Liminality, subjectivity, and aesthetics in Event Management studies

Peter   Vlachos   [1][✉]

Email p.vlachos@gre.ac.uk

[1] University of Greenwich, London, UK

Abstract

This chapter discusses 'liminality' within events management higher education by analysing the aesthetic and subjective aspects of the events experience against the instrumental, rational management of them. It is underpinned by Turner's (1974) theories of liminal and liminoid experiences, subjective place experience (Lefebvre, 2004; Tuan, 1977), and Debord's (1955) concept of psychogeographic flow. Localising event studies in business faculties within higher education institutions has resulted in an over-emphasis on managerial functions at the expense of creative and subjective elements. A literature review illustrates 'events management' as the prevailing disciplinary frame within the dominant discourse of the 'experience economy' (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Foucault's (2002) theories on the archaeology of knowledge underpin the analysis. The chapter concludes with a call for a more unified, multi-disciplinary, and subjectivist approach to the field of event studies.

"Liminality, subjectivity and aesthetics in event management studies"

Peter Vlachos, University of Greenwich, London, UK

email: p.vlachos@gre.ac.uk

Abstract

Over the past two decades, event studies have emerged both as a taught academic discipline and as a field of inquiry and publication. In the United Kingdom, however, the topic of event studies has largely been subsumed within faculties of business in universities, as 'events management'.

The purpose of this chapter is to review and assess the ways in which the concept of 'liminality' informs and relates to the study and teaching of events management within higher education. The first part of the chapter reflects conceptually on the aesthetic and subjective aspects of the events experience. Here we unpack tensions between the intrinsic, sensual and at times even Bacchanalian experience of events as social phenomena, and instrumental, rational management of these same events. Turner's (1974) notions of liminal time and liminoid spaces are examined through the lenses of subjective place experience (Tuan, 1977; Lefebvre, 2004). Debord's (1955) theories on psychogeographic experience and Aristotle's 'Poetics' (logos, pathos, ethos) are used to illustrate the aesthetic and subjective dimensions that are constrained by the dominant discourse of the 'experience economy' (Pine and Gilmore 1998; 1999).

Secondly, the author constructs the argument that the localisation of event studies in particular educational parameters within higher education institutions has resulted in an over-emphasis on managerial functions at the expense of the more creative and subjective elements relevant to liminality such as the design function. The teaching and research of the aesthetic and design elements of live events have been either been abandoned to art and design faculties (who themselves appear to have little interest in expanding into the events discipline) or are treated as a self-

teachable or easily out-sourced, despite their centrality to the liminal power of the event. To illustrate the current condition, the chapter presents a categorisation of higher education academic literature (textbooks) drawn from English speaking countries, mainly from the United Kingdom, and from the USA, Canada, and Australia. Foucault's (2002) theories on the archaeology of knowledge are used to underpin the analysis.

The chapter argues that due to this trajectory in the development of events management, as an academic discipline and field of research inquiry, unhelpful teaching and research silos have emerged that have prevented knowledge between events management specialists in business faculties being shared with academic researchers in other faculties (e.g. arts, social sciences, geography, or urban development). The chapter concludes with a call for a more unified, multi-disciplinary, and subjectivist approach to the field of event studies.

1. Introduction

The discipline of events management has been likened as an 'art and science' (Goldblatt, 1990). Whilst this observation may be directed at any number of occupations, from medical doctors to footballers, it holds a particular resonance to the domain of events management. Event management incorporates elements of control and creativity. Yet events management textbooks in higher education, as this chapter will later show, pay only a limited attention to the creative (and subjective) side of events management.

Whilst some events may be genuinely liminal, in the sense of van Gennep (2013) and Turner (1977), others can be more liminoid (Turner, 1974). Aesthetic design is a central component of liminal and liminoid events. However, as the chapter argues, a relatively small amount of attention is paid to the actual design 'threshold' experience in the teaching of events management at the higher education level.

The purpose of this chapter is to define and apply the liminality concept to events management theory, education and vocational practice. Particular attention will be paid to the design component of events as liminal and liminoid experiences and to the function of the event manager in their execution. The chapter proceeds

as follows: First, the chapter briefly identifies and explains the concepts of liminal, liminoid, and communitas. Secondly, the chapter applies these concepts to the field of events management. Thirdly, the role of the events manager is de-constructed through the analytic prism of the liminal and liminoid concepts. Fourthly, an analysis is made of pedagogic materials in relation to these concepts. Finally, the implications are discussed for events management practice, events management teaching and learning, and events management theory. Suggestions for future research are proposed. The chapter concludes with a call for a widening of events 'management' higher education teaching, learning and research to re-appropriate and to incorporate more of the liminal, aesthetic, and design components.

