Typologies and Event Studies

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As we saw in Chapter 1, the development of Event Studies has generated a great deal of debate over how we understand events. One of the key themes of the debate relates to the categorisation of events and the construction of event typologies. This chapter seeks to explore this theme and begins by asking, ‘What is a typology and why are they constructed?’ The term ‘typology’ is examined through several definitions, offered from the domains of sociology, marketing, management and events. An analysis of existing event typologies will be offered along with a case study which will be used to suggest an alternative approach to developing a typological framework for the reader to consider so as:

- to understand the general purpose and methods behind the construction of typologies;
- to critically evaluate current event typology frameworks;
- to develop their own typological frameworks in the event domain.

What do we mean by the term ‘typology’? Lewin and Somekh (2005: 349) suggest it is ‘the term used for a list or table which organises phenomena into categories and hierarchies. Typologies are often used as an organising framework in research, or the development of a typology may be an outcome of the research.’

This, it would seem, is not controversial. Indeed, Winch (1947: 68) suggests typologies are created, ‘to perceive order in the “infinite complexity” of the universe … for the purpose of discovering systems’. Furthermore, Winch contends that typologies may be classified as either heuristic or empirical, suggesting that a heuristic typology has the following characteristics:

(a) Insofar as it is distinguishable from theory, it is deduced from theory.
(b) It is constructed for the purpose of enhancing the vision of the research, i.e. by facilitating the statement of hypotheses, the conception of testing situations, the ordering of observations.
(c) It represents the voluntary distortion of empirical phenomenon by positing the extreme forms of relevant characteristics.
(d) In the logical order of things it stands between theory and the test of theory.

An empirical typology, as its name suggests, is one that is derived primarily from data rather than theory. The aim is to summarise observations rather than enhance vision or identify essences.
Logically, empirically derived theory stands between observation and the reformulation of theory, being anchored in a logical positivist paradigm.

The link with empiricism is continued by Capecchi (1968: 9), who defines typology thus,

A typology therefore, is the reduction of a property space, in other words the selection of a certain number of combinations of groups or variables. This selection may be more or less explicit, more or less valid, more or less based on the data afforded by empirical research.

An alternative perspective is offered by Cohen (1979), who develops a phenomenological typology of tourist experiences. In the context of this chapter, Cohen’s paper is interesting for two reasons; first because it is a useful example of the development of a typology on which to base empirical research, and second because it deals with the subject of experience which has gained increasing prominence in the events domain. This is a subject which we will revisit throughout the book, as outlined in the Introductory chapter and those that follow which focus on experiential issues (e.g. Chapter 11, ‘The psychology of events’). Getz (2007) questions the use of experience as one form of criteria through which to develop event typologies because of the multiplicity of experiential possibilities that may be found at any given event. He does, however, endorse the possibility of using phenomenology to better understand event experiences, citing Chen (2006). Another example of a phenomenological approach within the event management research is Derrett (2009), who takes up qualitative methods to explore how events emerge as cultural products from the communities in which they take place.

In contrast, Doty and Glick (1994) highlight, in the context of organisational structures and in particular the work of Mintzberg (1979), differing conceptions of what typologies are and strongly criticise the simplistic understanding of typologies as purely systems of categorisation. ‘Typologies are differentiated from classification systems, shown to meet several important criteria of theories, and shown to contain multiple levels of theory’ (Doty and Glick 1994: 231). Their argument is based on three assertions: typologies are distinct from classification systems; typologies meet key criteria for being theories; and typologies are complex, containing several levels of theory. As part of their critiques, Doty and Glick (1994) offer five guidelines for developing a typology:

1 In offering a typology the researcher should make clear the grand theoretical assertions that are driving it. For Mintzberg (1979) the grand theory related to organisational ‘fit’ to his typology would lead to greater effectiveness. This will enable others to test the typology.
2 A typology should define the complete set of ideal types. Doty and Glick (1994) show how Mintzberg (1979) offers five ideal types of organisation but then introduces hybrids or combinations of the ideal types. It is important that all hybrids allowed by the theory are included or that the pattern for their creation is explained.
3 A typology should describe each ideal type using a consistent set of dimensions. It is often the case, and Mintzberg’s work is no exception, that rich descriptions are used which should use a consistent set of constructs.
4 Typological theories should state clearly the assumptions about the theoretical importance of each construct used to describe the ideal types.
5 Typological theories should be tested with conceptual and analytical models that are consistent with the theory.

