

# Meaningful-Experience Creation and Event Management: A Post-Event Analysis of Copenhagen Carnival 2009

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## Abstract

A carnival is a cultural event within the experience economy, and can be considered an activity of added value to a city when creating place-awareness for tourists and residents. 'Culture' is used as a way to regenerate post-industrial and run down places, when studying EU – as well as Nordic – cultural policy reports. This might be too much to expect from the cultural sector though.

Amongst other external factors, cultural policy ideals co-create and affect the experiential content of an event in various ways. Thus studying a carnival one has to include external and internal factors in order to evaluate their meaningfulness in the total experience of the event.

One way to investigate what a meaningful experience is can be to apply a cultural consumer perspective. How different consumer segments directly and indirectly inform the event organisation and how the consumer's cultural preconceptions judge the event is vital when an event organisation designs and improves its experience concepts and experience setting. Thus, the way the carnival's venue and activities are culturally received is closely linked to the management of the organisation's external and internal resources. The goal of an event organisation is to produce meaningful and appealing experience concepts and perform them in real time. But how is this organised in practice?

This article evaluates the production of the Copenhagen Carnival 2009 and is based on ethnographic material. Through a model of Value Framework for Experience Production by the Dutch experience economists Albert Boswijk, Thomas Thijssen & Ed Peelen (2007) I analyse how the practical organisation, technical solutions and cultural assumptions of a carnival are part of an event organisation's work-process when creating a spectacle. Furthermore, the organisation of voluntary professional culture workers and the navigation in a metropolitan, political and institutional context is examined through the management concepts of routine, creativity and co-creation.

**Keywords:** Consumer Perspective, Exotic Experience Concept, Theme Park, Ordinary City, Urban Experience Industry, Cultural Policy, Passionate Organisation, Culture Workers

## Background and Aim

Since the beginning of the 1990s Scandinavia has undergone a cultural turn: ‘culture’ in its broadest definition has been instrumentalised in order to increase market value and improve the brand effects of a city. On a global scale culture is viewed as an attractive capital: places rich in it thrive by means of society’s different sectors which are able to capitalise on it, writes the American management theorist Richard Florida (2008:59). His book *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (Florida 2003) has been extremely influential in current cultural policy making both on a national and supra-national level (McGuigan 2009). Florida’s thesis resonates clearly in for example *A Creative Economy Green Paper for the Nordic Region* (Fleming 2007) and in the KEA European Affairs’ report *The Impact of Culture on Creativity* (2009).<sup>1</sup> In a post-industrial society culture is supposed to produce a creative city with tolerant people. Not all places have site-specific or spectacular cultural expressions to draw from, however. More frequently a grass-roots, commercial and/or cultural policy informed experience industry occupies large parts of the leisure landscape of cities and regions, inventing events, venues and festivals of all kinds.

In the experience-based society, ‘cultural events’ – narrowed down to festivals, carnivals and parades, are often promoted as means to strengthen a city’s image, by adding experiential and cultural value to a particular place. The goal is to form a ‘cool city’ or as Florida writes; to attract tolerant, creative and young people. These people are drawn to places with vibrant music scenes, street-level culture and active nightlife (after McGuigan 2009:294). Those places which are not able to offer in-between events of the urban or regional landscape and hence give vibrancy to a place’s more established experience industry, have difficulties in attracting both tourists and new residents (Larson & Fredriksson 2007:177, 179). The norm is – perhaps optimistically – to create high-profile and globally oriented events with the purpose of bringing wealth, ideas and opportunities to a local community (Gotham 2005). But as the English cultural policy researcher Jim McGuigan (2009:299) argues, it might be too much to ask for if more or less subsidised culture should solve ‘deep-seated economic and political problems in the post-industrial society’. Cultural policy, he explains, has, with the influence of Florida’s hypothesis on the regenerated cultural city, replaced economic policy.

Richard Florida’s ideas also influence scholarly theories of business events that are passed on to event managers. Still, there is a gap between the ideals of the cool city and the production of the event’s actual cultural content. Supported by a local city council, it seems political important to support the drivers of the creative economy – such as stimulating demand and providing education and skills. The political focus-point on cultural education and training is important in the co-created event, because culture then will be cheaply produced by for example school children and their families. But this might also affect the ‘coolness’ of the

event and hence the attractiveness to a creative, global and young consumer-segment.

Copenhagen Carnival 2009 was a local cultural event consuming, performing and addressing the global in a carnivalistic experience design. The act of consuming global and exotic artistic expressions, such as dance and music performances, were produced by children and young people who were encouraged to get the right training and become new artistic and creative talents. The political hope was that later on, young people will settle – live, work and stay, because the place exhibits resourcefulness through culture (Hjemdahl, Hauge & Lind 2007:23f).

With a post-event analysis and a ‘second generation experience economy’ perspective, the empirical material is investigated: ethnographic observations and an extended interview with the CEO Morten Sørensen were done in the summer of 2009.<sup>2</sup> The Copenhagen Carnival points to questions about how event management is done in practice: how a cultural concept of a carnival is themed; how the actual experience setting of the event is designed, and; how the happening is created and sustained by volunteering children and adults, and by professional culture workers – these are additional aspects that need to be organised by the event manager.

In four analytical sections, I discuss how a cultural consumer perspective can add knowledge to the event’s experiences and how the (co-)creation of the physical experience setting and the cultural content come about: In what ways does an urban, low-budget festival make use of professional culture workers, trained at the city’s other cultural institutions? Guided by the ideal of offering the guest a meaningful experience of a fully themed, absorbing and transforming environment, how does the event manager arrange the work of the organisation in order for everybody to have a clear understanding of what makes an event happen in real time? But I begin by asking why it is at all necessary to approach meaningfulness in the context of the experience economy and the experience industry.

## Meaningful Experience

Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen (2007:157) define the ‘experience economy’ as experiences added to goods and services, especially in the tourism, experience and leisure industry. Staging, conceptualising, branding and storytelling are essential tools to create market value and differentiation for products and physical environments.

This definition, they argue, nevertheless belongs to the first generation of the experience economy, often illustrated by the American experience economists Joseph Pine and James Gilmore’s famous book *The Experience Economy* (1999). According to the critique of Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen (2007:157), this type of experience economy offer ‘simple instruments with which physical experience setting can be tested’. These ‘simple test instruments of the setting’ investigate the

customer's perception of the theme/story of the concept; the five sense engagement of the environment; what makes the event memorable; and whether or not the setting is perceived as harmonious or has negative cues.