2. The liminality concept

The origins of the liminality concept have been already addressed in detail in the introductory chapter to this volume. In this section, a brief overview of the basic theory of the liminality concept is presented. The following section then expands the concept more deeply in its application to live events and their management.

The roots of the liminality concept in the wider social sciences can be traced to the structural anthropology writings of van Gennep (2013). Building on van Gennep's theories, Victor Turner's (1974) research focused on the social phenomena of rites and rituals. The concept of the 'liminal' (Latin: *limens*, threshold) refers to a fluid, ambiguous condition where normal social status and identity are suspended. It is a condition that echoes elements of temporary ecstasy, of being outside one's usual self.

Rites are socially established ceremonial acts that mark life transitions, typically of a religious nature (Turner et al, 1967). Rituals are sequences of human activity that incorporate set movements, gestures, words and objects that are performed in a particular place and in a fixed temporal order (Bell, 1992). The concept of liminality according to Turner (1974) can be presented as three phases that together comprise a social rite, typically a rite of passage to a new life stage or social identity. The three phases are

- the pre-liminal state
- the liminal (fluid) phase
- the post-liminal re-aggregation

These three phases of the liminal phenomenon are evident in social rituals related to life-stage transition, for example the transition from childhood to adulthood, marriage rituals and similar life-changing social event. The three-phase liminality model is particularly useful in de-constructing and analysing social rituals. For example, Johnson (2001) applies the notion of liminality to university initiation rites commonly known as 'hazing'. Such rites follow the three-phase structure: the separation phase with its associated pre-initiation anxiety; the transitory liminal phase; and, the concluding incorporation phase where the initiate is re-integrated (Johnson, 2011:204-5).

In the unfolding of these liminal phenomena, the individual undergoes a change in their social status and personal core identity. Members of the social group are expected thereafter to treat the initiate according to their new status and identity. The community as a whole thus also changes in its composition. For example, an individual's transition to adulthood alters the balance of children and adults in that society; a marriage alters the availability of potential mates and adds to the number of households in the community. In other words, these liminal transitions not only carry symbolic importance but also economic implications.

Turner acknowledged in his later writings (Turner, 1974) that modern society differs from the more traditional, pre-industrial and agrarian, that formed the backdrop to the development of his liminal concept. Modern society, he argues, is less bound by the social obligations that previously made participation in rites and rituals socially compulsory both for the initiate and the observer/witnesses. However, the rise of industrial society, coupled with increased individual freedom and expanding commerce, has resulted in a growth of what Turner (1974) labels 'liminoid' (liminal-like) phenomena. Such phenomena carry some of the attributes of liminality, such as 'threshold', ambiguity, and elements spatial and temporal displacement from the normal. On the other hand, however, participation in liminoid activities tends to be voluntary and the results are not necessarily deeply transformational to the individual or society. Thus, Turner had already set some of the crucial conceptual groundwork for the understanding and explaining the rise of

the 'experience economy' a quarter century before Pine and Gilmore's (1999) exposition and popularisation of the concept.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Turner's theory of rites, rituals, liminality and phases has captured the interest of events management theorists. The next section unpacks the liminality concept as applied to the planned live events field in greater detail.

3. The liminality concept applied to events

All rituals can be considered events, but not all events are, or necessarily contain, rituals. An 'event' in the specialist sense of the events management discipline can be defined as a planned gathering of a group of **people** for a specified time **period** at a particular location (**place**) for a specifically defined **purpose**. This definition can be abbreviated as the four Ps of event management: People, Place, Period (time) and Purpose. This core definition of 'event' can refer to regular events such as a weekly class or a monthly gathering of a book club. The term 'event management' however, both in academic and industrial usage, has tended to refer primarily to less frequent, irregular or unusual events. The difference between 'event' and 'special event' is a relative one in terms typically related to periodic frequency and scale and scope of the audience. Liminal intensity is more difficult create and to measure, which may explain in part why academic textbooks and programmes tend to underplay the topics of design and aesthetics. It is more straightforward to teach about health and safety risk assessments that to design and determine liminal thresholds.

