

Book Review

Book Review: A Research Agenda for Event Impacts

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When I was a full time academic, " REF" and 'impact' were the buzzwords since 2014. There seemed to be a different REF and impact-related event scheduled, even training aimed at every level of researchers. Lots of energy was invested in spreading the word on "REF and 'impact' to the last academics.

Working as a volunteer for an NGO advocating research with an impact in the Higher Education institutions in Malaysia, I find history repeating itself. In 2021, for the first time, Malaysia Higher Education funded the research impact training for academics on research with 'impact', which modelled the UK REF. Malaysian academics and university managers seem to be baffled by the notion of research agenda on impact. Frantically training academics to figure out and explain what impact is. Tracking down potential impact-generating scholars and tasking them with producing impact case studies with endless rounds of corrections for case studies as outputs of the funded program.

The notion of an "impact agenda" entails policy makers' attempts to ensure accountability on academics for utilisation of public funds for research. The impact agenda thus requires academics to address the intrinsic value of their research in advancing knowledge—its academic merit—and the value their research has to society—its broader impacts. Since then, research impact has been a

professional obsession, wanting to capture the evidence by creating conditions that deliver benefits from my research. In 2021, UKRI also introduced Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI), a content-rich alternative to the traditional CV. It supports potential applicants to show how they have made a difference to society during the grant application.

I was excited to receive the book *A Research Agenda for Event Impacts*, edited by Nicholas Wise and Kelly Maguires, with anticipation and apprehension. In anticipation because researchers, professional support staff and institutional leaders are often looking for advice and best practice in delivering impact. In anxiety, I also see a worrying trend in the delivery of research impact becoming a box-ticking exercise. Something that is done to satisfy the policy requirement rather than make a difference in the world.

I need not have worried. Running through this book is the passion both the editors and their contributors clearly feel about delivering event impacts from their own research, with examples of case studies and helping others do the same. This is definitely a book about making a real difference by analysing event impacts.

This book explores events' social, economic, and environmental impacts on people, places, and communities. The Research Agenda highlights the links between theory and practice in event impacts research. The contributors teach and research in the field of events and recognise the importance of the research agenda. They critically assess circumstances, look at who benefits from hosting them, and focus on sustainability issues, the need to define legacies, and extend regeneration efforts to secure economic and socially sustainable futures. They explore how events are being expended and used by destinations, organisations, and communities, which offers profound insights into impacts created by different events hosted in various geographical destinations. I particularly find this book useful as the case studies are relevant to tourism, social science and management disciplines.

The introduction to Research Agenda for Event impacts was written by Nicholas Wise. He focuses on event management researchers seeking ways to explore how events have impacted places, communities and the environment, which provides the opportunity to reflect on how different experiences by various contributors are measured and managed. After the introduction, the book has three distinctive parts. The first part is assessing event impacts which has three chapters focusing on the theory and concepts connected to the triple bottom line of sustainability – economic in Chapter 2 by Larry Dwyer, environmental in Chapter 3 by Kelly Macguire and social in Chapter 4, Wise, Gellweiler and Tian.

For the economic impact, Dwyer addresses how different stakeholders benefit from the various analysis techniques and how policymakers use data to inform decisions based on tangible results and secured outcomes. In Chapter 3, Maguire explains the pressures of events on the environment by outlining the different approaches to environmental impact assessment, strategic environmental assessment, models for sustainable event management, global criteria and indicator systems to help

plan for a more sustainable event. One pertinent raised on environmental impact is the amount of trash polluting the environment after an event requires innovative waste management from the event organisers. In Chapter 4, Wise et al. offer intangible approaches and critical directions for research in and with local communities from the perspectives of literature. They address the key questions and social conditions that researchers should consider when capturing social impact evidence.

In Part 2, the chapters then analyse various types and scales of events, including conventions and business events, sports tourism, cultural and religious events, intangible cultural heritage, and events in rural locations. This section offers the most valuable examples of event impacts for researchers. Hahm has highlighted the benefits of hosting convention events in chapter 5 and outlined how the periods of crisis have impacted this sector. Hahm uses the Orange County Convention Centre as an example of the impact of this centre in Orlando. Perc et al., in chapter 6, explore how the use of events by destinations and communities can extend the impact of tourism and create new sporting activities in a destination by illustrating the Rinsjak Trail running event in Gorki Kotar, Croatia.

Ulian and Felino (Chapter 8) offer insights on the commercialisation of religious festivals, an event deeply embedded in the culture in Salvador, Brazil, with the capacity to create broader social and cultural impacts by using religious events. Succinctly Jimura's research points out the necessity to focus on environmental sustainability and directions for impact heritage by using the firework case study of a 17th-century cultural entertainment tradition in Japan. On the other hand, Lindblom (Chapter 9) uses the international sporting event to illustrate the positive and negative experiences of different stakeholders in the co-production of this event. The author uses other collection methods to capture the experiences of other stakeholders involved. Aquilino, in chapter 10, provides a critical account of World Alternative Games in a small town of Llanwtyard Wells of human experiences and social practices boost social development in the rural communities. Maguire's case study on the role of local authority works closely with host communities by outlining the need to be socially, environmentally and economically sustainable.

Building on the theoretical perspective of space and place by Cudny in Chapter 12, the author assesses the role of event influences on place brand in a specific location. He discovers the sports Euro 2012 media messages, for example, focusing on images of space, event experiences, and event dimensions that influence the place branding. Fitzgerald and Maharaj (Chapter 13) provide a critical perspective on the influence of the bidding process to host mega-events by BRICS nations. Bond et al. (Chapter 14) have analysed the impact of the recent COVID 19 pandemic from event cancellation, postponement and adaptation through the UEFA EURO 2020. This forward-looking Research Agenda further analyses event impact on disability access and inclusion (Chapter 15) and climate change (Chapter 16).

Part 3 is the theme on Going Forward , consists of three chapters and focuses on the critical directions moving forward with impact research. Chapters 17 and 18 address the legacy and policy. In Chapter 17, Ganga focuses on how a legacy can be maximised through event evaluation. In addition, Wasser

et al., in Chapter 18, present the concept of legacy and its long-lasting impact through sports events and their governance. Future research must continue to compare and contrast impacts through the lens of multi-stakeholders for a holistic understanding of event impacts to be achieved. This can be done through longitudinal studies to look at the economic, environmental, and social impacts of events in various destinations for a prolonged period. Researchers can look into how perceptions of stakeholders may have changed over time.

I find this book will engage a wide range of readers from various backgrounds, organisational affiliations or career stages – who consider events impact more inclusive. Readers will benefit by engaging in reflection to transform the current research agenda on framing, delivery and evaluation of event impacts. The eBook version is priced from £20/\$26 from eBook vendors while in print the book can be ordered from the Edward Elgar Publishing website.

Reviewer

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