- and post-event management such as correct branding usage and thanking sponsors, ministers and volunteers. Early evaluation planning was also expected, with

organisers commonly required to engage with the funder prior to the event to plan promotion and evaluation activities.

Structure within event funding evaluation

One argument is that event funding should be evaluated through a performance-based system focused on post-performance rather than supply side investment i.e. success leads to greater funding rather than funding in advance of success (Hazledine, 2011). The reward for success is therefore a "topping up" of revenue (Lin et al 2011). As an economist, Hazledine (2011) saw the systems for arts funding (in New Zealand) as a poor use of public finance and argued for change. His premise is that the system should only reward positive spill-overs ("externalities") as these are, in his view, the only legitimate reason for taxpayer support of the arts. In moving funding from the supply side to outputs, or 'success' the funds support and encourage the consumption of art rather than the production of it. Although applied to arts more generally this approach could equally be argued for in events. As such, events do not need to be profit making but they do need to show 'success'. Hazledine (2011) does however add a caveat that "arts festivals don't fit" due to their transience and limited opportunity for revenue.

Such a demand rather than supply led approach may create a more balanced portfolio strategy which values internal demands and takes account of sociocultural peculiarities (Antchak 2017). Although intuitively appealing, this model is dependent upon events having a revenue stream and therefore neglects most free events where revenue is mainly through sponsorship and grants. It is also based on short-term visitor and stakeholder expenditure, ignoring long-term and non-economic impacts, which may not

be quantifiable or monetizable. The distinction between revenue, investment and outcomes becomes less clear in such cases.

Within the structural context of national funding programmes, several funds (TETF, TNI, RoI, Singapore and New Zealand) adopt similar approaches to that advocated by Hazledine (2011) withholding payment until deliverables have been verified post-event. Others such as EventScotland use an instalment schedule with the final payment released upon the delivery of the post-event report. This is possible due to the use of strict criteria whereby public funding is limited to additionalities and not core activities.

However, it is important to differentiate between evaluation compliance and success. Structurally, evaluation and reporting are integral requirements of all the schemes. Evaluation is typically comprised of three components, financial auditing, i.e. ensuring funding has been used for the intended purpose; outcome verification, i.e. assessment against agreed KPIs such as visitor numbers; and external impact evaluation e.g. economic impact. To minimise administration for organisers and funders, the depth and independence of assessment is generally proportional to event scale and investment. Financial accountability is at the forefront of evaluation requirements, providing justification for the investment and demonstrating compliance with funding terms. Broader deliverables such as KPI expectations and externalities are then assessed. Furthermore, all the schemes include verification as part of the process. TNI, Scotland and New Zealand require applicants to provide post-event evaluation reports and utilise economic impact assessment toolkits such as eventIMPACTS (www.eventimpacts.com). For larger events, independent verification is required, such

as the submission of third-party audited accounts (Singapore and RoI), or external impact assessments.

In all cases, reporting is limited to short-term post-event evaluations to promptly justify the funding investment. This highlights a structural divergence between programme centred evaluation to justify funding and a broader societal need to understand the positive and negative effects of events for host communities. As such, instrumental economic focus within evaluations reinforced by agency and structure, restricts the scope of external assessment that takes place. However, that is not to say that structure and agency restrict the delivery of successful events, rather success is defined within the narrow metrics used. Many programmes also require organisers to work closely with funders in the lead up to the event to maximise benefits. EventScotland stipulates a minimum of three months, and in the case of the New Zealand Mega Events Fund, applications are split into two calls, where applicants successful in the first stage apply for the second stage the following year. This is necessary to ensure that there is sufficient time to scrutinise applications and plan the delivery of the event in conjunction with the New Zealand Major Events team.

Conclusions

The aim of our research was to more fully understand the political nature of event tourism funding, the equity of distribution and, the decision processes involved addressing the potentially structurally and strategically selective nature of current practice. Employing a strategic-relational approach (Pastras and Bramwell 2013) allowed a focus on aspects of policy that are often hidden. The approach recognises the

sensitivity of the context of national and regional event tourism funding programmes created by the complex and intertwined power relationships between policy and agency which is embedded within governments (Jessop, 2005). Through the use of SRA we are able to conclude that agency and structure intertwine in this context, with each shaping and being shaped by the other and the implications of this are discussed below. Whilst it is acknowledged that this insight is undoubtedly carefully crafted by the respondents, the study provides a window into the policy environment of national and regional event tourism funders not readily accessible to academic critique.