Events are symbolic consumption goods (Veblen, 1899) fuelling the post-industrial 'experience economy'. But how closely does the liminality concept fit the wide range of event typologies? Liminality can apply to a wide variety of events, though not necessarily in the same way. Some type of events may retain liminality at their core (such as personal events: weddings and religiously linked ceremonies). Cultural events, given their often religious and spiritual origins also can retain a high degree of symbolism and hence liminal underpinning. Sporting events have liminal aspects in that the outcome creates new status (winners and losers) and the

5

rules of the game include behaviours and rites on the part of both the players and the spectators (Rowe, 2008).

It is more difficult, however, to discern liminality in other types of events. Business events such as trade fairs and industry exhibitions are a blend of professional gathering and market. Festivalisation may be in evidence, suggesting a liminoid event experience. Trade exhibitions such as the World Travel Market (WTM) held annual at the ExCeL exhibition centre in London increasingly feature entertainment and performances, including interactive activities for attendees. Elements of the three phases of liminal experience are in evidence: the pre-liminal information search and booking, the threshold of arrival, the experience of the event, and the transition to 'seasoned' attendee. For some first-time attendees, attending a professional conference or exhibition may be a marker of their attainment of professional status. Similarly, a student's first attendance at a university lecture signals their entry into a new social status. However, these liminoid examples do not carry the symbolic weight and depth of unified ritual that more liminal events contain. The educational experience over a three-year period, in the attainment of an undergraduate degree has elements of ritual, threshold and transformation, but without the intensity of a tight spatially and temporally defined rite. The university graduation ceremony, on the other hand, contains the full rituals and ceremony attendant to a properly liminal rite of passage.

Fan club events such as Comic Con on the other hand are rather different from more typical business events. Here, as with other cultural events, there is high symbolic content and participant interaction (Jenkins, 2012) within the spatial and temporal liminal sphere. Other hobbying conventions and consumer exhibitions may involve similar personal attachments. Yet ultimately participation is voluntary not obligatory. Thus, these types of events generally fall into the category of liminoid rather than liminal.

On the surface, attendance at any event could be treated as a liminal phenomenon. At all three phases (pre-, during, -post) there are well established associated behaviours and rituals: The pre-event phase includes the information search, registration or ticket purchase. These days the pre- phase may also include digital personal preparatory rituals such as the updating of personal or professional profiles on one's social media pages. The liminal threshold is reached with the physical arrival at the event. During the event there is experience of the event itself which

consists of an out of the ordinary experience at a designated location and time. The period at the event, any event, whether cultural or business or personal, is a period of freedom from normal daily routine to enjoy a concert, learn about developments in one's industry or engage in some creative activity/thinking. The post-event denouement brings the participant back to the normal state, albeit transformed in some way.

A truly liminal event is intended to "create a sense of vulnerability and a consequent dependence upon the larger group for support after the trauma of the event" (Johnson, 2011:207). In some liminal events, such as life-stage ceremonies, the participants may indeed emerge with a new identity such as husband or wife, or as university graduate. However, modern, industrial and post-industrial, secular, societies are more individuated than previous more traditional societies. Hence, we see the rise of events are liminal-like rather than liminal in the deeper sense. These 'liminoid' events have elements of ritual behaviours but without comprising a religious (or similar) rite of passage and subsequent transformation. On the other hand, , Moreover, the diversity in modern societies means that some events may have a liminal effect on one or some individuals (see examples earlier) but not for others or for the social group as a whole. Liminal rites that are religious or spiritual in one sense, such as wedding ritual ceremonies, are typically followed by a separate though connected liminoid social celebratory gathering (Teodoerscu et al, 2012). The social liminoid event may re-emphasise the recent rite of passage, for example the clinking of glasses calling for the new married couple to kiss in full view of public, thereby reaffirming in themselves, and the social group gathered, their transformation in social status.

Whilst all events, liminal or liminoid, may contain ritualistic behaviours and social expectation to conform to those behaviours, it is not the case that all events constitute a rite of passage that leads to 'rebirth', i.e. transformation of core identity. The liminal status of the event experience may be highly subjective. What may be a liminal event experience for one person or social group may be liminoid for others, or indeed the event may even be treated as instrumental activity (e.g. as a sales promotion event).

