

**Building Resilience and Understanding Complexities of Event Project
Stakeholder Management**

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Highlights

- addressing the need for complexity management in festivals and events
- understanding complexity is critical to developing resilience in the sector
- focus on event project stakeholders as being critical to complexity management
- complexity characteristics from stakeholder theory, project and event management align in instrumental and normative terms
- the need for timing and timeliness to address the challenges and complexities of varying stakeholder timelines and trajectories
- consideration of a 3-dimensional model to overcome the limitations of current project management tools

Abstract

This conceptual paper explores the nature of complexity management of event project stakeholders in festivals and events. Recent and ongoing Global factors have heightened an emphasis on resilience in the sector, including consideration of being embedded in organisational process, not only a planned response which is activated and deployed when needed. With no current research of complexity management in festivals and events, this research follows a sequential examination of complexity in three key academic fields – project management, stakeholder theory and event management – and the subsequent areas of overlap to arrive at the core intersection of event project stakeholders. This sequence reveals a number of key elements for consideration, each with corresponding characteristics which contrast along instrumental and normative lines providing a set of parameters for future

consideration and research. By virtue of being temporary planned experiences with specific time constraints, festivals and events are a unique type of project.

Stakeholders bring added complexity - should their goals not be well defined or emerge through the project cycle then uncertainty is introduced and complexity is assured. Furthermore, event stakeholder dynamics shift and change over the period of the project life cycle indicating the importance of time, timing and timely intervention. Whilst event management focuses on the chronological countdown to event day, stakeholders may follow their own timelines and trajectories presenting additional complexity and challenges for event producers and managers. This is demonstrated by a 3-dimensional representation to stimulate further research and modelling in the field of festival and events.

Keywords: event management, stakeholder theory, project management, complexity, stakeholder management, resilience, timeliness

Resilience and Understanding Complexities of Event Project Stakeholder Management

As the festival and events sector strives to recover from the impacts of the Global Pandemic, resilience has become a critical concern. Ordinarily, resilience in the sector had been considered in the context of risk management, and had been included as one of the six stages of Crisis Management (Ziakas et al., 2021a). The focus had been on the ability to withstand a range of potential threats and shocks (Ashwin, 2021) and the capacity to swiftly recover from them (Ziakas et al., 2021b). In reality, recovery in the new post-Pandemic world has not necessarily been swift and is confronted by ongoing uncertainties and impacts which have accelerated an emphasis on resilience in the strategic planning of events (Ziakas et al., 2021a). However, this remains a somewhat limited operational view of event activity when a wider understanding of resilience in an organisational sense may be needed to address a broader range of uncertainties.

As defined by the British Standards Institute, Organizational Resilience is “the ability of an organization to anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to incremental change and sudden disruptions in order to survive and prosper” (Kerr, 2021, p.1). This perspective encompasses all the operational risk and crisis elements whilst also providing a basis for the sector to flourish and be sustained in the longer term. This requires resilience to be considered on an ongoing basis, embedded into process rather than as a planned response which is only activated and deployed when needed.

Planning and delivering events in such uncertain times may require a different approach to resilience. Event management is concerned with delivering a planned experience (Brown, 2014) and can be considered as a type of project with its own

distinct and varying planning processes. However, the importance of experience and temporary nature of events means that traditional project management approaches are not fit for purpose. Given that events operate within dynamic structures, complex and nonlinear relationships between stakeholders develop over time to form a unified whole which behaves in an unpredictable yet orderly manner simultaneously (Olmedo & Mateos, 2015). This has all the hallmarks of a complex system and such levels of uncertainty in stakeholder management clearly indicate a degree of complexity to be addressed leading directly to the consideration of complexity management theory. The increasingly complex nature of events and their inherent degree of uncertainty suggests that understanding complexity and managing it effectively is essential in achieving this resilience.

It is acknowledged that research on complexity management in festivals and events has not been undertaken (Ziakas et al., 2021b), and this conceptual paper therefore makes a significant contribution to knowledge and understanding of the nature of the complexity of event project stakeholders in the sector. It takes a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on three inter-related fields of study – stakeholder theory, project management and event management – and their overlapping areas of project stakeholders, event projects and event stakeholders. This research will follow a ‘path of complexity’ to arrive at the intersection of all three fields - the focal point that encapsulates the combined complexity of event project stakeholders (Figure 1).

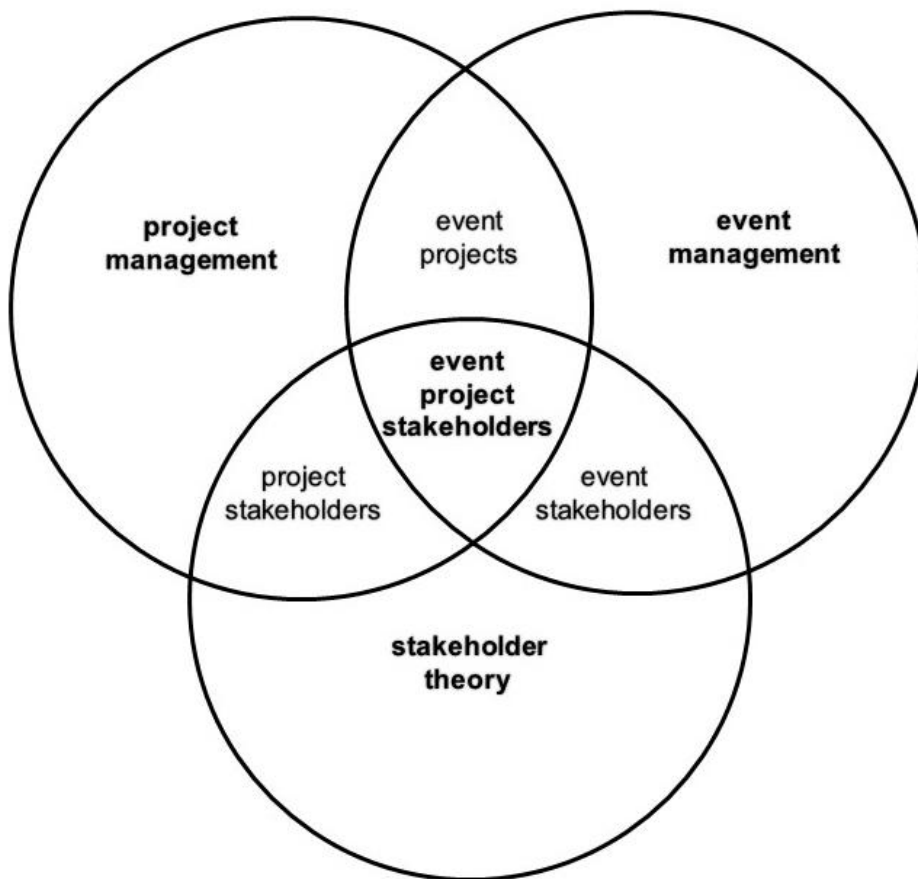


Figure 1: *The three fields of study, overlapping areas and central intersection*

A discussion of these key considerations, underlines the importance of complexity management in festivals and events and its contribution to resilience. A range of parameters are then presented that could be used to develop complexity management and contribute knowledge to the sector. In particular, the discussion highlights key challenges concerning the time constrained nature of event planning and the complexity of stakeholders with their own timelines and trajectories. To assist with the understanding and visualisation of the conceptual development, a 3-dimensional graphical model is presented and proposed for application in the events field. The paper concludes with calls for future research to extend current theory and examine it in practice.