In the light of these claims to the purpose and nature of typologies we turn to review their use in the extant literature on Event Studies.
As Getz has shown in Chapter 2, much of the early literature on events research concerned itself with the definition and categorisation of events. As this has been discussed in some detail in the preceding chapter it is not necessary to dwell on definitions in great detail here. However, it is worth looking at the assumptions that have driven definitions of events and typologies.

Goldblatt (1997) describes how, in 1955, Disney’s Head of Public Relations Robert Jani created parades at the theme parks to prolong customer visit times into the evening. The parades were described by Jani as special events, ‘that which is different from an normal day of living’ (Goldblatt 1997: 2). Clearly Jani’s use of the word ‘normal’ is problematic. In the same way as Getz highlights the difficulty of using experience as a foundation for a typology due to their variability from individual to individual, so too will a ‘normal’ day of living vary widely between individuals. While this is a key point and will be returned to later in this chapter, it is the motivation behind Jani’s development of the parades at Disney which is instructive here. Essentially, the parades were created to increase the amount of time that the visitors spent at the theme park. This issue of the motivation to put on events is taken up by Hall (1992: 10), who suggests, ‘Perhaps the most fundamental question which needs to be asked in the examination of hallmark events is that of for what and for who are the events being held?’

In the Disney example it is clear that the answer to ‘for what?’ is commercial profit and therefore ‘for who?’ is contingent. One could argue that the parade was put on for the visitors to enjoy, but there is the commercial imperative, the increased profit, derived from prolonging the length of visits to the theme park. Given this, it is perhaps unsurprising that early event literature focused on impacts, and in particular economic impacts, for example the work of Shaw (1985), Getz (1991) and Ritchie and Yangzhou (1987) which focused on hallmark, special and mega-events. An alternative lens has been employed recently by Xiao and Smith (2003), who used a grounded theory approach to analyse responses to an open question in a survey of residents. From this they developed a typology of event participant roles, namely the supporters, the complaint makers, the mild opponents and the radical opponents.

The question of event purpose or goal has been categorised by Goldblatt (2002: 8) as ‘celebration, education, marketing, and reunion’.

Matthews (2008: 3) develops Goldblatt’s categories and gives ‘the primary reasons for holding special events [as] religious, political, social, educational and commercial’, going on to suggest (2008: 5), ‘the primary reason for holding special events has now become almost completely commercial’.

Matthew’s typology of event purposes is valid; however, his confinement of modern-day special events to a commercial imperative may be questioned. Does an analysis that finds commerce as the primary driver of events imply an essentialising approach? Lavenda (1980), in a fascinating paper, looks at the purpose of the Caracas Carnival in Venezuela from what Matthews (2008) might term a political perspective. In charting the rise of a new elite within Venezuelan society, Lavenda (1980) shows how the carnival was developed to assert their position and, moreover, to engender the formation of a modern Venezuelan state based on the European model. Of particular interest is his analysis of a newspaper article from the time which described the new European-style carnival:

Through the use of the language of battle, language which only a short time before had been used to describe the real battles in real wars among the Venezuelans, the editor contrives to paint a charming, amused picture of civilized diversion, clearly harmless and without threat. Here, too, the threatening chaos of the old Carnival was brought under control.

(Lavenda 1980: 470)
Lavenda argues that the event was used to curb the agency of the lower classes who had taken part in the old Carnival. The analysis of the language is instructive in that it relates to what Getz alludes to in Chapter 2, when he introduces the idea of Foucauldian discourse analysis and, in particular, a classical discourse.

Perhaps in employing discourse analysis to events an alternative approach to the development of typologies may be conceived. A discourse analysis of a given event would include not only the literature of an event but, for example, the promotional materials and the voices of those who took part, the organisers, actors and onlookers. It could go further, as Jaworski and Coupland (2005: 6) observe, ‘It is worth noticing that discourse reaches out further than language itself in the forms as well as the meanings that can be the focus of analysis.’ In the case study of the Lewes Passion Plays 2010 which follows, the text of the programme for the plays is reproduced, along with parts of the website, the voices of some of those who took part and the authors’ observations of the feedback evening that took place a month after the plays on 5 May.

The Lewes Passion Plays are organised at Easter every ten years by churches in the Lewes town area. The 2010 project, involving approximately 100 people, was driven entirely by volunteers and cost £6,000 to stage. Fifteen months of planning led to an event consisting of four outdoor acts or plays in different parts of the town which were watched by audiences of between 300 and 600 people and were featured on the BBC news. The following, taken from the programme for the events, gives an overview of what took place.