Liminality has both spatial and temporal dimensions. This dual aspect of liminality does translate smoothly to events generally given that the four P's definition of events presented earlier occurs at a particular place and at a specific

7

time. From this perspective, all events share a basic degree of liminality in that they all feature ingress and egress, that is to say, an entry and later exit from the physical and temporal space of the event. Consequently, all rites of passage may be classified as events, but not all events are rites of passage. Furthermore, both liminal and liminoid events comprise recognised established and expected patterns of behaviour. However, liminal rites are socially determined, imposed and regulated, whereas liminoid events are ones into which participants voluntarily enter.

Modern capitalist, democratic, and secular societies have continually expanded the realms of individual freedom. Rites of passage can be enacted by legal and administrative processes (i.e. contracts) rather than social rites and rituals. This modernist expansion of freedom from past socially determined practices has at least two implications. One is that events are increasingly more liminoid rather than liminal. The more modern type of liminality is separated and distanced from natural life processes. Liminal life experiences trace a trajectory, at least for the individual. They can be likened to modern Special Events that happen rarely, in the case of the individual's own life-transition luminal experiences perhaps only once per lifetime. By contrast, liminoid events can include casual entertainment experiences or cyclical e.g. annual festivals. Moreover, given than liminoid events are voluntarily entered into, they can by the same logic can be abandoned at will. Liminoid event experiences are commercialised, more casual transactions in which the individual has a greater degree of choice although the choice is as consumer rather than social citizen.

Secondly, in modern events, the temporal and spatial dimensions of liminality are further challenged and complicated by the rise of 'virtual events' such as digital live streaming of arts performances (Mueser and Vlachos, 2018).   The commonly understood notion of 'attending' an event becomes strained in the age of ubiquitous, near real-time digital and audio transmission. These days one may 'participate' virtually in an event: watch remotely, interact electronically, via synchronous communication exchanges on online social media platforms. The new technology raises a parallel question; can liminality be achieved virtually? For example, is a wedding ceremony valid where the partners are not present in the same location? In the technologically evolving world of live events, it appears that spatiality is more negotiable than temporality. Yet virtual events cannot involve the sort of total body experience that actual presence does. Virtual 'attendance' may

involve, via mediated technological channels, the eyes and ears, but not the senses of smell or touch or taste. Without the involvement of all five senses, there is an inevitable weakening of attention, focus, time alignment, spatial continuity, and social interaction. In other words, virtual events will struggle to achieve the degree of liminality that live attendance can create.

Despite their increasingly consumerisation, the freedom that liminal spaces and events can provide the freedom to experience the unintended or the unexpected. A modern outdoor music festival for example will have a variety of stages with different musical styles, ancillary activities and so on. Some critical observers (Bryman, 1999) maintain that this alleged freedom can be tightly controlled and planned, in effect only an illusion of freedom. Even this kind of liminoid experience however contains greater freedom than the more tightly defined liminal sacred space which focuses one's attention on a more predictably established frame in which social catharsis rather than merely individual consumption occurs.

Even contemporary liminoid events continue to retain liminal qualities. Since ancient times, sports events have involved competitors entering the match as athletes and leaving as victors or losers (Christesen and Kyle, 2014). Championship, end of season, sporting events carry even higher stakes, complete with the associated rituals, ceremonies and threshold activities, that include entrance into the arena and the playing field being treated by fans, players, master of ceremonies (i.e. referees) and acolytes (e.g. security staff) like sacred space. A similarly liminal, competitive aura nowadays also permeates entertainment events such as the X Factor (field research, December 2017). Audiences attend live performances or watch televised broadcasts in order to follow the initiates' journey. The final crowning ceremony, of the winning singer or band, marks their transition from amateur performer to professional pop star. The live event (ethnographic field research, December 2017) and change of status on the evening is marked by a short (approximately one hour) hiding of the winners, which take place at the conclusion of the competition; after which they emerge at the celebratory post-event party, now accompanied by security guards, media cameras and accolades.

Figure 1. X Factor 2017 talent competition autograph card

Photograph 1. X Factor live final, ExCeL exhibition centre, London (03 December 2017, ITV)

Liminal rites of passage are temporarily subversive (Turner, 1969:166-8). Hierarchies are temporarily suspended. Nietzsche (1967) wrote of the Dionysian and Apollonian tendencies in the human spirit. The suspension of normal and established modalities during the liminal phase can be described as Dionysian: a sense of ecstasy, exuberance, freedom and creativity. The discipline of events management, on the other hand, aims to impose an Apollonian rational efficiency to these liminal and liminoid occurrences and experiences. From a materialist

perspective, liminoid events generate economic value whereas liminal events use up economic value.