Literature Review

Project Management and Complexity

The path of complexity begins with project management where the literature considers the definition of a project to consist of three essential features – it is unique, uses novel processes and is transient with a beginning and an end (Turner & Müller, 2003). The specific characteristics of being unique and temporary are echoed by the Project Management Institute – *temporary* as they all have a definite beginning and end with a limited time frame, and *unique* as they can be distinguished in some way from other products or services ‘even if the category to which it belongs is large’ (PMI, 2000). It is also noted that whilst this definition certainly applies to particular types of one-off projects such as large engineering works, today, the core business process of many organisations comprises of multiple projects of varying durations and complexity. This suggests that the degree of uniqueness, or novelty of a project, can be mis-placed (Maylor, 2001) and indicates that projects are becoming increasingly common in practice, similar in nature and less distinctive. Furthermore, a distinction is made between projects which are *complex* and *complicated* projects (Azim et al., 2010).

Complicated projects are focused on clear, established and well defined goals, whilst complex projects involve goals or objectives which are not well defined or may which may emerge through the project cycle (Azim et al., 2010). Complexity is also considered in terms of ‘uncertainty’ of how well-defined the goals of projects and the respective methods of achieving them are and ‘structural complexity’ in relation to the certainties of a project’s underlying structure in reaching them (Williams, 1999). There is also ‘descriptive complexity’ and ‘perceived complexity’, where ‘descriptive complexity’ is an objective understanding of a project’s intrinsic qualities and focuses on quantifying or measuring complexity, and ‘perceived

complexity' is a subjective perception of complexity of the context and reality of a project based on an individual's experience of number and type of projects (Azim et al., 2010; Williams, 1999). If complexity in the context of project management relates to perception and experience, then it is considered important to understand the factors which generate complexity and evaluate their impact over the project life cycle (Azim et al., 2010), including how the inherent complexity of stakeholder relationships impact on project success (Uribe et al., 2018).

In terms of complexity management, Turner and Baker (2019) consider that of the recent developments and strands of complexity theory, the metaphorical school is the most suitable for the social sciences. This is based on the view of the world as an organic entity, believing there is an intrinsic difference between the social and natural worlds and viewing complexity through a connectionist perspective. Key components of complexity theory include non-linear dynamics, chaos theory, and adaptation, with uncertainty generated by unpredictable future states of systems. Citing the Cynefin framework, there is a distinction between the complicated known unknowns and complex unknown unknowns (Turner & Baker, 2019). Complexity management is deemed to involve three key elements: solving problems that result from the variety, range and dynamics of external and internal elements and their relationship with the organisation and the environment; observing patterns of behaviour, actions, decisions and perceptions by actors in their subjective responses to complexity; and integrating the differing individual measures into a synergetic framework (Gorzeń-Mitka & Okręglicka, 2015).

The relationship between complexity and response and its implication for the behaviour of managers is seen to be critical (Maylor & Turner, 2017). In the context of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS), organizations must be adaptive, not simply

responding to events, but evolving or learning. This is a context where each actor is guided by its own schema or rules of behaviour as well as by a scheme shared with others. Responding with linear cause and effect tools is inadequate, current planning and control rules are inappropriate and therefore ineffective, and standard management approaches to socio-political complexities are deemed particularly less useful. Given the potential for multiple unknown variables managers must 'begin to pay greater attention to the non-linear and subtle influences in their planning and management' (Maylor & Turner, 2017). For example, project managers face a tension between focusing on planning and control in response to structural complexities whilst wishing to remain flexible in response to the emergence of complexity and uncertainties of the project. In striving to accommodate both, managers either exploit known or planned responses to dealing with complexities or a strategy of exploration in response to emerging complexity (Maylor & Turner, 2017).

In terms of further application to festivals and events, it is believed that there is a need to re-conceptualize complexity theory for each discipline and that a conversation needs to occur within each field to facilitate this. This includes the social sciences where complexity theory could provide a means of developing new perspectives to examine social systems, resulting in a better understanding of the complex issues of today (Turner & Baker, 2019). Whilst there is very limited research in the sector, complexity theory and the application of complex thinking is deemed to bring new approach on ways to face the multiple challenges that are common in Sporting Mega Events (SMEs) and the growing complexities of hosting them (Shonk & Bravo, 2019). A proposed framework of measures addresses the full range of complexity theories. The behavioural, cognitive and structural complexity aspects are

derived from human and material resources, collaborations and behaviours such as decision-making. Whilst algorithmic, aggregate, and deterministic complexity are captured through primary or secondary sources of data (Shonk & Bravo, 2019).

While this model was formed in relation to SMEs, there are calls for it to be empirically tested on events of all scales and types (Shonk & Bravo, 2019) but given the absence of literature on complexity management in events, it may be prudent to develop an understanding of it from first principles beginning with the field of project management.

Conventional project management theory has defined project success in relation to achieving the three primary objectives of the 'iron triangle' - getting the project completed within the constraints of time, quality (or performance), and cost (Atkinson, 1999; Lock, 1997). Success on these terms can be represented in a graph which plots these three parameters on x,y and z axis of a grid, with the convergence of these critical success factors producing a singular success point - in time, at cost and of quality (Kerzner, 2003). However, in reality, there are variations to these three dimensions – projects can have increased costs, overrun and be late in completion or achieve differing levels of quality. Indeed, a 2013 survey by KPMG found that 33% of projects were completed on budget, 29% on time and 35% to scope (K. Davis, 2017). This suggests that rather than a single point, a cuboid in this 3-dimensional plot may be a better representation of these conventional project management considerations as shown in Figure 2.

