Sensory Ethnography: Enhancing logistical event management planning

Lisa M Hayes (University of Waikato)
&
Jan C Robertson (WINTEC)

Kia ora koutou, Jan and I have been working on this evolving project over the past few years. We were introduced to ethnography as both a research method and a way of helping to explain the world we live & engage with at the first CEAD hui. As a reaction to this introduction, we began by recording out participant experiences at multiple events, as we wanted to raise the issue, with event managers, that their intended event planning outcomes may not be what the visitor or participant actually experienced.

Following more reading and conversation, we then began to question whether we could employ ethnographic methods to enhance our teaching and develop our students' knowledge, understanding and practice for event delivery, whilst ensuring a student-centred approach in our teaching.

This presentation will firstly provide a brief explanation of the field of event management, and the theoretical concepts that underpin this project and led to the development of these visual ethnographic teaching resources.

Introduction

- 'Teaching' event management

- Pedagogy
  - Philosophy
  - Practice

- Student-centred learning
  - Multiple senses
  - Multiple lenses
  - Multiple stakeholders
  - Clip 1: FIFA Under 17 World Cup 2008
  - http://youtu.be/fevvJNlorZg

Event management, only 2 words, represents the extensive processes involved in planning a ceremony, a concert, a competition, a party, and/or a performance, whether it be local, familial, community, regional, national and/or an international occasion.

Event planning is a set of complex tasks, from prior planning, to implementation and post-event activities that are interconnected, and impact or influence many other tasks involved in the presentation of a comprehensive and complete quality event 'package'. Event management can include goals, objectives, budgeting, site venue, permits, transport, parking, accessibility, event theme/brand, marketing, sponsorship, catering, contingency planning, performers, staging/lighting, communications, public relations, security, and ancillary services. There are multiple reasons for staging events – such as profit, promotion, fund raising and celebration. Each purpose influences the nature and shape of the resulting event.

Event management, from the management discourse perspective, is the process of applying project management principles. However as 'teachers' of this subject we need to be clear about the pedagogical methods used to convey information, impart skills and build learning and knowledge.

So Pedagogy is essentially the methods and teaching practices employed in education and learning. As tutors we want to promote meaningful learning, problem solving and critical thinking across our diverse student population to ensure their professional success. To achieve this we want to engage in active and inquiry oriented learning whereby students are at the centre of instruction and are provided opportunities to apply their learning in classroom and tutorial activities

We believe student-centred learning enhances the student's potential to use their multiple senses (sight, sound, touch & smell) to develop their knowledge and understanding of events and event management principles and practices, through the multiple lenses required to understand the needs, desires and expectations of multiple stakeholders – those people who have a vested interest in the events outcomes & impacts – whether they be participants, performers, sponsors, supporters/fans and/or the local host community and/or potential event services/product suppliers.

Sensory Ethnography

○ Definition

○ Intent

○ Methods

○ Clip 2: World Rowing Championships 2010 Lake Karapiro
http://youtu.be/yFLiVVy69yU

For this project, visual ethnography refers to the use of visual media and material to enhance student knowledge and learning in an attempt for students to understand the possible "lived subjective reality [realities] of those who inhabit the location (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p.16).Video clips of events or aspects of event management, planning and delivery have the potential to provide contextualized learning, whereby the content may become relevant to the student, with the express purpose of ensuring meaningfulness of often, abstract event definition, concepts and principles. Video, photographic and media clips are all examples of ethnographic storying.

The 'rider' that guided our project, was to provide clips that were specifically tailored to the students' needs, interests and aptitudes. We also wanted students to develop an awareness that there was no ONE lived reality, there are multiple subjectivities, realities and experiences, dependent on the perspective or position taken. For example, the sponsor may have an entirely different interpretation of the scene, as compared to the security personnel, or the family of 5 with an express interest/involvement in the activity, and/or the event 'party' crowd, for example the many who attend the rugby 7s – for the party.

 We also wanted the student to 'delve' into the context, to make "a cogent analysis of the complexities, difficulties and the potential" (Veinot, 2005, p.111) of events, rather than making superficial, and/or cursory study of the material. We wanted students to become reflexive. Further to recognise some/many principles may be applicable across a range of events; however the interpretation and enactment becomes unique and particular to each specific event.

The other important aspect that we wish to convey here today is that attending events are a sensory experience for all of those who participate. Whether it is consciously acknowledged events invoke the senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and movement. Without these sensations people, we believe, would not attend events.