	Liminoid events	*Liminal events*
Perspective	Objective (event manager)	Subjective (attendee/participant)
Control	Planned/Ordered/Managed	Spontaneous/Disordered/ Chaotic
Risk	Reassuring	Threshold
Materiality	Production (generating economic value – e.g. culture led urban revitalisation)	Consumption (consumes economic value – e.g. potlatch)
Function	Economic function	Social function
Academic Location	Faculty of Business	Faculty of Art
Volition	Voluntary	Obligatory
Ethos	Apollonian	Dionysian

Table 1. Liminal and liminoid construction of events (the author)

The differences between liminoid and liminal events can now be summarised as follows. Liminoid events are objectively managed in an Apollonian fashion by an event manager with the aim of controlling the experience and outcome using techniques of planning. Liminoid events are in the risk-averse realm of entertainment rather than cathartic ritual. Liminoid events create economic value; we see their outputs featured in economic impact reports and government documents relating to the creative industries, tourism, and urban regeneration, for example. The liminoid academic training of future event managers is in schools and faculties of business. Engagement in liminoid events is voluntary and often commercial in nature.

Liminal events, on the other hand, are intensely personal and subjective experiences. Though driven by established rites and traditions, there are elements of spontaneity, and temporary disorder. Reaching and passing the threshold of risk into a new way of being is at the centre of the liminal experience. Liminal events are more likely to use up surplus economic production, as rituals such as potlatch, and gifting and food at weddings demonstrate. In short, liminal events serve more of a social function than an economic function. Participation in expected rather than voluntary.

4. Subjectivity and the event experience

Events are subjective experiences in a number of ways. Firstly, they are intricately linked to a person's experience of a particular place (Tuan, 1977; Lefebvre, 2004). Secondly, events contain elements of sensory spectacle (Debord, 1994) making them unusual, notable, and thereby potentially liminal or liminoid. Thirdly, live events provide the opportunity for individual participants to demonstrate subjectively their social distinction (Bourdieu, 1984).

The construction of the live event is a product of the event's design. Aristotle's (1996) deconstruction of the dramatic form in his 'Poetics' captures the flow of the dramatic experience and can be applied to the construction of liminality in the event experience. Liminal events will have a (mythos), that is, an arrangement of pre-selected incidents chosen by the event designer to encourage a particular understanding and experience of the event. The **characters** of the event i.e. the audiences, the staff, and the speakers, are identified, oftentimes by uniform, positioning, or other forms of distinction. Words (**diction**) in an event may play a lesser role than in traditional text-based theatre, and the **thoughts** of the various event players may be less exposed that in theatre. However, the liminality of events is certainly influenced by Artistole's final two components of the dramatic from: **spectacle** and **melody**. The lights, colour, and sounds of an event help to create the spectacle, and a temporally well-designed event will reflect a balance of harmony and variety in the event's flow. An event can be designed in the technical sense, however the experience of these components is still subject to the individuality of the audience members.

5. Deconstructing the role and function of the event manager in relation to the liminal concept

It has been argued in the previous sections that event management, as a function, straddles and incorporates both Dionysian and Apollonian tendencies. If indeed this is the case, a new question arises: what role does the 'event manager' fulfil? Is the event manager a designer of rituals? Can they be likened to a priest or shaman (Turner, 1974:64) or even a 'trickster' (Turner, 1974:71)?

From the resource perspective, the event manager can be likened to the χορηγός (choregos) in ancient Greek drama festivals, the person who coordinated the resources and programming of the festival (Osborne, 2004; Wilson, 2003). Although not necessarily as rich as were the ancient Athenian χορηγοί (choregoi), the event manager, like them, performs a public function of amassing and coordinating the resources required for the production. As a vocation, events management comprises multiple facets, similar to the role of theatrical stage manager (pre-production manager and delivery manager).

For liminal events, events managers are not like priests or shamans. In a religious rite a priest or similar person acts a spiritual intermediary figure. In liminoid events, other actors assume the priest-like role: at a business event, such as a conference, it is the keynote speaker; at a classical music concert it is the conductor, at a sports event the referee, controls and coordinates the off-pitch activities. Meanwhile, off-pitch, the stewards oversee crowd behaviours and control crowd flows, whilst the attendees themselves follow the internalised, expected, ritualistic norms and modes of behaviour.