In the first generation experience economy, one might claim that the frictionless and pleasant consumption of goods and services plays a central role, next to the ideal of a memorable and interesting consumer experience. Returning to Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen (*ibid.*), what they consider new in the second generation experience economy is the question of *how* e.g. an event organisation can develop not only experience concepts, but meaningful-experience concepts. In a consumer perspective, they argue, a customer desires more than entertainment in his or her leisure time: What does it actually mean to have a meaningful experience, who decides this, and how can an organisation work systematically in order to create it? Thus, moving away from the memorable – what is not memorable – they want to customise and adapt experience creation to what the guest (as segment, cultural individual and social member) finds to be a 'meaningful experience'. They explain:

The first stage of meaningful-experience creation is to conceive and bring about new concepts in a creative way. Letting go of existing propositions and traditional ways of thinking is difficult in a business setting. At the same time, it is important to learn from earlier meaningful experiences. What didn't work, what did work and why? [...] Ideas ultimately need to converge, to come together in the design of a meaningful experience. This is a generally cohesive description of the meaningful experience that is to be co-created, which will bring about a transformation in the way one thinks, relates and acts (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2007:149).

In order to create meaningful experiences, they consider the method of 'co-creation' – or an unusual mix of collaboration forms – as fitting for the experience industry. An innovative and entrepreneurial approach far from 'traditional business thinking' is also what the Danish experience industry researchers Per Dramer and Lars Bo (2007:96, 107) find important. They illuminate how meaning is produced and what defines the opposite of traditional ways of thinking in a business setting: In order to produce new (combinations of) experiences, an organisational routine behaviour needs to be dismantled regularly and replaced with new forms of collaboration. Furthermore, the strategy of renewing oneself has to be examined continuously. The way to survive in the experience industry is to understand what the consumer perceives as true, valid and genuine (and the opposite). An 'authentic experience' – here defined as the feeling of experiencing something unique and incomparable – is a dominant ideal in this type of industry, they explain. This description points to the concept of meaning.

'Meaning' might be new to in the experience economy but is a classic concept in the humanistic disciplines. According to the early writings of the cultural theorists Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel (1964:66), it can be defined as 'importance and relevance to an audience'. The meaning (or non-meaning) of the consumer's experience is not exclusive or 'individual' but intertwined with a range of general

meanings: political, ideological, social, cultural and commercial. In times of individualisation, though, and when promoting the customer's experience and the strategy of customisation as tools for experience improvement, it is nevertheless important to stress that when talking about a consumer perspective, we are not talking about single individuals and what they may or may not feel and think. Rather, in order to improve, one should expect an ideal individual who sums up and presents sophisticated social and cultural common sense which can be resourceful in the production of experiences.

As Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen (2007:145f) explain, a meaningful-experience concept takes its point of departure in the first generation experience economy – the memorable experience of theme/concept, the activation of the five senses, and the harmony and elimination of negative clues in the experience setting. But the goal is now further to understand and create cohesion – or totality – in a built environment in correlation with the consumer experience. One is interested in creating *the essence* within the experience industry, namely the 'sixth sense' which – if you asked a magician – is the synthesis of the five senses that come together as a 'magic' experience. Designed with a ritualistic importance for sensation, meaning and imagination (O'Dell 2006), this almost cultic approach to experience creation is about offering absorption and importance to the customer.

## **Value Framework for Experience Production**

Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen (2007:145–146) create four stages when producing meaningful-experience concepts. The model could be called a Value Framework for Experience Production. It should guide the event manager and the organisation to make use of different values carried by different actors, when producing meaningful experiences. The four stages are: (1) *Customer perspective* on the organisation's performance and the finding of opportunities to offer the customer meaningful experiences; (2) *Internal business perspective, core competences and technology* – the resources which will enable a meaningful experience environment for the customer; (3) *People and culture* – the organisation's people and culture necessary for offering experiences in such a way that the customers and the market indeed will have and receive a meaningful experience as expected (or imagined); (4) *Innovation and creativity capacity* – the external partnerships of co-creation that the organisation needs in order to renew itself.<sup>3</sup> This model is relevant for understanding the different aspects of creating the Copenhagen Carnival. In the following analysis I will frame and discuss the event through these four stages.

What will come out of the analysis is not only a confirmation of the model's productiveness. In general, ethnographic studies of events – their ways of creating and choosing experience concepts and experience settings, and how this totality is perceived by guests – are not always part of the event organisation's innovation

and creativity capacity.<sup>4</sup> Still, ethnographic details of event-making are necessary because events are about being present and engaged. These details will add to the model by describing the actual challenges and practical intersections between the model's four stages, when managing and bringing about the event experience to the consumer and, when performing in real time and on a low budget.

## Copenhagen Carnival

CEO Morten Sørensen took over the leadership of Copenhagen Carnival in 2008. He changed the organisation, which was originally a flat, democratic organisation structure with over thirty grass-roots organisations and without any defined leadership. The carnival was initially launched in 1982. Still, up to 2008, there was only one annual account available to the new manager. In other words, the organisation was weak and practically bankrupt. Still, in 2009, the event attracted 230 000 visitors over a three-day period. It jumped to be the biggest carnival in Northern Europe, and the profit made in 2009 was large enough to establish a foundation and pay debts and bills. The organisation had become solvent, and expanded further into another event: a reggae beach party at a public beach in the city. Commercial partners, decision-makers from the city council, public caretakers of parks and beaches, a number of professional culture workers and 600 volunteers of global dance and music troupes, different public children's institutions, grass-roots organisations and commercial partners were involved in organising, co-creating and performing the Copenhagen Carnival 2009. But what had happened since the manager arrived?

Copenhagen, like other western cities, had become a 'new' post-industrial city and tourism had come to town: The urban purpose is to absorb oneself into leisure consumption of themed restaurants – Thai, Mexican or Italian, or themed experiences – bowling, climbing or beaching (Burstedt 1999; Strömberg 2007). New urban development strategies were supposed to transform the 'ordinary city' into cityscapes of the spectacular, exotic and magic (Amin & Graham 1997).

Thus, Morten Sørensen received and kept the experience concept of 'a carnival' that was *hot stuff* at the beginning of 1980s but had slowly changed its value when the global media world became part of everyday life. Still, in the post-industrial experience society, could the carnival enjoy a renaissance as a meaningful-experience concept? Sørensen left a flat and indecisive organisation structure. Instead he put together an experienced team of urban culture workers to orchestrate volunteers, theme and event technology through the experience concept of a carnival.

Accordingly, striving for a meaningful customer experience is a process result of (more than) four stages in the Value Framework for Experience Production but can be summed up as a form of event architecture mastered by the event manager: Developing a meaningful consumer experience follows a definition of 'event

management' which involves studying the complexity of the brand; identifying the target audience – or the experiencing consumer; taking decisions on the event's experience concept and experience setting; planning the logistics by coordinating technical and human resources; and finally; ensuring investments by being able to produce an evaluation or a post-event analysis.<sup>5</sup> Of course, things need to be planned in advance, but things also happen in the course of events and have to be handed with knowledgeable improvisation. A bullet-proof manual to ensure the order of things was non-existent when Sørensen took over, and improvisation became one of the event manager's core competences when organising on a low budget and hence he had to use co-creative, external and internal resources to the fullest.

