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BOOK REVIEW

Critical event studies: approaches to research, edited by I. Lamond and L. Platt, Basingstoke, UK, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 312 pp., €114.39, £115.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-137-52384-6, €91.62, £41.40 (e-book), ISBN 978-1-137-52386-0

Once lying in the margins, event studies is now a stand-alone subject area receiving new attention and research. The book, 'Critical Event Studies: Approaches to Research,' edited by Ian R Lamond and Louise Platt argues that critical event studies should be a significant part of event studies future. The 'critical turn' has occurred across the social sciences, with a distinct 'critical' paradigm rejecting positivist notions of objectivism and drawing in action-oriented participant-driven research and more engaging perspectives and approaches to event analysis. The editors acknowledge that critical event studies that 'critique the neo-liberal, operational focus currently dominating events management' (p.3) isn't commonly an aspect of event management education. They highlight that there are few modules of that name occurring in universities teaching event management, due to the focus on operational aspects of event delivery. The objective of the edited book is to bring together sociologists, historians, cultural theorists and political scientists to engage in alternative methodological praxis.

The three chapters in section one entitled 'Critical Considerations' considers the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of event research. Turner and Pirie explore problems of involvement when researching 'passion projects', while Dowse, in a qualitative case of the 2010 Football World Cup, explores similar personal insider and outsider statuses. Part two of the book, 'Discursive, Historical, and Ideological Perspectives' takes a look at approaches that consider history and ideology. McDowell and Skillen's chapter is a general overview of historical events studies research. Dominique Ying-Chih Liao, in a stand out article, contests the concept of 'event' within the field of events studies, by invoking and interconnecting concepts of performance, space and memory at a heritage site in Taiwan. The combination of Connerton's concept of bodily practice of inscribed memory, and Lefebvre's production of space, and Knowles's triangle model is novel and challenging. Likewise, Montessori's chapter on how to make sense of critical events in a society of radical change using poststructural thought, discourse theory, and critical discourse analysis (CDA) highlights the significance of how research on critical events can be performed. Jaworska then uses Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) to explore the case of the London Olympics, whilst Misener et al. examine events through disability studies. This chapter again notes the importance of immersion in the event phenomenon they are studying.

Part three, 'Encountering the Event,' examines the nuances of how events function, with five chapters reflecting on method(s) deployed and the strengths and challenges therein. The methods are diverse, and range from archival research, critical discourse analysis, corpus-assisted discourse analysis, participant-observation, autoethnography, and social network analysis. Finkel and Sang use participatory approaches to research special events, and similar to other chapters, explores immersion. Dashper utilises autoethnography as a useful research method. This is an interesting and challenging method, and offers a useful tool for exploring and understanding meaning in events research. Pavoni and Citroni utilise an ethnographic methodology whilst Moss utilises a novel approach called experience sampling to measure peoples' experiences in real time, to minimise recall bias. The additional exploration of phenomenology makes this a standout chapter.

In recommending the book to researchers and postgraduate students, I caution that many of the chapters do not extend beyond the realms of prevailing books on research methods in events. Pernecky's 'Approaches and Methods in Event Studies' (2016, Routledge) for example, addresses some similar approaches, and broadens the discussion to philosophical, theoretical, and methods-related problems. Likewise, many mainstream research methods books cover alternative inquiry paradigms seen in this volume. Indeed, for some readers, the research approaches explored may not be radical or emancipatory enough, with few chapters out rightly rejecting the market or not examining methods for studying events already covered extensively by other literature. The claim to the title of 'critical' could have been more broadly discussed and made explicit in the introduction and within each chapter. 'Critical event studies,' is a term with no accepted definition and it remains a slippery term. The book didn't fully grapple with its epistemological grounds, and those seeking to understand the philosophical context to critical events research may be disappointed. Such questions may be explored in the publication, entitled 'Critical Event Studies' (2016, Routledge) by Spracklen and Lamond. That being said, the chapters, stand on their own, as examples of researchers in the field employing methods in particular contexts. Each chapter is well written and graduate students and researchers will find the book accessible and relatable. A criticism may be the UK centric nature of the book, with most authors linked to UK institutions and most cases linked to the UK events. In addition, there may have been broader cases related to different types/forms/scales of events. Finally, many of the cases were related to one geographical location: Scotland (a community event located near Edinburgh, the Edinburgh Commonwealth Games, the Glasgow Commonwealth Games and the Edinburgh International Science Festival).

Whilst making a valuable contribution to the field, the book isn't a direct call to action nor does it seek to be used as a publication for critical events research at undergraduate level. The book isn't a methods toolkit and therefore isn't an aid to teaching and is best suited to those graduate students and researchers who have already decided on a method. In general, critical event studies are a work in progress, and we have seen critical event studies conferences, and on-going resources been developed e.g. https://makingeventscritical.wordpress.com/. While there hasn't been a critical event studies journal, it is inevitable that new courses, particularly for postgraduates, will emerge. Likewise, funding calls and funding success for the field is increasing. The threads contained in this and other related volumes and the extent to which they reference existing literature and/or practice; such as methodological conundrums (e.g. insiders and outsiders) is, in the medium to long term of immense benefit to event studies and event management. In summary, the book is part of a valuable and ever growing resource, which is collectively, driving a quiet revolution that is inspiring researchers and postgraduate students to consider other approaches toward event analysis.

References

Pernecky, T., (Ed.). (2016). *Approaches and methods in event studies*. New York: Routledge.
Spracklen, K., & Lamond, I., (Eds). (2016). *Critical event studies*. New York: Routledge.

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