The 'art versus science' dual, and possibly conflicting, aspects of the event management function analogy are apt here. The job of the event manager can be said to incorporate in fact three components: art, science, and craft. The Greek word τέχνη (techne) refers to the fusion of aesthetics and utility (Benjamin, 2008). The event manager is a craftsperson in that they bring together the various components of the event ritual though not necessarily designing the core rites themselves.

Another, alternative term that captures the liminal and liminoid work of the event manager is the French term 'mis en scéne'. On both performance stage and cinematic screen, 'miseur en scéne' refers to the person who oversees and directs placement and movement of performers and objects (props, scenery, etc) within the spatial and temporal parameters of the event, in the aim of translating the ideas of the 'auteur' into concrete human sensory experience. The term relates, literally, to the 'setting of the stage', thereby putting into motion the conditions in which the performers and audience are able to engage in the liminal or liminoid experience.

Consequently, the role of the event manager across the liminal and liminoid continuum is inherently post-structuralist. In putting together and executing the event, the event manager must stand back from the liminal (ecstatic) aspects in order to ensure that the event goes to plan, safety is adhered to, and so on.

In ethnographic research, 'emic' observations are those made from within the social grouping being observed. Conversely, 'etic' observations are made from an outside perspective (Pike. 1967; Morris et al, 1999). The event manager must be able to imagine the emic perspective from within the audience's point of view of the event experience, as well as manage the event from an etic viewpoint as an outsider.

6. The liminality concept in events management higher education

Foucault (2002) identified the manners by which knowledge is constructed and arranged in order to serve particular interests. More specifically, the categories within which knowledge is framed are a reflection of power. These bureaucratic categories of knowledge are not simply arrangements of administrative convenience, but rather indicators of actual or intended political aims. Foucault's notion of the 'archeology of knowledge' is an apt theoretical microscope with which to analyse the locations and categories of event management teaching and learning in higher education institutions. The positioning of events management as an academic discipline, and of the design topic itself in teaching materials, illustrate and providing indications of how liminality is constructed and arranged within the events management discipline.

6.1 The location of events studies in the higher education context

A variety of cases could be made for locating the events academic discipline in any number of faulty categories. Events Management is a multidisciplinary phenomenon/discipline in its origins as an academic field of study and research.

Arguments of favour of locating in business faculties include their project management aspect and the instrumental justifications for events as experiential marketing tools. Arguments in favour of locating events studies in arts or humanities faculties include the perspective that events are a variation of theatre or wider cultural production and consumption, the aesthetic and sensory aspects of event experiences, and the sociological and anthropological dimensions of events

as social natural phenomena. Arguments could even be made in favour of politics faculty due to the position of events as a variation on leisure and recreation public policy, tourism policy or urban development public policy. Finally, arguments could be made that events management should remain primarily a vocational subject, as is mainly the case in north American academia, as a form of hospitality, events management as self-employed business, or event planning as hobby. Consequently, the position of liminality in the teaching of events management will reflect the perspective and prior experience both of the institution and of the student.

Yet the teaching of events management in the English-speaking academic world tends to be concentrated on the form rather than the content of events. This is a significant observation because, at present, academic higher education institutions in the United Kingdom and Australia in particular dominate the discipline. There are relatively few events management university degree programmes elsewhere in the world. Where there are (e.g. southeast Asia) they are typically franchised programmes from the aforementioned dominant English-speaking countries.

University degree programmes in events management have tended to be located in business faculties rather than arts or humanities faculties. In other words, the emphasis has tended to favour applied 'management' rather than the 'events' themselves. Events management degrees are similar to music management degrees in that both are concerned with the business and operational elements of the discipline, not with music theory, composition, or performance per se.

My argument here is that from the perspective of the liminality concept, the collective (though not necessarily co-ordinated) decision to position events management within business faculties has had pedagogical repercussions. Other modern fields of study have developed in a more inter-disciplinary fashion, for example 'creative industries' and 'urban studies'. The events management discipline could have developed in a broader 'event studies' manner, for example, to incorporate more of the sociological and design aspects that support liminality. Alternatively, the events discipline could have been developed from leisure studies (as a branch of public policy), urban studies, or perhaps theatrical stage management. Any of these latter options would have increased the scope for incorporating a greater emphasis on the liminal component of events. As it has turned out, however, events management has followed the path of tourism

management in its focus on the managerial aspects rather than the content itself. By contrast, the emergent discipline of arts management (later creative industries) has tended to remain in the humanities field rather than transferred to business faculties.