CEO Morten Sørensen's goal, he explained, was to increase the 2009 visitor figure of 230 000 to one million within a time-frame of ten years. Whether or not this is a possible expansion is difficult to predict. But in order to grow, all aspects of the event had to be evaluated. In 2009 the primary guest segment was 'the Scandinavian nuclear family', which had certain thematic and stylistic consequences for the design of the experiences and the event setting. This segment would be sufficient to sustain the festival, but might also interest-wise contradict and exclude another possible segment: 'the young, global party guest' – or actually more or less the same global segment as Richard Florida speaks of, when he defines the cool city of 'high-human capital individuals, particularly young ones' (after McGuigan 2009:294) with taste, talent and tolerance who would prefer a well-designed dance party with interesting fusions of global and western music. Was it possible to accommodate both segments, for instance, at daytime and night-time and, in this sense, obtain the fullest use of the experience setting?

## **1) Consumer Perspective**

### **Conventional Consumers?**

With regard to cultural events, and also in the case of the Copenhagen Carnival, it is expected that experience consumers travel long or close distances in order to pay for expected – but sometimes also rather predictable – experience products. In a sceptical and value-based debate about meaningful experiences, 'local culture' is promoted as an ideal and preferable experience, though in danger of losing its unique expressions, traditions and authentic characteristics to a 'McDonaldization of society' (Ritzer 2008). When trying to accommodate the idea of an average western consumer's standards for service, accommodation and experience activities, the experiences on offer are at risk of becoming routine, it is argued. Still, idealistic guidelines such as 'every city with self-respect' should compete with other cities by establishing spectacular events in order to create an attractive place image and extend the tourist season is also part of the debate (Larson & Fredriksson 2007). The cultural theorist David Harvey (1988) has also critiqued this image

trend as the rise of ‘voodoo cities’ where local decision-makers are more occupied with masking and staging their cities in order to turn them into spectacular façades of (mega) events, but are less interested in the afterlife of the establishments built, and of the cultural and social messages which could create meaning-value for local citizens and their guests.

But are customers’ expectations really that conventional? When discussed in a consumer perspective, how can one find those consumers who can actually help an event organisation to improve the offered experiences to become even more relevant and meaningful to them? Many consumer surveys are above all designed to gain access to the guest’s understanding of how his or her basic needs are accommodated through the infrastructure, facilities and services of the experience setting. Often it is impossible for the guest to suggest anything else but improvements of these essential logistics. Consumers are not asked to dream or imagine, and point to how an event could contribute to creating, for example, meaningful social relationships, strengthening a person’s identity or broadening understandings of different cultural worlds (Hjemdahl 2003).

### **Defining Experience**

Still, according to Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen (2007:145f), what the event organisation needs to do in order to survive is to follow the consumer’s perspective on the meaningfulness of the experiences offered. But what is an experience?

The definition of ‘experience’ is about having a personal experience of heightened awareness and undergoing uplifting sensations organised around the stimulation of the five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste). But a meaningful experience is also supposed to direct one’s senses to the ‘sixth sense’ namely to the sense of ‘a carnival’ or to the visual, mental and sensory pre-conceptualised cultural signs from this type of world. Thus, the logic of the carnival should correspond with the recognition of a carnival. But the cultural recognition can also surprise or fail, depending on how well the concept is controlled, organised and thought through: A carnival could also – unintentionally – correspond with the recognition of a rainy day and a drowned feather costume falling apart.

In order to access the customers’ cultural recognitions, an event can be studied from a phenomenological perspective,<sup>6</sup> or how people describe the sensory ways in which they learn about cultural symbols, but also how they engage with an event’s materiality. What does it mean to feel, sense and bodily master being amongst a large crowd of people, hustling and bustling one’s way around, getting drawn in many directions, being interrupted, surprised by, or engaged in a variety of emotions, moods and impressions? The experiential effects and affects designed are supposed to create the impression of the exotic carnival, and not, for example, of the bad Scandinavian weather. The visitor’s experience is supposed to be guided to something interesting – both expectable and surprising.

The consumer perspective (1) and external partnerships of co-creation (4) are discussed together in the following section, because, applying the model of Value Framework for Experience Production, event-designing a meaningful consumer experience is also about understanding trends in the western consumer's (cultural) desire motives.

### **Carnival as Post-Colonial Edutainment**

Mapping out meaning empirically includes the concept of 'edutainment', a point of contact between education and entertainment where the consumer is more than entertained and instead engages with the experiential and existential content of an event (Kjær 2009). The event was branded and designed as a 'carnival' and hence would have to live up to the consumer's visual and media-based preconceptions of the Latin American samba carnival as it is displayed primarily in Rio, Brazil. However, for Copenhagen Carnival to deliver what culturally is perceived as relevant 'carnival edutainment', it had to find opportunities to bring about meaning in practice. The external partnerships of co-creation, by which the Copenhagen Carnival was able to renew itself, were to work with the concept of authenticity and invite 'real' samba troupes to the event.

Despite being in the context of Copenhagen, with its Scandinavian climate, as an ordinary city with pale people, there was something more 'carnivalistic' about the event: The cultural imaginations of 'Rio' were in many ways turned upside down and became an imagined façade of the colourful and exotic combined with sudden rain, umbrellas, hobby set pieces and Scandinavian children and youngsters in body paint. There was a friction between the cultural imaginations of an authentic carnival when moved outside its site-specific (imaginative) origin of Rio and into a Danish wet summer park. One could always hope for nice weather conditions, but this would most likely not affect the consumer's comparison between the event and its exotic origin.

When viewed in a post-colonial tourism perspective, the Copenhagen Carnival borrows signs from the mysterious, exotic and colourful while, at the same time, domesticating and consuming 'the foreign' in a homely event setting at pleasant distance – not too strange and not too homelike (Kjær 1999). When the exotic is not too outlandish but 'safe', western tourists have learned to desire the exotic as a positive, enriching and inspiring, cultural experience.<sup>7</sup> In a consumer perspective, these historic conditions affect the present-day tourist experience, but might not be realised or verbalised as anything else but a "hidden programme" of learning or the consumer's 'desire motives' to engage with what is perceived as an inspiring cultural event (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2007:145).

When the CEO took over the leadership of the organisation, the consumer experience of the event was mostly – aesthetically and educationally – pointing in the direction of school children's and enthusiasts' hobby activities, rather than to cultural imaginations of a site-authentic carnival. The dance troupes performing at

the Copenhagen Carnival parade were consequently a result of several Copenhagen-based county schools and leisure associations with children, men and women who manufactured their costumes and rehearsed their music and dance performances during the year. This form of volunteering co-created the event and was necessary from a social and economic viewpoint.