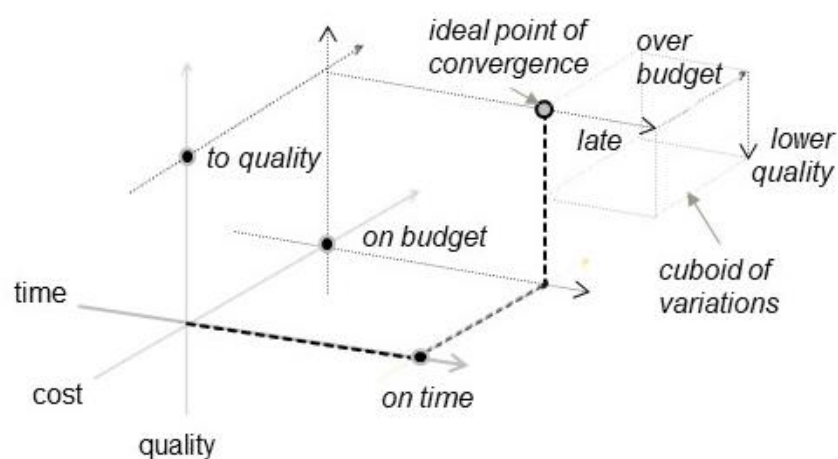


Figure 2: Convergence of success factors – point or cube (adapted from Kerzner, 2003)

However, critics of this established approach suggest that the iron triangle is “no more than two best guesses and a phenomenon” (Atkinson, 1999, p.341) with time and costs calculated when least is known about the project, and quality is a subjective phenomenon which can emerge and change throughout the project. The iron triangle is considered incomplete and its criteria should be expanded to cover benefits as well as project outputs and outcomes across the range of value delivered by the project (Musawir et al., 2017). It is proven only to be part of overall project success and needs to be broadened to include stakeholder satisfaction, benefits to the project organization and long-term impacts (Radujković & Sjekavica, 2017). With too much focus on conformance in relation to the cost, time and quality, a greater emphasis on performance is now required (Maylor, 2001) as an additional area of consideration in project management (K. Davis, 2017). Conformance reflects manufacturing process with precise specifications and measurables, whereas many projects now require different performance measures, such as customer orientation. This indicates a shift from product-based measures to more appropriate service-

based outcomes and processes (Maylor, 2001). In the context of events, such a service-dominant logic was found to provide insight into how co-creation adds value to the consumer festival experience (Van Winkle & Bueddefeld, 2016).

The advent of the triple-bottom line (TBL) and an increased awareness of the social and environmental considerations of projects has also challenged the dominance of the conventional iron triangle and economic factors (Brown et al., 2015; Crane & Ruebottom, 2011). This has led to the need for a holistic approach, integrating the economic, social and ecological dimensions through long-term and sustainable strategies (Di Maddaloni & Derakhshan, 2019), and a shift from the traditional supply or value chain to a more ecological, network approach (Jackson et al., 2018; Richards & Jarman, 2021). Whilst the parameters of the iron triangle and factors for success are believed to be known quantities, their limitations also explain why projects have consistently been deemed as failing (Atkinson, 1999). This is believed to be a result of focusing exclusively on iron triangle delivery criteria which gives an inaccurate picture of project management failure. The iron triangle clearly represents a set of known, tangible complications of a project, but not a range of potential unknown, intangible complexities of a project, and therefore cannot give a holistic appraisal of project failure. Integrating additional criteria of stakeholder management to the conventional 'iron triangle' could herald a new evolutionary phase in project management process (Atkinson, 1999; Maylor, 2001; Uribe et al., 2018) which in turn would elevate complexity alongside complication in contemporary project management theory and practice.

Project management practice is encapsulated in a number of guides published by professional organisations, notably the Project Management Institute (PMI) and the Association of Project Management (APM). The PMI practice guide is

not without its critics and is seen to focus more on what are deemed 'hard' skills than 'soft' (Azim et al., 2010). In project management terms, hard skills relate to procedures, process, techniques and tools, whilst soft skills relate to the 'people' side of projects such as communication and relationship management which can, at times, be more significant (Azim et al., 2010; De Carvalho & Rabechini Junior, 2015; Di Maddaloni & Derakhshan, 2019). There is concern that standard project management approaches concentrate on 'hard skills' which are not deemed effective for modern management. This has led to a call for the importance of 'soft skills' to be recognised given "their effect on project success is highly significant and positive" (De Carvalho & Rabechini Junior, 2015, p.335). In contrast, the APM practice guide states that it is people who deliver successful projects, not methods and tools, and it is people's ability to engage intelligently with the complexity of projects, that is central to the successful management of projects (Azim et al., 2010). With limitations of the hard skills approach in addressing the complex social contexts and dynamics of projects, project management research is also criticised for lacking relevance to practice leading to a call to focus on the lived experience of practitioners in managing projects (Azim et al., 2010) and the soft skills needed to address complexity in the management of projects and their stakeholders (De Carvalho & Rabechini Junior, 2015; Walker et al., 2008).

Stakeholder Theory and Complexity

Following the path of complexity within stakeholder theory, it is important to consider stakeholders and their management in the context of both projects and business. A seminal moment in stakeholder theory is widely considered to be the 1984 publication of 'Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach' by Freeman (1984) which marked a conceptual shift from the dominant production and

management views of the firm to the stakeholder view of it (Eskerod, Huemann, & Savage, 2015) and effectively delivering the 'birth' of stakeholder theory (Littau et al., 2010). It defined stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives" (Freeman, 1984, p.25). This is acknowledged by many to be the classic stakeholder definition (Capriello & Fraquelli, 2008; Moital et al., 2013; Tiew et al., 2015; Van Niekerk & Getz, 2016).

However, an alternative stakeholder definition was presented in the project management field as those ". . . who have a vested interest in the outcome of the project" (Cleland, 1985) or those who have a legitimate claim (Cleland, 1986). This contrast between Cleland's focus on 'vested interests' and 'legitimate claims', and Freeman's wider 'affects' indicates what has now become considered as a distinction between two threads of stakeholder theory, the instrumental and the normative, also described as the management *of* stakeholders and the management *for* stakeholders (Freeman, 2010; Freeman, et al., 2007). The instrumental approach sees stakeholders in terms of resources to procure, and the management 'of' them as a means to an end for organisational aims. The normative approach 'suggests that all stakeholders have the right and legitimacy to receive attention from the organization' (Eskerod, Huemann and Savage, 2015, p.9), 'have names and faces and children' (Freeman, 2010, p.9), with management 'for' stakeholders as valuable entities in their own right.

Cited as the "two different and contraposing stakeholder management approaches" (Di Maddaloni & Derakhshan, 2019, p.3), the instrumental approach identifies stakeholders in relation to the organisation's interests and needs and aligning stakeholders to them whilst the normative approach is deemed holistic, where stakeholder interests are respected and considered in their own right. There is

an increased emphasis on the normative, to focus on meeting and exceeding the needs and expectations of stakeholders through an inclusive approach towards stakeholder management to develop trustful relationships and collaborative value creation (Di Maddaloni & Derakhshan, 2019; Freeman, et al., 2007; Freeman & McVea, 2001). Indeed the normative approach is deemed more ethical, moving beyond traditional analysis of stakeholders as supporters or threats to the organisation, to being embraced to seek win-win situations rather than trade-offs (Eskerod, Huemann, & Savage, 2015). Stakeholder inclusiveness is further defined as 'the extent to which (in principle) all stakeholders are considered by the focal organization' (Eskerod, Huemann, & Ringhofer, 2015, p.43). Here, 'considered' means the organisation should identify and address stakeholder needs and expectations but not necessarily accommodate them (Eskerod, Huemann, & Ringhofer, 2015). 'In principle' acknowledges that it is not always possible to identify all stakeholders – this could be due to a lack of awareness (Eskerod & Jepsen, 2013) or because some stakeholders are groupings of diverse individuals (Eskerod, Huemann and Ringhofer, 2015). However, this potential polarity between the 'of' and 'for' approaches is tempered by the argument that stakeholder analysis raises the possibility of combining both in order to increase the likelihood of achieving a variety of success criteria (Andersen, 2008).