6.2 The location of 'design' in higher education events management textbooks

In order to test the above hypothesis, a content analysis was conducted of n = 34 university level events management textbooks in the English language. These were obtained from a university library collection at an institution that has an established undergraduate and post-graduate degree programmes in events management.

The sample of texts included titles that covered a comprehensive range of topics. The objective of this exercise was the extent to which liminality is covered in these comprehensive volumes, several of which are targeted as core undergraduate texts. Books that were expressly focused on sub-themes (e.g. event marketing; event human resource management) were excluded on the basis that it would not be expected for such more specialised texts to contain an extended discussion of liminality. An exception was made for textbooks that focused on event design as this sub-theme is clearly connected to the liminality theme. The texts were surveyed to ascertain (a) if and where the concepts of liminality, ritual and communitas were covered, and (b) to what extent and in what manner event design (as a proxy for the liminaility concept) was addressed. The results found that liminiality was only given limited attention in the majority of the 34 textbooks. The range of books themselves can be categorised into three types of approaches. One group of texts often written relatively early in the event discipline's emergence, mainly emanated from the USA. These texts are mainly hospitality and etiquette oriented. Examples of such texts include:

Silvers, (2003), Professional Event Coordination

Monroe, 2006, Art of the event

Allen, 2002, The business of event planning.

Although these early, vocationally- oriented texts are less 'academic', that is to say, less analytic or critical in style, they do typically identify and focus on factors that affect liminal and liminoid experience. Such texts show attention to the arrival of

guests (i.e. threshold) and the rituals and aesthetics of events (e.g. Silvers, 2003. The target audience for this material appears to be students in Further Education (i.e. polytechnics or community colleges) rather than Higher Education (universities).

As events management courses evolved into stand-alone academic degree programmes, more comprehensive texts followed (e.g. Bowdin et al, 2011: Shone and Parry, 2013; Allen et al, 2008; Bladen et al, 2012). These texts usually contain a series of chapters on topics like finance, project management, service operations etc as applied to live events. Such texts often include an introductory chapter on the history and nature of the events industry and discipline. The 'Events Management Body of Knowledge" framework supported and reinforced the positioning of the 'events management' discipline within the broader fields of business management and more specifically as project management. In the EMBOK model (figure 1) 'design' and 'creativity' are minor components in what is overwhelmingly an Apollonian approach to the field.
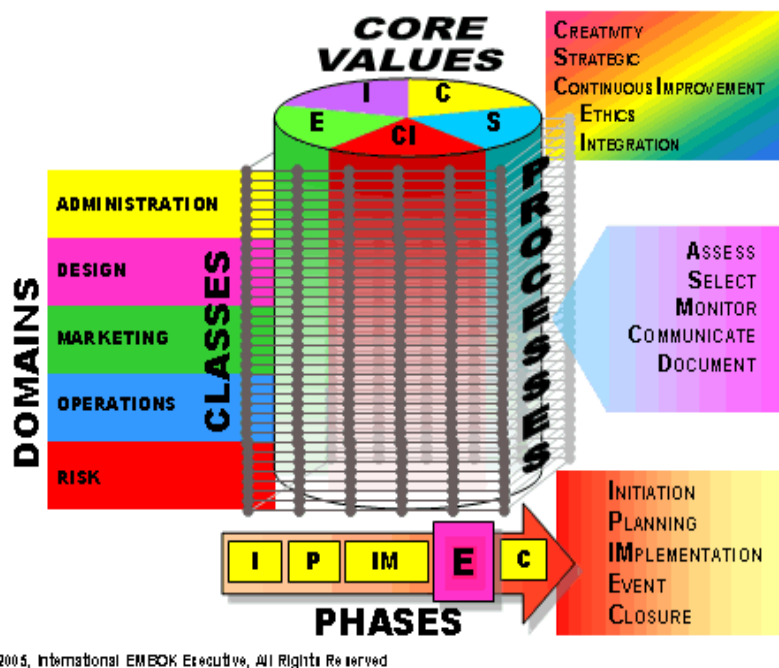
Figure 2. The EMBOK model (International EMBOK Executive, 2005)

In a few cases, elements of liminality are addressed in a chapter on 'event design' (Drummond et al, 2004; Ferdinand and Kitchin, 2012). Yet these chapters, too, lean to an operational approach such as 'service blueprinting' (Bladen et al, 2012).