### **Old and New Consumer Segments**

The question was whether or not Copenhagen Carnival would be able to attract new segments, e.g. global (party and creative) tourists to an event that could be perceived as an out-of-context, ‘pale copy’ of the original. Would these tourists instead travel to an authentic scene of a carnival, or could they, when the CEO evaluated the possibility of attracting new segments to the event, be incorporated in the carnival? When interviewed Morten Sørensen said that he was of course aware of the ‘authenticity factor’ in the sense that he knew the carnival could be perceived through cultural preconceptions: Copenhagen as a site for a samba carnival was not the media-informed consumer’s natural line of association. The authenticity factor – next to the educational purposes of training children and youngsters – decided why the organisation had chosen to invite real samba troupes from Latin America. Sørensen explained the considerations he had when conceptualising the event as close to ‘authentic’:

We invite real samba troupes from Brazil to participate, train the children and perform in the big parade. This is a great form of integration between different nationalities, but I am fully aware that if we want to compete on a global scale and attract foreign tourists we have to be very professional and move away from the hobby-based expressions which have dominated the Copenhagen Carnival in the past. There is no doubt that world music, samba and carnival had its heyday in the 1980s in Denmark. At that time – as it is today – Copenhagen Carnival was mostly a family and grass-roots orientated event which may not appear spectacular from an aesthetic or artistic point of view. The carnival in Rio is virtually the only point of reference the audience has, but there are several ways to develop a carnival concept – Southern European Middle Ages; Postmodern Music Mix; International Sustainability or Global Awareness are just some of the conceptual styles that can be further developed into new experiences.

It seems that Copenhagen Carnival has a flexible event-design structure which can be revised, redesigned and reinterpreted into new, related themes accommodating new consumer segments. These new, or additional, consumer segments could thus result in a redefinition of the carnival concept: for example, a more postmodern event with aesthetic references to popular culture consumption of mixed music could solve the inauthenticity challenge of the event location, but may well turn out problematic in a funding perspective: Another external and co-creative partner, namely the city council’s cultural department, which almost by rule considers cultural events as educational opportunities to train youngsters and children (Hjemdahl 2003). The actual experiential design of Copenhagen Carnival 2009 balanced between offering old and new segments, what they, and tax-funding de-

cision-makers, perceived as meaningful edutainment. Furthermore, in the context of the 2009 event, the carnival's attention was adapted to the large family segment of the Metropolis Area of Southern Sweden and Eastern Denmark, which could be expanded by strategic marketing. If the CEO chose 'business as usual' the event would still be a success from a management and organisational routine perspective (Dramer & Hansen 2007). The event manager probably did not have to facilitate other consumer segments or change the experience design of carnival edutainment in order for the event to survive. But the modernisation of the cultural content and the ambition to design new experiences for new segments, adding unique and site-specific cultural expressions to urban spectacle, could easily be left aside in this process.

### Hybrid Cultures

The post-analysis of the event was nevertheless to continuously question and redesign the carnival's exotic theme, aiming at facilitating the nuclear family segment in the daytime, while offering consumer experiences to a young party segment in the experience design of night-life clubbing. Copenhagen Carnival wanted to evaluate the possibility of becoming an international festival and not only a local event which consumed the exotic at a comfortable distance. Maybe the carnival, in the process of designing unique experience concepts, could also avoid the consumer's pre-conceptual dichotomy of authenticity and inauthenticity?

Since the Copenhagen-based geographical locality of the event could not really compete with consumer imaginations of a *real* carnival, one could choose, for example, 'internationality' as the event's experiential reference point. This concept could be materialised and consumed anywhere – even in the neighbourhoods of the ordinary Scandinavian city. Accordingly, the Swedish art historian Per Strömberg (2007) stresses that the tourism and experience industry should be courageous enough to test the kind of possibilities that actually arise from the mix of borrowing out-of-context experience concepts, such as a carnival, while mixing this with local, western culture. Strömberg explains that, instead of *copying* cultural expressions – failing or succeeding according to the consumer's understandings of real and fake, it is more relevant and coherent to investigate how 'hybrid cultures' can be designed in order to create unique, aesthetic expressions.

An example of possible hybridisation was provided by Morten Sørensen in the interview. It was about challenging the western consumers' preconceptions of what Caribbean music is:

The carnival tries to create awareness of not only traditional Caribbean music – which is packed with imaginations of beaches, palm trees and oil drums. We also search for post-modern Caribbean music that, to Europeans, offers surprising and new versions of the techno-genre. To a western audience that is already very familiar with this genre, this is a great reason to come to the carnival instead of travelling thousand of miles to watch an unknown underground band in Jamaica. Instead we are bringing the band to you – and you would probably not have found it if you had searched yourself, anyway.

A 'mixing strategy' can produce an event's new cultural content: postmodern can be mixed with traditional; global with local; north with south; alternative sub-culture with established high-culture or electronic with acoustic (Willim 2005). But this might only be meaningful to a relatively small (and elitist) consumer segment such as 'the creative class' of Richard Florida's consumers which are expected to not only add vibrancy and regeneration to run down places but also demonstrate 'a particular set of class interests' for example cool and hip pleasures and places (McGuigan 2009:298). Additionally, this type of segment has to have extensive knowledge in order to enjoy the fusion of musical genres or the launching of underground and upcoming music from distant countries. It might simply be too risky or avant-garde to experiment with hybridisation, when the event is already facilitating a large family segment which has accepted – and even created – the cultural content of the event. Thus, a post-modern, mixed and cool event could contradict the local decision makers' traditional focus on subsidising (the not yet so cool) young people's cultural education. This case demonstrates how an event's cultural content can be influenced by the local focus on subsidising drivers of culture and hence *not* promoting the (class-distinct) cultural consumption described in the general and maybe over-simplified culture policy ideals on how culture can become an instrument to regenerate cities by adding to a place's coolness.

## **2) Internal Business Perspective, Core Competences and Technology**

### **Theorising the Experience Setting**

How can an event organisation ensure and enable a meaningful experience through the totality of a themed and conceptualised environment. Following the Value Framework for Experience Production on the internal core competences of a business (2), how can the event accommodate the experienced and media-informed consumer through the event technology of the experience setting?