Echoing the normative approach to stakeholders from the project management literature, advances in management theory also favour co-opetition. Specifically, there is shift in focus from *competitive* advantage to *cooperative* advantage. This is highlighted for instance by the more recent work of Porter & Kramer (2011) 'Creating Shared Value', in which there is a recognition that cooperation between organisations and their stakeholders is needed for social and

environmental sustainability. This conceptual shift is particularly important as it challenges the dominant paradigm of competitive advantage, exemplified by 'Five Competitive Forces' since Porter (1985) (Strand & Freeman, 2015). With 'cooperation' between a company and its stakeholders deemed a more effective strategy for value creation (Strand & Freeman, 2015), it has also been seen as maximising stakeholder well-being and 'redistributing value at the greatest possible value point', establishing a key difference between the assumptive framework of sole self-interest and the combined interests of self with others (Ingerson et al., 2015).

Making sense of stakeholders in practical terms and the challenges this presents has generated a range of approaches to managing their complexity. Given the possible number, scope and nature of stakeholders, the potential dynamics or conflicts between them, the team and each other, and the resource demands this may require, prioritising stakeholders is noted to be an important and regular element of strategy planning (Jepsen & Eskerod, 2009, Eskerod, Huemann and Savage, 2015). Freeman himself has cautioned against simplistic 'role-based identification' with a move towards a 'names and faces approach' (McVea & Freeman, 2005) to stakeholder identification of specific interests and identities to enable the moral value of stakeholders to be recognised more easily (Di Maddaloni and Derakhshan, 2019). With proactive stakeholder identification considered a core issue and challenge for business (Crane & Ruebottom, 2011), new models and methodologies have been developed as a means to achieve it and address the inherent complexities of stakeholder management (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2019, 2021).

It is, however, acknowledged that it can be difficult to see stakeholder interests as 'joint' rather than 'opposed' and not easy to find a way that all such

interests can be accommodated (Freeman, 2010). Dealing with the complexities of stakeholders can be harder than ignoring them and whilst the value creation process provides opportunities for real leadership, those involved need to be patient and accept conflict and change (Freeman, Martin, et al., 2007). This has led some to point out that an instrumental approach may be a more appealing and pragmatic option to the alternative normative ideal; an ideal which has been deemed in danger of being too naïve given the complex challenges for temporary projects or organisations to achieve the requisite win-wins in a timely and proportionate manner (Eskerod, Huemann, & Savage, 2015). Others maintain that a company needs to appreciate that seeing stakeholders in purely instrumental terms misunderstands the point of the value creation process (Freeman & Liedtka, 1997) and should see itself operating in its own ecosystem to better understand the interests of stakeholders, resolve trade-offs, create accountability and achieve sustained success (Burchman & O'Toole, 2020). This also requires a reinterpretation of the value chain and traditional hierarchies (Andersson & Getz, 2008; Capriello & Fraquelli, 2008; Cserhati & Szabo, 2014) in order to develop relationships with stakeholders that are sustainable over time (Freeman & Liedtka, 1997; Pernecky, 2022). Indeed the significance of stakeholder theory has developed to such an extent that the 21st Century is considered more stakeholder focussed, with a closer examination of success and the goals of a project life cycle (K. Davis, 2014); also evident in the festival and events sector.

Event Management and Complexity

Continuing on the path of complexity, the field of event management has been described as a series of activities and processes that lead to a planned experience, an *experience* that is intended, staged or facilitated and dependent upon an

audience or participants to be realised (Brown, 2014), with the events industry acknowledged as a key instrument for the delivery of experiences (Jackson et al., 2018). Given that events are experiential, it is argued that all event experiences must be created, designed and produced (Brown, 2014; Jackson et al., 2018) with an increasing requirement for strategic event creation and purposeful design (Beard & Russ, 2017). Creativity in events is also considered a core value by event practitioners and academics (Brown, 2014) and a requirement in both the planning of events and the event manager role (Jackson et al., 2018), adding further complexity to event management.

Characteristics of creativity include 'divergent thinking abilities'. Identified by Guilford (1984), this is seen as the abilities of originality, flexibility, fluency and elaboration of thought to go searching, changing routes and generating multiple answers to a given problem and developing something new (Bavik & Kuo, 2022; Sisk, 2021). This is distinct from 'convergent thinking' (Guilford, 1984) which focuses on knowledge and resources to identify the ideas most worth pursuing to arrive at conventional answers (Bavik & Kuo, 2022). These components continue to be considered important to event managers and have been developed further to identify three key aspects of creativity in events (Jackson et al., 2018). Firstly, successful events require a combination of convergent and divergent thinking – the pragmatic planning and processes to ensure the event takes place on time and within its finite resources alongside the creativity. Secondly, this is not an individual process, it is social and collaborative – it involves other people, not just the core team, potentially even audiences themselves. Thirdly, the context of events generates a particular type of creativity – their limited time and resources, and temporary nature produces unique, everchanging, yet familiar, events (Jackson et al., 2018).

It is argued that actors in event networks are not individual, autonomous and routine based but networked, heteronomous and responsive to unpredictable and non-controllable reality (Hedaa & Törnroos, 2001). With growing turbulence and interdependence across sectors, actors are also considered as dependant or independent, acting alone or collaborating, or limited or stimulated by others in the network which may create or hinder opportunities for action, generating incremental value creation across a value net rather than a conventional value chain (Azara et al., 2021; Hedaa & Törnroos, 2001). Such value creation impacts on the event life cycle and the literature includes examples of the differing and unique pathways or trajectories of festivals and events (Holmes & Ali-Knight, 2017). These cycles look beyond the planning and implementation aspects of event management to the context in which festivals and events take place and how they fit.