The cover of the programme states,


To enable the churches of Lewes, together with the community, to share in the telling of the story of Christ’s passion.

2 p.m. 28 March. Palm Sunday. Entry into Jerusalem; Miracles. Procession leaves from St Anne’s church (opposite Pelham Arms) down the High Street to Cliffe Precinct [the main shopping area].

The Prologue: Luke [writer of the third Gospel] will introduce the events to come in Holy Week; a crowd cheers and follows as Jesus travels with a donkey to be welcomed into Jerusalem by the people who have heard of his miracles and teaching. The crowd sees him as King and Liberator, who will set them free from the Romans. But Jesus makes clear that his kingdom is of a different nature.

In Cliffe Precinct:

A crowd gathers to welcome Jesus. Jesus establishes his identity as healer and demonstrates his authority. A blind beggar is healed. The procession will move off along Friars’ Walk to the Grange Gardens where further amazing events will occur. Please walk with us.

3 p.m. Grange Gardens. Women are weeping beside the body of Lazarus. Jesus has been asked to come and heal Lazarus when he fell ill, but had not done so. Here he is now though, with amazing results …

Jesus then moves to the Temple courtyard and makes plain how he feels about the moneylenders and the traders dealing there.

Much of what Jesus did during his lifetime challenged the authorities of his day. They also felt threatened by his popularity and were determined to bring him to trial – using false allegations if necessary.
8.30 p.m. 1 April. Maundy Thursday; Last Supper, Arrest, Trial. Venue – Grange Gardens. This play takes place on and around a temporary stage. In atmospheric surroundings of the Grange Gardens and in gathering darkness key moments of the passion are enacted culminating in Judas’ betrayal of Jesus and the subsequent trial at the house of the High Priest Caiaphas.

We meet Judas as he struggles with his disappointment that Jesus has not rushed in and displaced the Romans but is spreading a message of love and forgiveness (see Figure 3.1).

12.30 p.m. 2 April. Good Friday; Trial Venue – Cliffe Precinct

Jesus is brought to trial before Pilate who sees no real case for execution but is weak before the insistence of the Priests and Pharisees. He tries to evade matters by sending Jesus to Herod, Tetrarch of Galilee. Jesus does not answer Herod’s questioning so is returned to Pilate for him to deal with. Evading the decision once more Pilate gives the people a choice: one prisoner is traditionally released at Passover – it can be Jesus or Barabbas. Stirred up by the leaders the crowd call for Barabbas to be released. Pilate then sentences Jesus to be flogged and crucified. Soldiers take him off. His kingship is reflected in their mockery. Process with us, following Jesus, to the Mount.

The audience walk with Jesus as he carries his cross piece to the Mount where he is nailed to the cross and left to die a slow, agonising death.

The programme for the play states,

Brutal and cruel as his death is, it offers each of us a chance to start again. ‘Father forgive them,’ he calls out, ‘for they know not what they do.’ The prayer of forgiveness is ours for
the taking and extends to the way in which we daily turn our back on God and give in to what we know is wrong.

3 p.m. 4 April. Easter Sunday; Resurrection. Venue – Grange Gardens.

The women find the tomb empty and their distress turns to amazement and awe when, in seeking help, they encounter the living Jesus. In this and other revelations of himself after the resurrection Jesus stresses his real presence – in breaking of bread, teaching and commissioning his followers to go and spread the message of God’s love and salvation for all who hear and believe.

The message of forgiveness and salvation is demonstrated in the final scenes of the play when Judas and Jesus come face to face and embrace.

Message from the director: we have grown together as a community in our faith as we have worked on this very special project. We hope you have benefited from sharing with us our Holy Week Experience and it has helped you understand the Passion of Christ. It has been a privilege to be part of a wonderful team of volunteer scriptwriters, actors, singers, musicians, seamstresses, technicians, and prayer groups and my heartfelt thanks goes out to everyone who has made this community venture possible.

The author attended a feedback event for those who had produced the play to observe and conduct informal but focused discussions. Peter Shears, one of the scriptwriters, when asked about the decision to use authentic costumes rather than a more contemporary wardrobe, said, ‘We wanted to move people out of their everyday reality.’