A 'carnival' in its theoretical – and classic – definition by the Russian literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin (1941/1993) is a social situation where people of different social backgrounds, cultures, ages and stations in life are considered equals. The 'carnavalesque', he argues, presents the encouragement of people to engage in a social meeting point where the grotesque (the transformation of bodies, the display of flesh, eroticism, drunkenness or bodily movement) is allowed. In the crowd and behind bodily masks and décor, this social situation is characterised by turning the fixed roles of everyday life upside down. The carnival thus allows people to become somebody else and to play with social hierarchy – or, as is the case with the Copenhagen Carnival: to play with cultural fantasies of the colourful, exotic, global and worldly on a local scale, taking the mundane everyday life of the city as its point of departure. Still, one could argue that the norms of ease in the leisure life of the Scandinavian nuclear family were dominating the experience

setting more than the cultural expressions of, say, ‘the carnivalistic grotesque’ or new, aesthetic and mixing music concepts.

In 2009 the nuclear family segment was provided for by things such as exotic family take-away dinners and children’s playgrounds themed in ‘UNICEF ways’. Sørensen explained how they tried to avoid mass-produced consumption – or McDonaldisation – in the experience setting:

We have a global market square at the venue with handmade, sustainable and organic toys and household articles from abroad which can be purchased. In order to boost the symbolism of the exotic and global, rather than the local and western, commercial partners’ sponsor consumer products and those companies with a sustainable and global profile are preferred. In this sense, we do not accept all types of sponsorships.<sup>8</sup>

An experience setting is supported by cultural, visual and aesthetic expectations of what a carnival experience ‘is’ (Anderton 2009). It is also vital for the production of the event’s themed totality that the culture workers in the organisation have core competences in how specific cultural signs and symbols are communicated through the design of event materiality. From the immediate point of being at the venue, an experience concept is only relevant – and functioning – if it directs the mental and bodily comprehension of a single – but cultural – individual to the idea of the event.

### **Producing Event Materiality**

Returning to the model of Value Framework for Experience Production, the experience setting, or the event materiality, is a result of the internal core competences and technology of the organisation by which the totality of the experienced environment is achieved (2). But the creative capacity the organisation needs in order to renew and maintain the carnival (4) has to come from the outside the carnival itself, as was the case when samba troupes were invited to teach the children and perform in the parade. But turning to the internal business perspective, a low-budget organisation like the Copenhagen Carnival has limited resources for training and hiring professionals. Thus, the experiential content of the event is highly interrelated to the model’s People and Culture (3) or to the cultural and human resources necessary, in order for the event to deliver to an audience in real time and in such a way that the carnival becomes a convincing experience. Hence, the four stages in the Value Framework for Experience Production are not easy to distinguish when studying the field of event practice. In what follows, I will nevertheless investigate how practice and theory can add further knowledge to the model.

### **Theme Park and Ordinary City as Venue Matrix**

The ideal experience setting – a carnival, an urban beach or a shopping mall – should be so well-designed that if you asked for an entrance fee, people would be willing to pay just to be there. Hence, the ‘feel’ of an experience environment

should be constructed and manipulated in the exact same way as in a theme park (Shaw & Williams 2004).

When studying the experience setting ethnographically, it becomes clear that Copenhagen Carnival is produced through a number of *ad hoc* solutions or through improvised, professional competence of abstraction. This means that the culture workers have the core competences to think imaginatively, when turning props and things at hand into carnivalistic ritual, performance and artistry. Morten Sørensen describes it like this:

When I became the CEO, I already had an extensive network of technicians and organisers who work with cultural performances every day. The carnival does not possess stages, props and decorations, furniture, light or sound systems. We rely on the established cultural institutions – or rather, their dedicated staff and their passion for producing culture in their free time. But we also rely on the city council's attitude towards Copenhagen being of European standard when providing us with technical systems for water, electricity and infrastructure at the public parks and beaches. The standards are only now becoming better! Nevertheless, how the venue will finally appear and what kind of decoration it will have, is part of great improvisation. I have thirty ideas for decoration and props that would underline the theme of the carnival. But whether or not it is a Caribbean pirate ship or a fairytale castle that arrives on a truck, I don't know before the driver is actually there. I mean, the decoration I would want to borrow might be on stage at the Royal Danish Theatre that particular weekend. I would be very nervous if I couldn't trust my network of culture workers to understand what a relevant prop is and be imaginative in order to substitute a first ideal thought.

Working on a low budget and with volunteers not only requires confidence in the professional network and how it is able to manage itself. Most important, though, is how the design of the carnival's thematic concept is based on meaningful aesthetics and symbolically relevant props, which are directly linked to the core competences of the culture workers, their sense of quality, efficiency, experience and training from the established cultural institutions of the city.

Copenhagen Carnival is themed as exotic and colourful. Still, an important part of the event involves controlling the venue space. The rhythm and pace of the crowd and the location of hubs of activity and recreational experience are supposed to offer the visitors a positively defined, culturally imagined and real-time-produced meaningful experience.

In a Scandinavian context, the carnival aims at presenting a surprising experience concept, but when it comes to organising the venue, geography and space have to be predictable to the guest and hence dominated by the organisation's routine behaviour. Morten Sørensen explains:

It is true that we want to create an experience of the exotic, but in order to fulfil the Scandinavian expectations of safety and hygiene, the feeling of being in a predictable environment is very important. There are also aspects of the carnival that might be acceptable elsewhere but which we do not acknowledge. For instance, we have designed the venue in order to increase the tolerance level of homosexuality. This might sound weird but in different world-music genres, reggae for instance, some utterances might be homophobic. In many ways, we try to strengthen the audience's and participants' open-mindedness. In 2009 we located a reggae stage next to a bar

hosted by the Copenhagen World Outgames, which is an international homosexual sport olympics. We want to show that in Denmark homophobic behaviour is not accepted. The good carnival for us is a balance of Scandinavian standards of safety; a tolerant mentality; and artistic and symbolic connotations of the global.

The experience setting, according to Sørensen, should result in a balance of home and abroad, the predictable and unpredictable, the ordinary and extraordinary (Morgan 2009). There is an ideological vision behind the design of the venue – especially the (Scandinavian) ideal of cultural and social tolerance. Thus, the production of a ‘carnivalistic Scandinavian space’ consists of an integration ideology which the city council and tourist organisations additionally welcome: It is considered a good image to market and profile the city as tolerant, open and friendly. Interestingly enough this type of tolerance resembles the Richard Florida inspired European culture policies where one of the ways to define an attractive place is by assuming a correlation between cultural tolerance and economical prosperity, often illustrated by a place’s high level of diverse groups and especially gay-friendly communities (McGuigan 2009:294).