Event Logistics

- Definition
- Event logistics' elements
- Implications/Interference across events – Issues
- Clip 3: WOMAD http://youtu.be/t3p7ZX9PPMA
- Clip 4: Fieldays http://youtu.be/NGS94lU6L5U

Event logistics is simply 'having the right thing in the right place at the right time'. Definitions Logistics involves the identify the event's elements and special features. Logistics is the ability to divide operations, movement of material and people, and activities into manageable, effective and efficient, coordinated categories and subdivisions (Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2011). Within an event context having things in the correct sequence and place is to guarantee positive/satisfactory consumer experiences. Event logistics is often 'unseen' by attendees, "except when it doesn't work" (Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2011, p.452).
The elements of event logistics are:
Supply of customers (marketing, ticketing, queuing, transport/parking)
Supply of product (transport, accommodation, artist/participant needs)
Supply of facilities (security, power, water, contractors, waste)

Feeding into Event site logistics (Flow of audience, artists, equipment around the site; communication; amenities, consumables, VIP & media requirements; emergency procedures including legislation)
And finally Event shutdown (removal, cleaning, contract acquittal)

There are always the possibility of logistical issues. Students need to be very aware of the possibility. There might be a 'logical' rationale for a particular course of action; however people are not always logical and/or rational. As such there can be problems if assumptions 'silo'ing, and/or lineal arguments are adopted and enacted. The intent purpose for our visual narratives/photographs is to 'story' the possible outcomes of different decisions. We want to actively encourage brainstorming, problem solving and analyzing the implications of decisions for other stakeholders.

For example, There is considerable evidence, NZ crowds are notorious for arriving close to or upon the start time of concerts. Yet many event facilities fail to have more than a few entrances staffed to electronically scan tickets, as a result patrons become restless and irritated whilst waiting in queues to access the venue, are slow to seat, because they traditionally require food/beverages and merchandise, and the show either starts late, or a number of patrons miss a segment of the show. Maybe the facility could hire more scanners and employ more staff, but there are financial implications for pricing and costs.

Event Logistics (WOMAD)
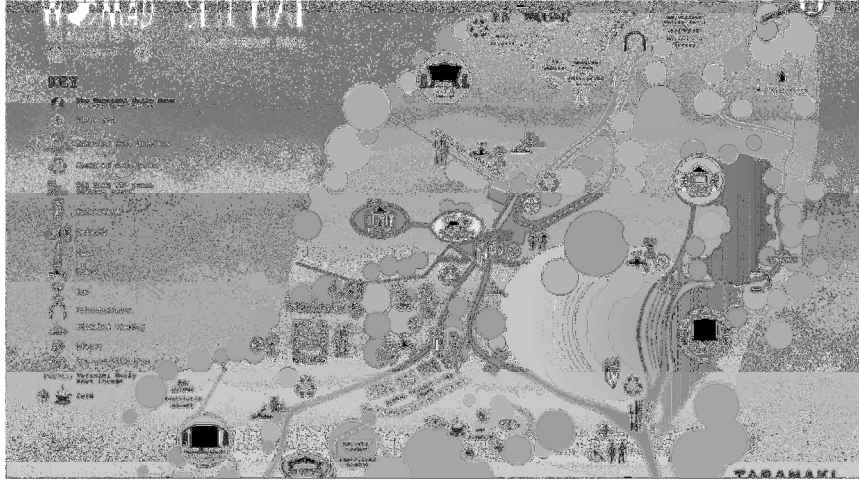
A one-dimensional map that does not really demonstrate the ruggedness of the site. There are specific limited access for pedestrians to the venue, and even less access for motorised vehicles.

The event organisers have to be very specific when transport of merchandise can occur. When there is pedestrian traffic the 'buggies' and ambulance staff have to be very cognizant of the pedestrians and ensure the health and safety of patrons.

A rationale

- Introduce complex relationships

- Build knowledge and awareness

- Develop student engagement & critique, from multiple perspectives

- Develop problem solving, strategizing

- Raise awareness to cross-event implications/consequences

- Develop transferability

As has been shown in the clip on Fieldays – what was originally started as a meeting for famers to meet with potential suppliers, and to participate in specific farm 'skill' tests (such as tractor pulling' and fencing) has evolved into the largest agricultural event in the southern hemisphere.

Farmers are not the only attendees. Families, schools, urbanites and rural communities from throughout the country and overseas descend on Mystery Creek for 3 days. Attendances are now in excess of 120,000 people.

Not only are there many purchases of farm machinery, there are competitions – the No 8 fencing wire competitions, fashion created from farm products, tractor pulling,, there are demonstrations of new technologies and sustainable products, there are campaigns to raise awareness about issues facing our country, such as water & river quality, there is retail therapy, animals, specialty food and beverages – just to name a few. The committee that coordinates this event commences planning for the following year before this year's event commences.