Overall the sampled programmes broadly conform to a pattern of 'path-dependency', tied to the strategically selective context of tourism and economic development. This was evidenced by static policies and politically neutral objectives buffering against political change. Top-down power structures, often with ministers approving funding applications, also appear to restrict opportunities for 'path-shaping' at delivery level, as actors are preoccupied with policy implementation. Where agency for policy/fund change existed, it was restricted to 'path-refining' through minor or incremental changes. Furthermore, policy histories were found to be intertwined at intra-governmental level, with governments cloning formats and chasing similar events to other regions with scarce evidence of 'path-shaping' innovation.

Event evaluation was also found to be structurally constrained by narrow definitions of success related to fund KPIs and economic outcomes. Although several funds had begun to address broader aspects such as social and environmental impacts, capturing non-economic outcomes remains a challenge. Evaluation requirements were also found to be generally short-term, restricting the development of broader legacy outcomes.

Although a portfolio approach, as argued by Ziakas and Costa, (2011b) and Ziakas (2014) was valued, within the current policy architecture, even balanced portfolios remain restricted to applicants able to satisfy primarily economic criteria.

Figure 3 summarises the structurally and strategically selective nature of current practice and the negative consequences of such path dependency. It also highlights our recommended alternative *open* model which would allow for greater contextualisation and innovation in event tourism policy.

[Insert Figure 3 here]

Practice and policy recommendations

Although change will be hard to affect without top-down buy in to new ways of doing things there are still lessons to be learnt for those involved in event tourism at delivery level (event organizers, promoters and local tourism businesses). These are, firstly, to learn the rules of the current game – i.e. understand the processes and potential biases at play and to look for ways to fit with or circumvent these. For example, an ostensibly cultural event may have a better chance of funding success though an emphasis of its attractiveness to inbound tourists rather than say, community cohesion. It may be possible to define 'inbound' to better support the case being made. This might include bringing local suburban residents into the town centre, attracting local residents to a new venue or extending the reach to local audiences who traditionally do not attend the venue or type of event. Secondly, to understand the importance of influencing and lobbying for policy changes that would create greater inclusivity and transparency whilst allowing for creative freedom. A harder task but one to consider over the longer term.

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Our findings do, however, speak more to policy makers. It seems clear that current event tourism funding policies are privileging some and disadvantaging others creating potentially unbalanced portfolios which do not cater for the needs of local communities. Our suggested 'open model' (Figure 3) will require buy-in from multiple agencies often with conflicting goals and, in some cases, ideological changes at a high level (Andersson and Getz 2009). This is a big ask especially as "many relevant policies are made in other policy domains and the relevant actors are diverse and have varied interests and priorities" (Bramwell and Lane 2011:412). However, recognising the paths, the complex interplay of actors and the inherent selectivity of these is a start to making positive changes.

We therefore recommend firstly, that policy makers create contextualized rather than cloned policies that acknowledge regional distinctiveness, resident host wellbeing, local values, and community ownership (Ezedeuji 2015). Too many of these policies appear to have been parachuted in from other countries with the view that 'if it worked there it'll work here' showing little consideration for local conditions. Secondly, that the design and implementation of the funding process includes a role for all the actors who have an interest, rather than being dictated from above. Lastly, for the process to be inclusive and to avoid structural-selectivity, evaluation requirements need to be broadened to include, for example, softer measurements of social and community impacts and a consideration of environmental damage. These three policy changes will enable a path shaping approach, allowing those involved to break away from the inflexible paths well-trodden (path dependency). In turn this should create far greater scope for innovation and responsiveness.

To conclude, what appears to be needed to bring about broader social benefits and legacies is a paradigm shift to innovatively rebalance economic and social outcomes within fund KPIs and governance structures. This is summed up by Antchak (2017, 294) as entailing "a comprehensive revision of event strategies and approaches. This could include the development of new portfolio evaluation matrices, the revalidation and revision of the outcomes, and better stakeholder communication and integration." As this study has shown, without fundamental change, funding programmes are likely to continue to operate within their existing narrow remit. This finding also supports a growing body of evidence that isolated tourism interventions are inadequate, and that resident and tourism benefits require narrow policies to be abandoned in favour of broad and diversified economic and socioeconomic development strategy (Du, Lew and Ng 2016; Cárdenas-Garcia, Sánchez-Rivero, and Pulido-Fernández 2015).