Those involved in the play also found it a moving experience that impacted on their lives. The director of music, Stella Hull, spoke of a ‘divine jigsaw’ referring to the way the music and musicians had come together to perform. Serena Smith, the director of the plays, described how her acceptance of the role of director had been a life-changing moment. She and others spoke of the strong emotions they had felt. Some comments from those involved included, ‘Thank you for letting me join such a deep and moving set of events, never so overwhelmed and mesmerised by a group of people’, and ‘I’m not a Christian but now I’m really thinking about my beliefs.’

Both the programme and the conversations at the feedback meeting convey messages that relate to community and inclusivity. Peter Shears commented, ‘We wanted to tell the story of the Gospel in a way that was accessible to all.’ And Serena talked about how the script had been amended to involve women more; in particular, a scene was introduced in which Mary, mother of Jesus, talks to her son. Further, the text of the programme invites the audience to participate: for example, ‘Please walk with us’ and, ‘We meet Judas as he struggles … ’ These instructions were reinforced by the action of the plays when actors mingled with the audience during certain scenes.

The previous Passion Play in 2000 had been organised differently, with individual churches putting on different acts autonomously. The new approach, in which the churches of Lewes collaborated to produce the plays, represented a major departure and this is reflected in the message on the programme from the director, who states that ‘We have grown together as a community … ’

So what are the implications of this case study for the construction of event typologies? The approach to categorisation offered by Allen et al. (2008: 14) would suggest that this is a community event: ‘Most communities produce a host of festivals and events that are targeted mainly at local audiences and are staged primarily for their social, fun and entertainment value.’ Equally, one could apply Matthews’ (2008: 7) category, celebrations, ceremonies and spectacles: ‘Public events: these include such events as parades, festivals, sporting events, concerts and
one-off theatrical presentations.’ So one could categorise the Lewes Passion Play as a public community event. However, is this approach to categorisation adequate? Goldblatt (2002: 10) acknowledges that his subfield categorisation of the event management profession is ‘not scientifically categorized – there are many linkages between them’. Further, Matthews (2008: 8) suggests that there is ‘often much cross-pollenization among the categories, in spite of the different primary reasons for events’. For this reason the next section will suggest an approach to categorisation and ultimately typology development through the study of the discourse generated by event organisers, participants and the texts and other symbols they generate.

In suggesting an alternative route to the development of typologies, it is the author’s contention that discourse and discourse analysis could be used to develop an event typology. In Chapter 2 Getz introduced discourses on events and tourism, using the term ‘discourse’ after the tradition of Foucault (1972). In The Archaeology of Knowledge Foucault states his intention,

to show that discourse is not a slender surface of contact, or confrontation, between a reality and a language (langue), the intrication of a lexicon and an experience; I would like to show with precise examples that in analysing discourses themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice … A task that consists of not – of no longer – treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things.

(Foucault 1972: 48–9)

Foucault’s work focused on the idea that within given social cultural and historical periods are particular ways of seeing, analysing and acting in the world that distributes power so that people (subjects) live within the discipline of that period’s discourse. For the purposes of this discussion I will use the term ‘discourse’ as suggested by Potter and Weatherall (1987: 7) as covering ‘all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds’.

Earlier in this chapter, the problem of what constitutes a normal day was raised in relation to defining an event. What an individual considers to be normal will relate to his or her conception of reality. Before going any further it is necessary to consider briefly two theoretical areas that are important to discourse analysis, the nature of reality and the construction of self.

Macnaghten (1993) acknowledges that it is difficult to summarise the ontological2 position of discourse analysis in relation to reality. However, Macnaghten (1993: 53) suggests that many approaches to discourse analysis would agree that ‘all knowledge is irretrievably connected to a reality – produced, bounded and sustained by human meanings and constructions’. In essence this can be seen as a post-structuralist, socially constructed epistemological position.

The methodology of membership category analysis (Sacks 2006) suggests that the way category descriptions are sequenced in conversation enables people to make sense and derive meaning. Sacks’ approach to discourse is different from that of Foucault in that he uses an ethnmethodological, conversation analysis-based technique. In particular, Sachs analyses the sequences of talk. These categories will, whether they are imposed by others or by ourselves, impact on our individual identity, and discourse analysts are particularly interested in this process or what may be called the construction of self.

If we take the comment by one of those who took part, ‘I’m not a Christian but now I’m really thinking about my beliefs’, we can see how this individual links the word ‘Christian’ with belief. The individual wishes to make clear that s/he is not a Christian but does have
belief. This discourse ties in well with Giddens’ (1991) description how old faith-based systems of belief have been eroded by secularisation to uncover a multitude of ideologies from which we can choose. Thus identity may change over time and is not fixed, and this links closely to the social constructionist position mentioned above. Furthermore, the fact that this individual’s statement was read out at the feedback evening speaks to the way in which the organisers of the event wished to position it as an event which shared the Christian message. This statement was an instance of the event disturbing an individual so that s/he re-examined what s/he believed.