Our clips, we hope achieve our rationale –to introduce the complexities of event management, whilst encouraging creative problem solving and skill transferability.

Development Process

- Events
  - Range
  - Purposes
  - Providers

- Data Collection

- Editing

- Programmes/Soft ware

- Data Purposes

- Clip 5: Collage of different events
  http://youtu.be/Rh3gXGM6Nlc

When seeking 'events' to record, we asked students to identify those types of events they had experience of, had participated in, and/or chose to seek employment in post education. We then deliberately set about attending such events, experiencing the events from a participant perspective, and deliberately seeking good and/or poor examples of event management practices that impacted on our subjective experience. In the first instance we were seeking examples associated with event logistics. To build a 'bank' of material – any potential event became a site for research, even if our primary motivation for attending was our own entertainment, enjoyment or leisure.

We did not limit ourselves to international or commercial events, many of our students are going to 'start' in the industry working for clubs/societies and small operators. We also did not limit ourselves to sports events, we have attended cultural, community, arts and social events, held for several hours, a day and even several days.

We used photography, video camera and mobile phones to record aspects of events attended. Post attendance material was downloaded, along with newspaper and television media onto computer and filed against a generated event management terminology index. We have been investigating and trialing different software to determine the most effective teaching tool. (This includes YouTube, Flicker, Narrative Clip and iMovie). Jan is still 'playing' with these different technologies as she has to determine the most 'bullet-proof' system for me to manage and employ in my classroom as I am a classic technophobe!

Student Reception

- Engagement
- Knowledge
- Learning applicability/transfer
- Awareness raising
- Implications for practice
- Clip 6: TSB Women Pro Surf Festival
- http://youtu.be/4FDYCVs4Tv4

At the beginning of each programme, students questioned how they were going to gain knowledge about events. There were many constraints that prevented them from being able to attend events – study, finance, transport, accessibility, timing. The video clips and small case studies enabled them to 'share' in these events to build a repertoire of 'virtual' experiences. Where-ever possible we would also contact organisers to see if it was possible for students to attend as volunteers and/or gain entry at reduced prices.

Replaying clips increased familiarity with the subject, and built a common knowledge base. Students recounted how they were able to use there other senses – sight and sound – to gain more in-depth understanding of the challenges facing successful event managers. They also said the video clips helped them to make sense of the academic literature, the concepts, principles and recommended practices. They could 'see' the results of planning and the impacts it had on events and the various participants. The biggest learning was the assumptions audiences have about what services will be provided at events – and the standards required/expected.

One teaching exercise we conducted, was to set a clip as a homework exercise, whereby each student had to interpret the clip and create a narrative, that was shared with the class, that told a story from a particular stakeholder's perspective. This exercise provoked much discussion and argument. Students claimed they began to understand the complexity of event management when considering all the stakeholders and their vested interests.
We have begun to explore a piece of software that will allow students to enter their own narration onto the clips.

To summarise

○ An ongoing project

○ Build a suite of educational logistics event management clips

○ Expand into other areas of event management, for example:
  ○ Site development/set up
  ○ Health & safety
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_profilepage&v=iV4GjTFSvts
  ○ Ancillary Services
  ○ Visitor/audience & host community experiences

Although a rather rushed snapshot of our project, we trust that you now have some insight into how we, as teachers in the field of (sport & leisure) event management have employed sensory ethnography, especially visual and audio recordings to enhance our teaching of event management logistics to tertiary student, with the express purpose of developing our students' senses as tools for event enhancement, ensuring quality consumer experience.

Over the next year we will be further trialing our logistics video bank with our classes, plus editing footage collected to focus on other event management areas of site development/set up; health & safety; ancillary services and the visitor/audience & host community experiences. For example, Jan's masters' research focused on event impacts on host communities – the media and most of the research highlights the benefits, yet there have been many negative impacts that may have long-term consequences for the host community. Health & Safety considerations include: Large international events, here in NZ, after the America's Cup 2000, have had to integrate into their events planning that considers the opportune criminal element that relocates to the host community to take advantage of the event in order to disconnect members of the public from their possessions! Pyrotechnics have become an expectation at many events – as a finale, to celebrate victory, to celebrate an occasion, but as depicted in this picture, things can go wrong. This man was one of 3 people injured at a rugby match in Christchurch this year.

Thank you for your time.
Are there any questions/comments and/or suggestions that may enhance our teaching practice via the use of sensory ethnographic methods and technologies?