The breadth of the events sector also adds to its complexity. With 20 distinct event types identified across 4 thematic categories (Dolasinski et al., 2021) it has been difficult to establish industry-wide practice in the festivals and events sector (Harris, 2004). Whilst a number of models have been developed around the world (Bladen & Kennell, 2014; Brown, 2014) there is no standardised or internationally recognised occupational standards or certifications for practice in festivals and events. In comparison with the best practice guides of the project management sector, the Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) was developed through collaboration between academics and practitioners (Silvers, 2007). As a framework that identifies the full range of event management fundamentals it provides a structure that enables event management knowledge to be collated, analysed and retrieved. However, even though it acts as both a practice guide and a tool for deconstruction and academic research, it is not widely used by academics or

researchers (Brown, 2014). This demonstrates the challenges in developing standardised practice and bridging the gap between theory and practice in festivals and events. It is clear that there are a number of complexities to the management of festivals and events and a need for an approach that event managers and producers can use to address them successfully. Whilst the limitations of conventional and sector-specific stakeholder management models largely remain, there have been some recent efforts to address them; notably the introduction of the Stakeholder Sandwich conceptual model (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2019) and later its methodological extension (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2021) concentrating on the complexities of event management.

Discussion

Having identified complexity in each of the three fields of project management, stakeholder theory and event management, the path of complexity now spirals inwards to pass through the overlapping areas of event projects, project stakeholders and event stakeholders. These areas compound complexity even further and inform the complex nature of the combined focus at the centre of the spiral - event project stakeholder management. Only by understanding this critical point of intersection can complexity be managed and strategies for resilience be developed.

Event projects

Starting with the crossover of project management and event management, it is evident from the literature that there are characteristics of projects that are pertinent to events, and that events can be considered as a 'type' of project. Given that 'the definition of an event as an occurrence that has a time element, two or more

participants, is planned, and is a unique opportunity' (Dolasinski et al., 2021, p.558-559), their temporary lifespan, complicated and complex planning, and unique nature confirms the categorisation of events as projects.

Furthermore, with festivals and events delivering on a fixed time and date, unlike most other project types they cannot be late. Such a clear countdown to event day decidedly sets festivals and events apart and adds complexity where time becomes a finite and limited resource. Kerzner's cuboid of variations now becomes a rectangle for events at fixed point in time (Figure 3).

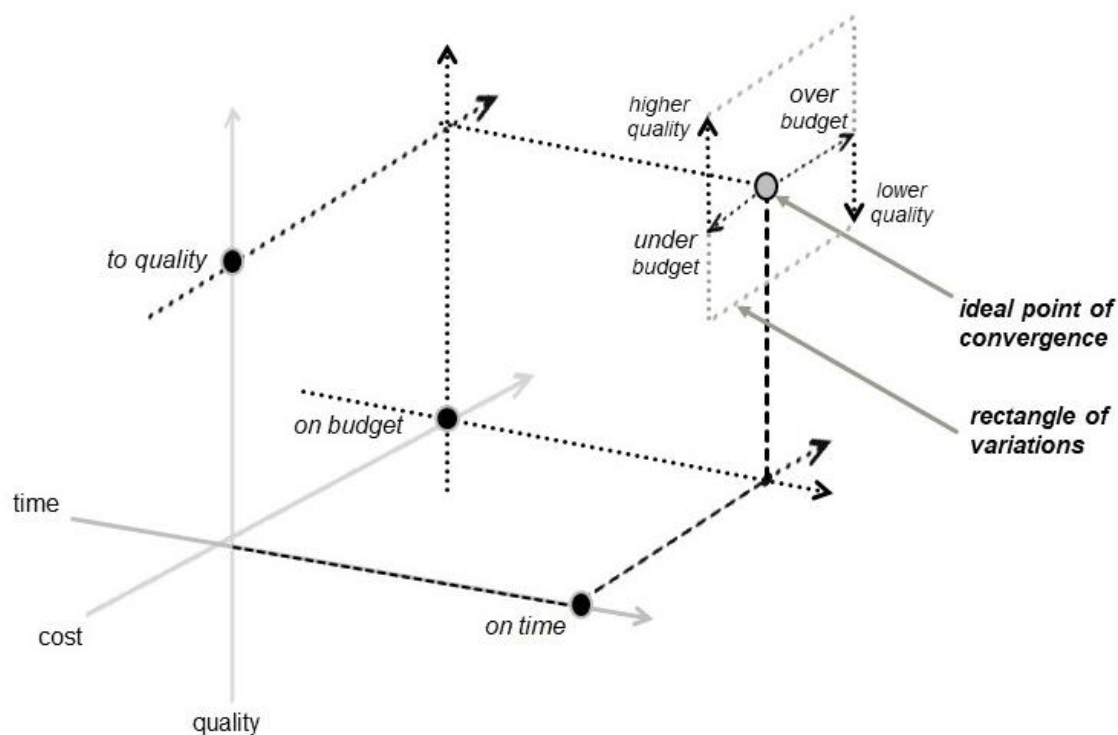


Figure 3: Rectangular convergence of success factors for fixed-time events
(adapted from Kerzner, 2003)

It is also noted that in comparison to the management of a tangible and physical project that exists in its own right, an event is not a 'thing' - it is the staging of an experience which only exists in the presence of an audience and this creation of experience is a characteristic that 'sets events apart from projects' (Brown, 2014).

Whilst there are obviously tangible elements to facilitate an event experience, there are the levels of complexity and uncertainty which has led some to argue that, for example, sports event management involves 'some of the most complex events imaginable' (Emery & Radu, 2007) where each planned event 'is unique in its blend of management, program, setting, and participants or customers' (Getz, 2000, p.1).

In terms of conventional project management, festivals and events move beyond the iron triangle to include the complexities of a range of social factors. This includes how the participation of residents in their local festivals may influence their subjective well-being and their quality of life (Yolal et al., 2016), protect culture (Brewster, 2020), enhancing local community image, maintaining community values, and using events as a vehicle for improving social relationships (Hanrahan & Maguire, 2016), and how perception and experience strengthens place attachment and place identity in a festival environment (A. Davis, 2016). It is also argued that 'the complex nature of events should be recognised and supported' (Jackson et al., 2018) with collaboration and open-mindedness essential for success, achieved through flexible and adaptable event planning processes (Jackson et al., 2018). With a focus on a chronological timeline, conventional planning process can become a closed management system, but it should also ensure that any socio-cultural impacts are being planned for and abided by to ensure that socio-cultural needs and quality of life of host communities are considered, and negative costs and impacts avoided (Hanrahan & Maguire, 2016). Addressing such a range of complicated and complex factors for event projects requires the management of a variety of associated stakeholders.