Further research should take the funding applicants' and other stakeholders' view of the consequences of current policies and processes. This would consider the perspectives of fund recipients, both successful and unsuccessful, and the host communities in terms of their experience and ability to understand and influence the policies that affect them in this area. A similar strategic-relational approach would benefit further studies seeking to critique the contextually dependent and intertwining relationships inherent within other policy areas related to tourism, such as arts, culture and sports. It could also be useful in exploring the use of such policies in soft power and the appropriation of tourism and events for political purposes (Grix and Lee 2013).

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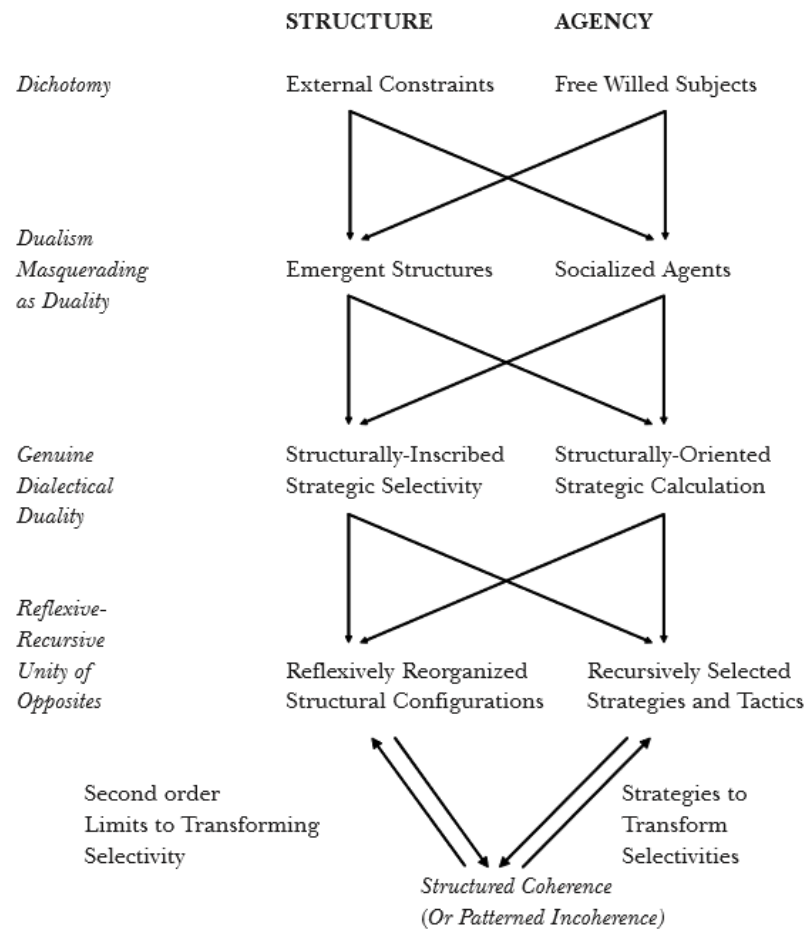
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Figure 1: A strategic relational approach to structure and agency

	STRUCTURE	AGENCY
Dichotomy	External Constraints	Free Willed Subjects
Dualism Masquerading as Duality	Emergent Structures	Socialized Agents
Genuine Dialectical Duality	Structurally-Inscribed Strategic Selectivity	Structurally-Oriented Strategic Calculation
Reflexive-Recursive Unity of Opposites	Reflexively Reorganized Structural Configurations	Recursively Selected Strategies and Tactics

Second order Limits to Transforming Selectivity

Strategies to Transform Selectivities

Structured Coherence (Or Patterned Incoherence)

Source: Jessop (2005:50)

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Table 1 Selected event funding programmes