Returning to the design of the carnival’s experience setting, the ‘theme park’ is a matrix which can be applied to the organisation of experience hubs, market place, stages, and bars. The theme park originates from the romantic English garden which, historically, gave the society’s elite the possibility to become part of a cosmopolitan culture without leaving the comfort of their home city. Invented in the eighteenth century, the romantic garden was designed to sharpen the experience of sensing through its astounding effects: its sceneries, surprises and props were organised in fairly fixed ways, and regardless of the fact that the garden design was spread to parks all over Europe. The romantic garden was supposed to deliver fresh attractions behind every corner. Walking from surprise to surprise, following the winding paths and brooks, and when crossing bridges, one would engage in an exotic mix: a Greek temple, a Chinese house, a hermit’s grotto and a Norwegian log cabin. Enjoying ancient sculptures, smelling unusual plants or listening to the sound of a waterfall are just some of the sensational technologies of the romantic English garden. This garden design of the exotic is a good example of how today’s experiential venues often are organised. During the nineteenth century the romantic English garden became the blueprint for urban parks and private gardens, and stayed in power when theme parks – from open-air museums to Disney Worlds and adventure lands – were established (Löfgren 2002:21–26).

A map of the romantic English garden could easily be applied to the venue of the Copenhagen Carnival. Walking from surprise to surprise, resting, consuming and experiencing different forms of performances and activities; moving along if the attraction gets boring, or getting drawn to other spectacles – all this organises the sensations that can be experienced in this particular venue matrix. Thus, following the Value Framework for Experience Production for the event organisation’s core competences and technology (2), this cultural heritage of the theme park is a way – in practice – to produce and conceive an experience environment.

There will always be perspectives, angles and dimensions that are difficult to plan, but today this blueprinted experience space forms the general expectations of how to consume events.

But much of the experience setting also evolves around ‘the urban’ or, as some urban geographers would define it, ‘the pulse of the ordinary city’: Traffic lights; the opening hours of the shops; work and leisure time; church bells ringing; surveillance cameras; the electricity that lights up streets and squares – these are all technologies which organise the flow of people, regulate their behaviour and aim at controlling social interaction (Amin & Thrift 2002). Following this ‘ordinary city’ structure, the carnival is in many ways ordinary in its people-flow technology. In order to offer the consumer transparency, guidance and security at the venue, public legislation, rules and routines need to be followed. Sørensen states in his post-analysis:

One cannot run an event without thinking in worse-case scenarios: What if it rains and it did – do we have enough indoor space to facilitate wet and hungry people? What if people do not – and they didn’t – understand that they should clean up after themselves? Do we have money set aside to pay for extra cleaning? What if somebody gets ill from the food? How do we handle bad publicity? What if our guards are not trained and a chaotic situation occurs? It would be naïve *not* to plan for worse-case scenarios and try to organise ourselves out of it in advance. This is why security and hygiene – or actually Maslow’s hierarchy of basic needs<sup>9</sup> – is the model for designing trust and a relaxed atmosphere. I think we signal that important little extra if people can orientate themselves to the bathrooms, the Samaritan tents and feel secure when they meet professional – and hence friendly – guards. Although most of our staff are volunteers it is important that the guards are well trained. I am happy to pay full price for a well-organised safety crew and would never leave that to amateurs. Imagine this type of event *not* being safe. We could just as well close up and find something else to do.

Copenhagen Carnival organises the crowd in a circular way in order to create comfortable flow and rhythm. Morten Sørensen explains, in addition, that the venue is supposed to be ‘considered filled with people but without anyone disturbing each other’. The bodily competence of being in a crowd, that is, quickly decoding where other people are headed, knowing – or feeling – a sense of direction, turning left or right, can in many ways be organised through the practical organisation similar to the structure of the ordinary city (Kjær 2010). Still, basic essentials are not sufficient when producing a setting people would be willing to pay an entrance fee to experience (Shaw & Williams 2004). Thus, surprising or transforming experiences can be organised through the matrix of the romantic English garden.

These organising principles are not tacit but produce the cultural and social content of space: the attractions at the Copenhagen Carnival are located in a logical order and through an understanding of what kind of content will communicate with which segments. Thus, children and families are expected to be interested in certain attractions (parade, dance, hobby and food) during the day, while the young party segment is supposed to experience the venue space at night-time and

engage in music concerts and bar life. Still, at night-time, the venue space must not feel secluded or empty. The balance when organising the venue is to facilitate old and new segments' experience of high and low levels of relevant and customised experiences, while their need for safety, food and edutainment is also fulfilled.

### 3) People and Culture

#### Managing Culture Workers

Personal connections, a collaborating network and shared aims create the professional network behind Copenhagen Carnival 2009. A well trained group of culture workers – stage technicians, property masters, sound and light technicians, chauffeurs, marketing people and event-makers – have a day job at tax-funded theatres, stadiums, exhibition venues and concert halls. These culture workers transgress the different sectors of urban experience industry by their voluntary work. On a practical level, this group makes cultural events happen, but the urban environment with its traditional culture industry provides the resources – props, manpower; technical equipment – to the alternative experience industry, simply because the technicians and organisers share the same professional network.

When the CEO took over the leadership of Copenhagen Carnival, he created a horizontal organisation with vertical lines to responsible team-managers and their groups who administered the event's different thematic areas: decoration/aesthetics; music/parade programme; market/merchandise; media; legal permits; and food and beverages.

The event organisation, according to Morten Sørensen, is founded on simple principles: (A) *Cultural resource transference* (directly and indirectly) from the external partnership institutions (established culture industry, sponsorships, co-creative grass-roots) to the event. This transference is organised by the carnival's responsible team managers: the event should democratically facilitate and include everyone with a good and relevant idea in relation to the experience setting. This could be university projects on littering and recycling; kindergarten projects on dance and masks; restaurants with an exotic theme; or performance groups who create various appropriate experience hubs at the venue. These projects are necessary for the event to renew itself, but they are not copyrighted or bought by the carnival and can be reused by the artists, performers and institutions in other event settings. (B) *A low-cost event but not low content quality*: The event's experience setting, its decoration, milieus and infrastructure, are achieved by professional culture workers who borrow resources from their conventional workplace, and the logistics is created by the responsible team managers. These two principles are the result of (C) *A passionate organisation*: Since the carnival is low-budget, the event teams cannot exist without the single individual's passion to create and erect parts and totality of the event. A 'passionate organisation' follows here the imper-

ative found in the tourism and service sector where it is literally expected that the employees' work performance has emotional and dedicated components. Superficial or theatrical acts of e.g. good service, friendly smiles or helpfulness are not enough. Instead, in order for the business to compete, the employees have to feel 'deeply' about their message and their reason for being there, i.e. they need to possess a competence of having 'self-aware intentions' so that both the employee and the business understand the work situation as win-win (Ooi & Ek 2010:304). This type of creative workforce – or 'creative class' is exactly what is viewed as necessary in the Richard Florida inspired culture policies when producing a place's vibrancy and a cool city brand. The trend in current culture policy where 'creativity' is equivalent with 'wealth creation' (McGuigan 2009:295) might even be perceived as a compliment to (prior and traditional) local and national decision makers: during the years cultural politics has promoted the subsidisation of upcoming talents but also financed the educational training of culture workers in the public sector, which the carnival and the city now (hopefully) capitalise on. Thus, in a post-industrial society the leading justification for subsidising culture is no longer art for art's own sake, but for the sake of wide-ranging wealth creation.