Project stakeholders

At the juncture of project management and stakeholder theory, the role of the project stakeholder has been the subject of constant debate (Aaltonen, 2010, Turkulainen et al., 2015). The understanding of the role in managing stakeholders is considered to be poor and ignored by many project managers (Maylor, 2001), and there is concern that project management has not kept up to date with recent developments in stakeholder theory (Huemann et al., 2016). To resolve this, it is suggested that “a deep understanding of both the theoretical concept and the project as context is a necessity to move the field of project stakeholder management forward” (Eskerod, Huemann and Ringhofer, 2015, p.43). The practical difficulties, challenges and complexities of managing stakeholders in projects are also acknowledged in the literature. Each organization will have its own, and differing, stakeholders and stakeholder relations, and numerous methods of project stakeholder management are available depending on the project phase and context (Huemann et al., 2016). Any degree of project uniqueness introduces unknown factors with uncertainty and risk inherent to any project, particularly in relation to stakeholders (De Carvalho & Rabechini Junior, 2015). The complexities of multiple stakeholders and their relationship dynamics in unfamiliar project contexts can lead to conflicts (De Carvalho and Rabechini Junior, 2015) presenting risks which need to be managed. This makes extra demands on project managers in time and resources, including transparent communications and developing relationships in accordance with Freeman’s ‘names-and-faces’ approach (Di Maddaloni & Derakhshan, 2019).

These challenges may explain why research in this field is deemed to have been predominantly instrumental, focusing on management frameworks and tools to improve the management of stakeholders (Turkulainen et al., 2015) with normative

or network stakeholder approaches often not considered (Eskerod, Huemann, & Savage, 2015). As a result, the relationship between stakeholders and the project is often viewed as dyadic with the project as the key focal point of reference (Eskerod, Huemann, & Savage, 2015). A number of weaknesses have been identified with this project-centric approach (Eskerod, Huemann, & Savage, 2015). It assumes that the project is the centre of attention for stakeholders, and overlooks the fact that these stakeholders in turn have their own set of stakeholders to whom they may be answerable to. Some of these 'stakeholders-of-stakeholders' may be more important and influential to the stakeholder than the project itself. It also ignores the potential for relationships and coalitions to form between project stakeholders which could be more powerful and influential than those formed with the project team (Eskerod, Huemann, & Savage, 2015). There is also the potential for those considered as secondary stakeholders who do not have a formal or contractual role yet may bear risk or be affected by the project to find themselves left seeking a legitimate claim to be involved in decision-making processes (Olander & Landin, 2008). To address these shortcomings, it is suggested that the proposition of a network approach with 'stakeholders in a system' (Ackoff, 1974) would be more beneficial than the dyadic (Eskerod, Huemann, & Savage, 2015), as they should be seen as a complex network (Kristiansen et al., 2021), connected by the flow of information and resources which provide interconnections for events to occur and be ordered (Richards & Jarman, 2021).

This approach requires a different skillset for efficient project management such as interpersonal, social and communication skills, and emotional intelligence, that is considered difficult to achieve with traditional management methods (Azim et al., 2010; De Carvalho & Rabechini Junior, 2015; Uribe et al., 2018; Walker et al.,

2008). This can be demonstrated in the event industry across the world as an event managers skillset changed and 'pivoted' in response to the challenges of the global Pandemic (Werner et al., 2021). A successful management for stakeholder approach requires alignment of expectation and more inclusive decision making processes with a wider range of stakeholder needs and expectations also seen to lead to more sustainable projects (Di Maddaloni & Derakhshan, 2019). This suggests that whilst the complexity of project stakeholders and their expectations may be daunting, there are clear benefits for achieving project success. Integrating additional criteria of stakeholder management alongside the conventional 'iron triangle' could herald a new evolutionary phase in project management process (Atkinson, 1999; Maylor, 2001; Uribe et al., 2018)

Event stakeholders

Given the increasing range of social, economic and policy agendas now prevalent in the events sector, Event Management has faced a growing complexity of considerations and requirements from an increasing number of stakeholders. The importance of stakeholders in the festival and events sector is widely acknowledged (Alade, 2013; Derry, 2012; Getz et al., 2007; Jensen & Sandström, 2011; Larson, 2003; Presenza & Iocca, 2012; Todd et al., 2017) and with stakeholders concerned with their own specific interests and perspectives, at local, regional, national or even global levels, festivals and events became both complicated and complex projects to manage.

Since an event cannot be produced in isolation it is reliant on stakeholders for resources and as willing partners (Getz et al., 2007; Moital et al., 2013). Identifying and managing stakeholders is seen to be an essential part of festival management (Getz & Andersson, 2010) and an important contribution to the cohesion and

successful management of festivals (Van Niekerk & Getz, 2016). Diverse festival stakeholders collaborate together for the organisation of a successful festival (Adongo et al., 2019) where the relationships and dynamics with other stakeholders impact and influence success (Saito & Ruhanen, 2017). For example, sports events are acknowledged to have 'a diversity of stakeholders unparalleled in many other event management scenarios' (Emery and Radu, 2007, p.209). Cooperation to maintain core values and shared objectives is considered one of the most informal and low-risk relationships (Andersson & Getz, 2008) with shared vision amongst stakeholders considered one of the essential conditions for collaboration (Menon et al., 2017; Zhou et al., 2021). This is especially relevant in relation to resources where festival and event management needs efficiencies in multilateral relationships between partners based on resource interdependencies to produce quality events and develop a more focused customer orientation (Capriello & Fraquelli, 2008). Festivals must be adept at stakeholder relationship management, particularly those stakeholders providing resources to ensure festival viability, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability (Andersson & Getz, 2008).

It is also acknowledged that event stakeholder dynamics shift and change over the period of the project life cycle and beyond (Holmes & Ali-Knight, 2017) indicating the importance of time, timing and timely intervention. Whilst event management has a clear focus on the chronological countdown to event day, stakeholders may follow their own timelines and trajectories. This introduces the concept of *kairos*, the qualitative aspect of time in contrast to the quantitative and measurable element of *chronos*. Festivals and events must manage both to ensure the relevant actors are 'in the right place at the right time' (Emery & Radu, 2007) presenting additional complexity and challenges for event producers and managers.

Event project stakeholders

At the end of the path and centre of the spiral are event project stakeholders. It is clear that in its endeavour to understand its own unique and complex nature, the field of event management has clearly drawn on the fields of project management and stakeholder theory. It is evident that festival and events have pressing project management requirements and distinct stakeholder considerations which combine to give a particular complexity to the sector. Following the path of complexity through the three fields of project management, stakeholder theory and event management, and their corresponding areas of overlap, presents a number of key elements which combine to frame the nature of complexity for event project stakeholders. Project management introduces the notion of *complexity*, the *skills* required by project managers, the *dynamic* of the project management, and the *measures* of success. Stakeholder theory considers the *principles* of stakeholder management, the nature of the *advantages* to be gained, the purpose of the *objectives* and degree of self *interest* in stakeholder dynamics. Event management considers the style of *thinking*, the approach to the various *actors*, the nature of *value* creation, *system* of management and notion of *time*. The path of complexity therefore identified 13 key elements.