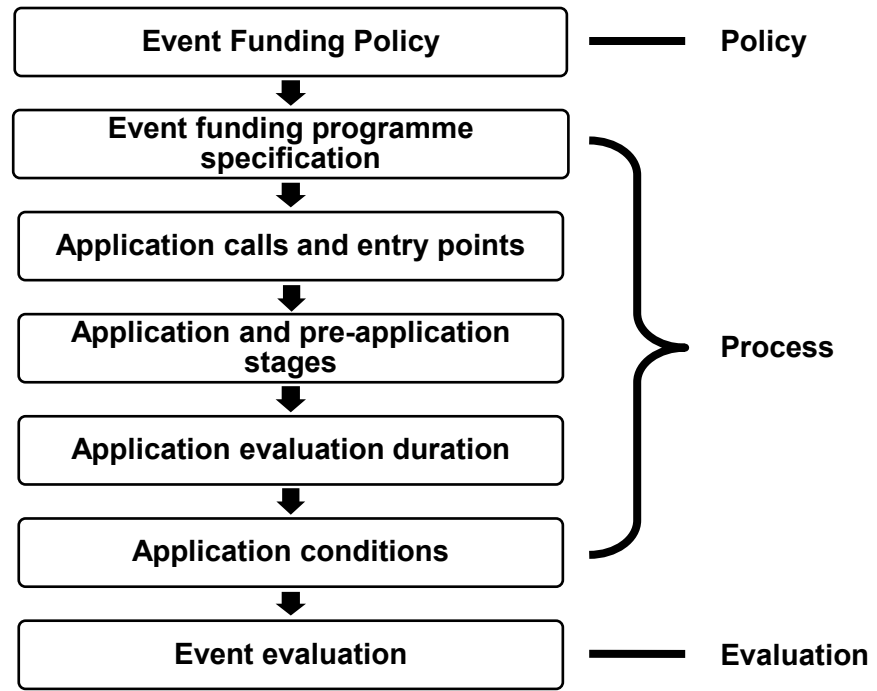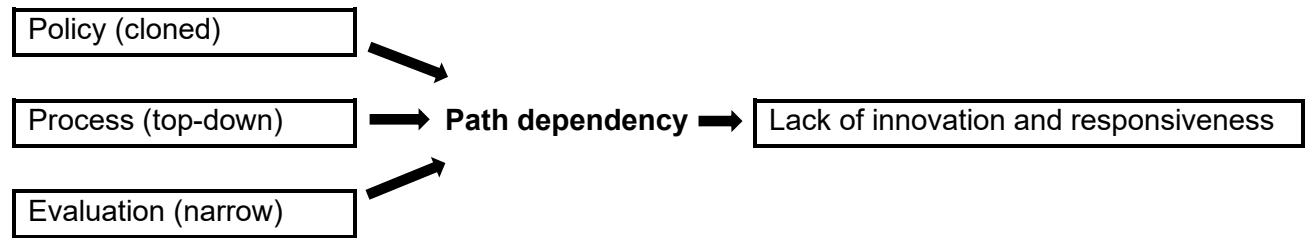| Country / Region	Programme	Programme Type
Australian Capital Territory (Canberra)	Events ACT. ACT / AMEF Event Fund	State-scale funding programme
England	Sport England Major Events Engagement Fund	National funding programme for hosting sports events
New Zealand	Mega Events Development Fund	National funding programme / Regional funding programme
Northern Ireland	Tourism Northern Ireland events funding programme 2010/11 – 2015/16	National funding programme
Republic of Ireland	National Festivals and Participative Events Programme	National funding programme
Scotland	EventScotland Scotland the Perfect Stage	National funding programme
Singapore	Leisure Events Fund (LEF), Business Events in Singapore (BEIS), Kick Start Fund (KF)	National funding programme for leisure and business event development
Tasmania	Events Tasmania. Major Events Partnerships Program, Regional Events Start-up Program, Grants Program	National funding programme
Texas	Texas Events Trust Fund (TETF), Major Events Reimbursement Programme (MERP), Motor Sports Racing Trust Fund (MSRTF).	State-scale event trust fund programme
Wales	Event Wales A Major Events Strategy for Wales 2010-2020	National funding programme

Figure 2 Overview of event funding programme structures

Figure 3: Structure and agency in event tourism funding policy

Restricted

| Policy (cloned) |

| Process (top-down) | ➡️ **Path dependency** ➡️ | Lack of innovation and responsiveness |

| Evaluation (narrow) |

Open

| Policy (contextualised) |

| Process (inclusive) | ➡️ **Path shaping** ➡️ | Innovative and responsive funding |

| Evaluation (broadened) |