### **Low-budget Creativity**

The 'simple principles' offered by the Copenhagen Carnival's CEO can add to an understanding of Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen's (2007) model of Value Framework for Experience Production: In order for the event to be experienced as meaningful to the customer (1), the organisation's people need to be driven by a certain emotional structure, namely a business culture of self-driven passion with core competences regarding how an event will be perceived as complete by the consumer (3). In order for the event teams to perform and activate external partnerships of co-creation (4), they additionally need a network competence to acquire the resources from the city's established cultural and institutional sectors. All these core competences should lead up to the event's business model: to deliver a spectacular consumer experience and perform a sustainable organisation regardless of being low-cost and volunteer-based.

The team managers, thus, should possess creative core competence which, in this context, means that they should know how to transfer – spin off and capitalise – experiential resources from their responsible thematic area to other thematic areas within the organisation. Being trained professional culture workers, they should be able to focus on the consumer's immediate experience, i.e. understand the kind of products and performances which can create edutainment value for the guests, add value to the carnival as an event, and create awareness among a larger public. Morten Sørensen gave an example:

A DJ volunteered to perform at a night-time show. He was paired with a pyrotechnic who was going to create a great fireworks display on Saturday night. The team manager of the music and event programme was responsible. However, this was first of all a case for the group manager – in charge of legal permits, which could have cho-

sen to keep the permission to do the fireworks a purely technocratic matter. And there is a lot of that! A lot of permits for hygiene, safety, traffic, alcohol, noise – you name it! Still, because the team managers are experienced, they knew that a party climaxing with a big fireworks display could also become a media story *precisely* because of the safety issues. In this case we got a great media story – and hence free marketing – on how the carnival’s fireworks would be so dominant that it could cause safety problems at the city’s airport and affect its flight logistics. On a practical level – or because all the managers know every aspect of the organisation, the team manager in charge of media was provided with all the information on both safety and party in order to create a good story. This is an example of how the organisation is always structured around producing good stories and creating spectacles. Or, in other words, we aim at capitalising on everything. And also the things that would normally cause distress and irritation.

Expertise, experience and knowledge transference between the carnival’s thematic areas and their team managers are essentials in an event organisation. The ambition to make things happen, or engaging the professional culture workers with the carnival’s interests in the spectacular and attractive, has to be meaningful, challenging and rewarding for their sense of a good story, a great party or an event coming together, but possibly also for their career as culture workers.

Working on a low budget and with tight public legislation, forces the organisation to be innovative when capitalising on all possible stories which could market the event. At least this is the working model of the carnival’s CEO. In this sense he follows a widespread notion of ‘creativity’ which can be outlined as a playful, original and surprising capacity, enhanced by rigid rules and strict budgets which otherwise, as Sørensen explains, would cause distress.

There is nevertheless creative potential in distress. This definition of ‘creativity’ might originate from the German sociologists and critical theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. In their influential book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944/2007) they argue that to be creative is a counter-cultural performance against the establishment and thus to bring about a set of alternative and surprising world-views. Returning to the example provided by Sørensen, what may linger on from this progressive or old-fashioned argument, depending on how one sees it, is the way in which ‘creativity’ is conceptualised, promoted and protected in an event organisation which is supposed to be sustainable both as a business and as a rejuvenator of cultural expressions. In the event organisation, the romancing of low budgets and the voluntary working conditions becomes the costless culture worker’s imaginative and playful potential. It can be interpreted as a core competence of passion but is also the event manager’s rhetorical and practical way to *art up* an event sector that, in order to deliver the spectacular, should be able to challenge conventional ways. But it might even be strategically wise when the CEO communicates the instrumentalised ways of creativity production to local decision makers because these ways resembles the trend in current culture policy where ‘creativity in artistic practice and business management are roughly the same kind of thing’ (McGuigan 2009:297).

## **Co-creation and Marketing of an Event**

In exotic feather costumes, a group of women are dancing samba in the half-time break of a football match in Copenhagen. On the pitch of the Danish national stadium, The Park, the performing women are accompanied by the sounds of a drum troupe to which they unfold their samba dance rhythms. On this 31st of May 2009, the football game is a first division match and the stadium is packed with fans and supporters. The contesting clubs decorate the stadium with their colours, rituals and songs. Despite the warm reception from the football fans, the performing samba troupes still appear a bit odd, out of context, or at least something that would not normally happen during a half-time break. Why isn't it the customary cheerleaders and club supporters who entertain the audience? How has this cultural fusion between a Danish football match and the performance of the samba-dancing women come about?

The Copenhagen Carnival used its network of people and was well-connected in the city's different experience sectors. The principles of 'co-creation', which the Swedish market economist Lena Mossberg (2003) defines as a collaborative way of two and more businesses and/or entrepreneurs to fuse their (in this case, intangible) experience products, were used in order to create a marketing opportunity and bring about unexpected experiences. The idea of co-creation is, among other things, to access new markets by launching a product in unusual places and through unusual combinations. Thus, the feather-clad women were *of course* a live performance marketing event, promoting the Copenhagen Carnival 2009 which simultaneously took place at the public park which surrounds the stadium.

The fusion between the half-time break in the football match and the carnival troupe was furthermore a low-cost marketing strategy. A deal was done over the telephone by two stage technicians – one at the commercial sport event and one at the low-budget carnival. Marketing the Copenhagen Carnival to the 38 000 people in the audience on that particular day was certainly more lucrative for the carnival organisation than it was for the football event. This promotion shows how co-creation is not always about win-win, but – when creating urban spectacles – also a gesture or a helping hand from a more resourceful organisation which helped the carnival to renew, not the concept, but the market. In an urban context, the city's institutionalised and/or commercial experience industry indirectly co-creates the carnival's alternative event, through a well established, albeit informal, network of professional culture workers, technicians and organisers.

## **4) Innovation and Creativity Capacity – External Partners**

### **Event as Urban Vibrancy or Political Challenge**

A low-budget event organisation needs to collaborate with political decision-makers in order to survive and renew itself. I have given examples of the special

culture policy interest of the carnival's cultural training of children and in how the event setting promotes Copenhagen as a tolerant city.