Considering the text and voices presented in the case study it may be possible to develop a typology following a pattern similar to that of Holt (1995), who observed baseball spectators at games to develop a typology of consumption. However, rather than develop an analytic approach to data generated predominately through observation, the proposed approach is based on an analysis of the language used by those who organise and participate in the event. For example, the programme for the event contains the following two extracts,

1 To enable the churches of Lewes, together with the community, to share in the telling of the story of Christ’s passion.
2 Message from the director: we have grown together as a community and in our faith as we have worked on this very special project.

The word ‘community’ has two meanings in the text: on the one hand, it refers to the churches as a community of faith (Christians) and on the other to the wider community of Lewes who are invited to share in the Passion Play. Extract 1 refers to both of these groups while Extract 2 refers only to the community of faith, which, while it included non-Christians, was predominantly made up of individuals who would describe themselves as Christian. Referring back to Allen et al. (2008) one could categorise this event as a community event. However, using discourse analysis to identify how the event organisers construct their identity and then relating identity to the fundamental question of the event’s purpose (i.e. Hall 1992) one may be able to develop an alternative approach to event typology which recognises that, like the identities of those who take part in the event, the result may change over time.

Returning to Extract 1 above, given in the programme, and the event’s website (Extract 3) a clearer indication of the event’s purpose may be given:

3 Please continue to pray for all those who saw it, and whose hearts may be moved to want to learn more.

The text of the programme and the website indicates that the purpose was to enable the churches of Lewes to share the story of the Passion in the hope that those from the wider community of Lewes and beyond would also share in it and want to know more. As mentioned above, the text of the programme often invites the reader to ‘walk with us’ or ‘process with us’, and in the Good Friday section,

‘Father forgive them,’ he [Jesus] calls out, ‘for they know not what they do.’ The prayer for forgiveness is ours for the taking and extends to the way in which we daily turn our back on God and give in to what we know is wrong.

There is a strong message from the Christian community through the Passion Play to the wider community to share in the Christian message and believe in it. But it seems that the primary purpose is for the church communities, Anglican, Catholic, Methodist and other denominations,
to share the story of the Passion. In this way, the event could be described as a religious community-building event.

The discussion of typology in the event domain given in this chapter has aimed to develop the discussion and understanding of how typology methodology may be employed within the event domain. The discussion has drawn from other subject areas to demonstrate the functions of typologies and given alternative perspectives on their nature and use. Furthermore, in employing the methodology of discourse analysis to a case study an alternative approach to event typology is offered.

It is hoped that the introduction of a social constructivist approach, employing discourse analytical methodology, will provide a greater understanding of the relationship between individuals and events and their role. From a more practical perspective the intention is to give the event organiser and marketer additional resources with which to develop their objectives and therefore evaluate the success of their events.

For the organisers of the Lewes Passion Play, the fact that all the churches in the town contributed to the production and the comments made at the feedback evening by individuals from the wider community who were involved attest to the event’s success. Clearly if some churches had not been included this would have been a failure in terms of the objective set by the organisers.

The approach to typology employed in this chapter has not focused on quantitative aspects of events such as size and economic impact. This is in part because of the prevalence of this type of analysis in the event literature. Further research, employing a discourse analysis approach, should be conducted on a range of events, and this methodology be combined with existing quantitative approaches. Such approaches will be well suited to demystifying the role events play in forming individual and community identities. Furthermore, the role events play in terms of knowledge production and therefore of power relations can also be approached by researchers who take up discourse analysis. Some of these themes have been taken up, for example in relation to commodification of events (Foley et al. 2009) and instrumentalisation of cultural policy (Glow and Johanson 2009). Such investigations will provide a rich new perspective for students of Event Studies.

Notes

1 The distinction between heuristic and empirical relates to informed judgement and insight grounded in experience (heuristic) rather than judgement based on systematic analysis of data (empirical). Heuristic discovery/problem solving may draw on empirical data, but it goes beyond the data to deeper insights.

2 By ontological position I mean a view of the nature of being or existence. Discourse analysis takes many forms and therefore it is difficult to label them as taking a particular ontological position. For a useful discussion of different approaches to discourse analysis see Maclure (2003).

References