However, all these elements are subject to the underlying tensions of the instrumental and the normative in the corresponding fields, which then present a certain tension in event management. This is demonstrated by specific contrasts in the characteristics of these 13 elements relating to complexity. In a project management context, complexity can be descriptive or perceived, required skills hard or soft, dynamics dyadic or network oriented, and success measures in relation

to conformance or performance. Stakeholder theory can follow pragmatic or idealistic principles, competitive or cooperative advantage, joint or opposed objectives, and sole self interest or interest for self with others. Event management considers convergent or divergent thinking, actors acting alone or collaborating, a linear value chain or expanded value net, closed or open system dynamics and chronological or kairological time. These 13 elements and their contrasting positions presents a pattern that can be aligned to suggest a correlation across the 3 fields to show complexity along instrumental and normative lines as demonstrated in Figure 4.

ACCEPTED VERSION

instrumental	< approach >	normative
	elements in each field v	
	Project Management	
descriptive	< complexity >	perceived
hard	< skills >	soft
dyadic	< dynamic >	network
conformance	< measures >	performance
	Stakeholder Theory	
pragmatic	< principles >	idealistic
competitive	< advantage >	cooperative
opposed	< objectives >	joint
sole self	< interest >	self with others
	Event Management	
convergent	< thinking >	divergent
acting alone	< actors >	collaborating
chain	< value >	net
closed	< system >	open
chronos	< time >	kairos

Figure 4: Instrumental-normative alignment of elements and their contrasts across 3 academic fields

This lineage can be traced back to their respective sources – the instrumental from Cleland (1985) developed context of project management, and the normative from Freeman (1984) in stakeholder theory. The limitations of the instrumental approach to the management of stakeholders and the tensions this creates highlighted in stakeholder theory are echoed in project management which laments the predominance of instrumental and dyadic approaches in its literature. With the importance of stakeholders recognised in project management, there is a call for current stakeholder theory to be incorporated in its research (Eskerod, Huemann, & Ringhofer, 2015; Huemann et al., 2016). Project success is also predominantly defined in relation to the conventional Iron Triangle of cost, time and quality rather than the contemporary triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental factors. This results in the measures of project success focusing on conformance to the parameters of the iron triangle rather than the performance in relation to a broader range of factors. This is deemed to lead to a range of errors and project failures – both tangible in relation to delivery targets and intangible in terms of stakeholder perceptions.

The field of project management has yet to address limitations in outlook that contribute to project failure or embrace contemporary frameworks that can improve levels of project success. Similar tensions in project failure are apparent in relation to the goals of festivals and events – some of which are well defined and others which are not, some may emerge through the project cycle and some may be uncertain. Managing projects has traditionally involved ‘hard’ skills for the technical, logistical and procedural elements of the process, but there is an increasing need for ‘soft’ skills for communication and relationship management, particularly in relation to stakeholders. This resonates with event management which indicates an emphasis on a variety of soft skills, such as the experience and creativity of event managers and the application

of divergent thinking to counter the rigid, pragmatic, procedure and planning of convergent thinking. Perhaps a more fundamental tension concerns that between stakeholders as a means to an end with a focus on only creating value and benefit to the core objectives of the event, or stakeholders as valid in their own right with a belief it is important to create value for all stakeholders as well as the event. This links back to the distinction between the management 'of' or 'for' stakeholders and how well defined the goals of festival and event stakeholders may be. Should they not be well defined or emerge through the project cycle then uncertainty is introduced and complexity is assured.

Whilst there are clear tensions between the two contrasting philosophical approaches of the instrumental and normative, very few things are ever so black and white - reality and pragmatism determine various shades of grey. Indeed, it has been concluded that the contrasts shown in Figure 4 should be considered as 'two extremes on a continuum' rather than polarities and 'either – or' scenarios (Huemann et al., 2016, Hedaa and Törnroos, 2002), and not dichotomous or steady state positions to allow greater flexibility of stakeholder management (Eskerod, Huemann, & Savage, 2015). For example, the creative process is considered a blend of divergent and convergent thinking (Bavik & Kuo, 2022) indicating that these contrasts need not be considered as mutually exclusive. Indeed, event project management will always require a combination of hard and soft skills, be subject to chronological time, and any normative approach will encompass the instrumental components of the Iron Triangle within its stakeholder mapping. Perhaps the greatest challenge in aspiring to the normative ideal is the resourcing required to address the inherent complexity to fully achieve it, and whether the benefits of creating value for all make the required demands to do it are ultimately worth it.

This dilemma is compounded further by the increasing number and variety of event stakeholders and their interests, and the need for effective stakeholder mapping and management models. It is acknowledged that currently there is no stakeholder centred model recorded within the project management literature (K. Davis, 2017) and 'an absence of models to accommodate the role of multiple stakeholders in creating value' (Pernecky, 2022). This has led to calls to innovate, to "break free from traditional schema and question the validity and usefulness of conventional stakeholders' management models currently in use" (Michopoulou et al., 2019, p.492). The limitations of conventional and sector-specific stakeholder management models has led to recent efforts to address them; notably the introduction of the Stakeholder Sandwich conceptual model (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2019) and later its methodological extension (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2021) which concentrates on the complexities of event stakeholder management.