But in order to also be acknowledged as a legitimate tool for the cultural policies focusing on creating vibrant cities or regions, the event organisation needs to incorporate political awareness, language and terminologies. The goal is to gain access to the local city council's funding but also to its metropolitan services, such as sanitation, electricity and infrastructure. A city council is an important – but highly difficult – external partner to work with, because the logistic needs of an event are spread out over a number of departments. In addition, there will be economic priorities and local politicians might not be as well informed about national or supra-national cultural policy to recognise how different events could create attractiveness in a city's image. In this sense an event might support the cultural activities of a place, but not be recognised for its part in the economic value chain (Larson & Fredriksson 2007:180-182).

Still, it might not only be culture policy researchers, such as Jim McGuigan (2009), who understand it as far fetched when culture is promoted as the instrument to solve deep-seated economic crisis in the post-industrial society. This thesis could also appear strange to local decision-makers because the Richard Florida inspired culture policies mainly are concerned with the cultural consumption of aestheticism and portray places in intangible terms of 'magic' and 'vibrancy'. To put it roughly this language has to do with business and religion but not with cultural education of either citizens or culture workers. Thus, in current cultural policy reports there may be a distance between visions of vibrancy and how to achieve them in practice. This might discourage decision-makers from supporting an event organisation, despite its qualified staffs' performance on culture production.

Large parts of the alternative experience industry are defined as weak, have difficulty surviving from year to year and creating sustainable profit from sponsorship and partnerships in order to reproduce. Especially the event sector often relies on individuals, volunteers and enthusiasts, who have limited training, and the organisation is often missing out on important knowledge transference when new volunteers are recruited. According to national and supra-national culture policy reports, the experience industry thus lacks professional skills in managing, marketing, event designing and financially running its business. The ambition is to politically support the right framework conditions, e.g. tax-funding, educational and infrastructural solutions. Thus, finding and promoting effective tools for managing, organising and marketing the sector is highlighted as a culture policy strategy (De Paoli 2006:15f). In local decision-making this business language might be difficult to adapt to the cultural practices of urban- and regional everyday politics. The overall vision of why a city or region should need a strong experience industry when competing globally and in the post-industrial era might be lost at the level of policy practice.

## Conclusion

Through a model of Value Framework for Experience Production I have analysed how the event organisation, its technological solutions and cultural assumptions can be difficult to separate in the field of practice and when producing experiences. Nevertheless, this model clarifies the external and internal resources necessary when an event organisation works to create spectacular and hopefully meaningful-experience concepts. I have discussed event management as a particular form of leadership which has to promote an improvisational structure. When it comes to experiential concept it has to be inventive, but needs to perform routines when it comes to the experience setting of consumer safety and comfort. When creating meaningful experiences in a low-budget organisation, culture workers' improvisation and *ad hoc* solutions are vital.

This article has investigated the event management and organisation of the Copenhagen Carnival 2009. I have outlined the Copenhagen Carnival as an example of how a low-budget event is indirectly supported by the established and commercial urban experience industry and not least by its staff of culture workers. The carnival is thus co-created by voluntary culture workers and service staff, but also by international and national women, children and men who produce the event's cultural content by staging, organising, dancing, playing and consuming the exotic. The carnival is furthermore a co-creative space for sponsorships, small enterprises and a scene for artists, students and grass-roots who display their cultural expressions in an experience setting which is similar to the matrix of a theme-park and an ordinary city.

In order to survive, an event has to have qualities of the new (annual) thing and a co-creating live effect on the guests. Copenhagen Carnival has a flexible event structure which can be revised, redesigned and reinterpreted into new, related themes, addressing new and old consumer segments. Improving an event depends on the consumer's recognition of, but also surprises in, an event environment. This is important for the event management to analyse. Hence, in order to transform experience concepts into experience settings – or transform ideas into materiality – the event manager first of all needs to clarify the consumer's perspective – his or her different social roles, cultural understandings and specific desires to be offered more than entertainment.

An annual event such as Copenhagen Carnival exemplifies the recent debate within cultural policy and experience economy in which events are perceived as essentials when adding value to a city's image. This is underlined by a post-industrial, business and scholarly, focus on the creative class producing and consuming 'the cool city'. Inspired by the American management theorist Richard Florida, current Nordic and European culture policy argue that culture can be capitalised and solve deep-seated economical problems in the post-industrial society. Culture has become equivalent to societal wealth creation, but this might be too ambitious and over-simplified. Nevertheless, if these current culture policy reports

are viewed as ways to renew the (traditional) culture- and experience industry, for example by bringing about meaningful-experience concepts, defined as so good that people will be willing to pay for them, the reports might add value to this sector. But a city council with its duties to culturally educate citizens and delivering framework conditions for the culture- and experience industry might go against these ideals. Additionally, a city's metropolitan functions may be difficult to access to the alternative experience industry. This is challenging when viewed from the event organisation's ambition to renew and sustain the event. But it is also problematic if current culture policy desires for event professionalism and culture-business are not met, or if an event's ability to create urban vibrancy is not considered part of a place's value-creation chain.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See also e.g. this relevant cultural policy report: Econ Pöyry AS/InFuture AS (2008): *Innovasjon i opplevelsesnæringer* (Econ-rapport no. 2008-118). Please note that in the following article I will refer to these reports as the "current culture policy".
- <sup>2</sup> Morten Sørensen is the CEO (2008–) of the foundation Fonden CPH Carnival.
- <sup>3</sup> They build on Quinn's (1988) model of "Competing Values Framework" (after Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2007:146f).
- <sup>4</sup> But see for instance Bjälesjö 1999; Ristilammi 2001; Hjemdahl, Hauge & Lind 2007; Kjær 2009.
- <sup>5</sup> Definition from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Event\\_management](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Event_management) (11.04.02)
- <sup>6</sup> For a clarification of the different phenomenological concepts such as situation, interaction and experience, see Jackson 1996.
- <sup>7</sup> For post-colonial literature and the discussion on colonial influences on present-day tourism see e.g. Pratt 1992; McClintock 1998; Edensor 1998.
- <sup>8</sup> This is a different experience setting strategy from a purely commercial (culture) event such as the Swedish music festival Way out West, located in the city of Gothenburg. Large companies like Ramlösa, Nokia and SJ (Swedish Rail) sponsor the event and receive experience hubs at the festival venue in return. Commercial messages are wrapped into leisure lounges and the experience focus is not on the Way out West concept, but on the sponsor's consumable products. In a commercial event, a particular musical culture and its artistic visions are sometimes toned down for the benefit of sponsored products which nevertheless could be storylined into appropriate experiential and conceptual themes, but in many cases are not. Thus, in commercial events, the overall experience theme of an event is sometimes considered secondary (Kjær 2008).

- <sup>9</sup> In the event industry it is a widespread practice to work according to the theory of the American psychologist Abraham Maslow and his model of “the hierarchy of basic needs”, developed in the 1940s. “Basic needs” are defined as physical/bodily needs, security, social acceptance, appreciation, and self-realisation.

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