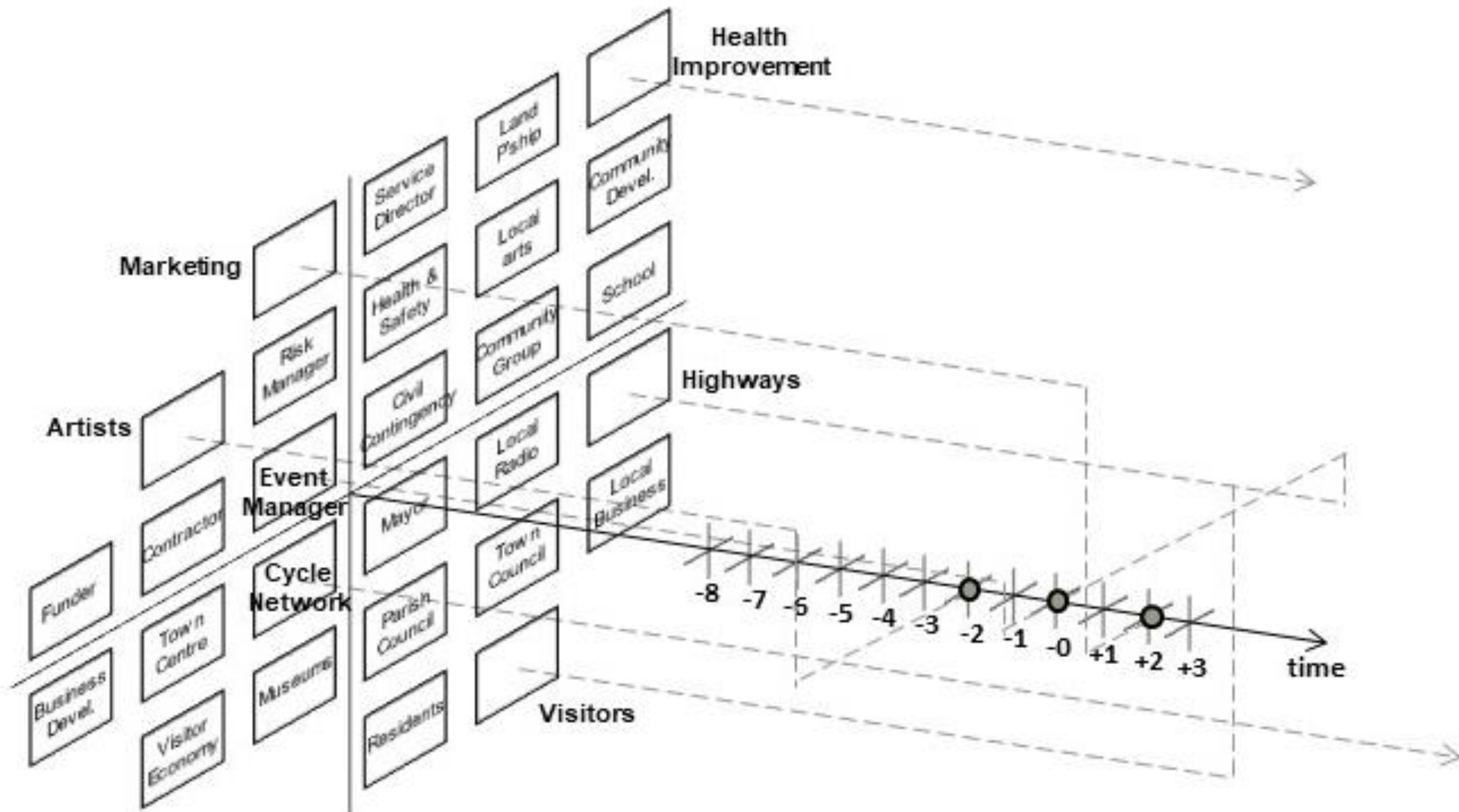
However, this model is a conventional 2-dimensional mapping and consequently unable to represent any 3-dimensional dynamics over time. Further analysis of the primary data for this model confirmed that there were indeed timelines and trajectories which did not coincide with the focus on event day and therefore both chronological and kairological characteristics of time are to be considered. To address this limitation, it is proposed that the third dimension of time is added to the stakeholder map by rotating the mapping in 3-dimensional space to allow the timelines of the various interests to be plotted. To test this concept, a simplified version of the stakeholder mapping was produced and the 3-dimensional elements applied as shown in fig. 5.

Figure 5 shows event day as 'zero' on the timeline with a countdown of weeks leading to the event (negative numbers) and a continuation after the event (positive

numbers). For the purposes of this example the timeline is limited to 8 weeks before event day (-8) and 3 weeks after (+3). Review of the data indicated that along with 'Event Manager' having a key focus on event day, so too did 'Visitors' and 'Highways' – all aligned with '0'. However, 'Artists' had a focus 2 weeks in advance (-2), and 'Marketing' 2 weeks after the event (+2). Furthermore, there are legacy stakeholders with longer-term interests such 'Cycle Network' which compares data on a yearly basis, and 'Health Improvement' which may not show results for a number of years (potentially +52 and +156 on an extended timeline). Applying this to all stakeholders shown on the map would reveal further variations in timeline and trajectories. This initial example shows the increasing number and variety of event stakeholders and their interests, and clearly demonstrates a significant level of complexity for the festival and events sector in relation to the instrumental chronos and normative kairos characteristics of time.

Figure 5

A 3-dimensional plot of stakeholder timelines (after Wallace and Michopoulou, 2021)



In the context of practice, such conceptual modelling should consider exactly how managers and producers planning and delivering festivals and events reconcile such complexity. They must indeed be managing it to some degree, but with no proven theoretical models or established practice for complexity management to turn to, they must inevitably draw upon their own experience of what may or may not have been effective for them in the past. Indeed, research clearly demonstrates that “knowledge sharing in event organizations is both unique and more complex than in traditional organizations with ongoing operations” (Muskat & Mair, 2020, p.607). Unique characteristics include the significant amount of ad-hoc knowledge needing to be shared in a short time and the lack of opportunity that workers have to share or not share such knowledge (Muskat & Mair, 2020). This indicates a body of tacit, instinctive or implicit knowledge within the collective learned experience developed through trial and error, that can be explored and made explicit for the sector. Translating such implicit shared experience of the strategies, techniques or ways of working which have been successful in addressing such complexity into explicit understanding of these critical elements and developing tools for the benefit of practitioners will be of significant benefit to the sector. The devastating impact of the Pandemic on events clearly demonstrates the need for models that are robust to ongoing and future shocks, and agile to volatile stakeholder dynamics. It certainly constitutes a situation where factors are unknown and can present at any time in the project cycle, and the re-emergence of the festival and events sector as restrictions ease involves yet further complexity. The additional logistical requirements in relation to risk mitigations and measures, and revised public expectations around safe and healthy public gatherings are just two immediate examples of new or different stakeholder interests and dynamics.

Conclusion

Complexity remains a critical consideration in Event Management. Following the path of complexity through the fields of project management, stakeholder theory and event management and the spiralling into the intersection of event project stakeholders has presented an accumulation of 13 elements each with a set of contrasting characteristics which align along instrumental and normative perspectives. This contributes to theory in the field of Event Management by providing a set of characteristics from which an understanding of complexity for event project stakeholders can be developed and contribute to resilience in the festival and events sector. It is also hugely valuable to practitioners in the festival and events sector giving them a lens through which they can understand complexity and build resilience.

Limitations of this research require empirical evidence, and further research should be conducted to identify parameters and factors which may influence these elements and consider ways to measure, assess, plot or map their contrasts. Understanding these elements and positioning on the spectrum of contrasts will provide insight on the strategies and approaches to managing complexity in festival and events and inform the development of theory and practice for event, project and stakeholder management in the sector.

Furthermore, such insight has potential value to the related fields of stakeholder theory and project management where further research on particular elements would be valuable. In project management, research on the range of hard and soft skills and comparison of the performance versus conformance approaches would demonstrate their effectiveness and contribution to project success. In stakeholder theory exploration of the polarising idealistic and pragmatic principles,

and of competitive and cooperative advantage will be a significant contribution to a wider debate concerning stakeholder capitalism. Returning to event management, research on managing actors collaboratively rather than individually, and greater understanding of concepts of time would address specific complexity in the sector.

In the current context of ongoing uncertainty, it is considered that the creation of shared value for stakeholders through cooperative advantage, and the importance of a three-dimensional mapping model and theory of time and timing for various stakeholder timelines would be an invaluable tool for research and practice. This would be a key combination of priorities that would enable the festivals and events sector to manage complexity and develop resilience as it moves forward.

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