Whilst such approaches may acknowledge an element of the 'threshold' aspect, they do not really address the sensory design of the actual ritual components of the event experience, such as movement or visual, sound and tactile sensations. An exception is Hasley's (2012) book on corporate event design, one of the few texts found that carries a sustained and in-depth treatment of the event design topic.

A third more recent wave of event management textbooks relate to specific topics of applied business management such as human resources (Van der Wagen, 2010) or sustainability (Jones, 2017).

By comparison, theatrical stage management and stage design texts (e.g. Pavis, 2013) engage more closely and thoroughly with the techniques of scenography and their intended impacts of the liminal or liminoid experience[1]. These theatrical stage management texts are presented as technical tomes within the wider artistic (literary) field of theatre. Yet compared with their event management counterparts they contain more liminal oriented content. Stage 'management' does not appear to have traversed into the realm of business management in the manner that events 'management' has done. In addition, theatrical acting texts teach performers how to create liminoid experiences for audiences in traditional theatre (Bell, 2008; Grotowski, 2012), theatre of the oppressed (Boal, 2000) and more recently in the growing field of immersive theatre (Machon, 2013).

7. Summary and implications

The secularisation of society has de-ritualised modern life to such an extent that these days some events may still be liminal for some individuals whereas for the same event may be liminoid for others. Or alternatively an event may be liminal for a particular individual but liminoid for some or all the other members in that society. Meanwhile, event management students are increasingly being taught to design and deliver 'experiences' rather than simply 'events. 'Experiential' marketing has further diluted the liminality of events by emphasising even more the liminoid over the liminal. Pine and Gilmore's (1999) prediction of a transition from the 'experience economy' to a more 'transformational economy' remains to be

seen. If anything, we see a fixation on fleeting experiences rather than life-changing transformations.

In terms of transformational impact, the instrumental use of events, for example as a tool of urban revitalisation initiatives (Viehoff and Poynter, 2016; Richards, 2017). suggests that the liminal concept may even be extendable to the idea that societies (geographic districts) can be transformed even though individuals within the society may not personally experience transformation or indeed may suffer negative effects. The transition from liminal to liminoid events is representative of the increasing commodification of the lifeworld through instrumental reason (Habermas, 2015). With the increasing use of events for instrumental purposes such as experiential marketing, the function of 'event management' is morphing into 'experience making' (Morgan, 2018) which signals a movement towards re-incorporating the liminal and design aspects as central features of the live event.

The current situation in academia locates events management, within higher education, in the sphere of liminoid rather than liminal experience. The situation reflects, in western contexts at least, the post-modern, individualised, commercialised nature of the experience economy. By extension, 'events management' reflects liminoid, etic, objective Apollonian tendencies rather than liminal, emic, subjective, transgressive, Dionysian ones

A feature of modernity, especially in urban centres, is a constant environment of stimuli and novelty. In a way, people in modernity are at the threshold of new experiences on a nearly daily basis. This means increased audience expectations in seeking liminoid experiences. '*Special*' events have become ubiquitous, thereby increasing the demand on event managers to create memorable, moving experiences. Instead, there is a tendency to outsourcing the liminal components and a general instrumentalization of events. The review of textbooks revealed an abandonment of the liminal and design aspects of events. Research focus has followed suit, as have the career paths of graduates.

The debates outlined in this chapter bring forth the question as whether a re-think is required regarding the long-term positioning of 'events management' as compared to the broader 'event studies'. A more cross-disciplinary approach would necessitate breaking down current faculty and research divisions. Whilst these academic and industrial silos remain, the crucial role of liminality in the

production and experience of events will continue to be overlooked. The current location of events management higher education in, primarily, faculties and schools of business has resulted in an abandonment of its liminal and creative aspects. The void in event design studies is not currently being filled by design teaching faculties or programmes. Until events studies higher education teaching and research re-appropriate the subjective, aesthetic and liminal aspects of live events, the discipline will be destined to continue to be stuck between aesthetic 'art' and management 'science'.

References

Aristotle (1996). *Poetics.* London: Penguin.

Bell, C. (1992). *Ritual theory, ritual practice.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Benjamin, W. (2008). *The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility, and other writings on media.* Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press.

Boal, A. (2000). *Theater of the Oppressed*. London: Pluto Press.

Bryman, A. (1999). The Disneyization of society. *The Sociological Review*, *47*(1), 25-47.

Cody, K., & Lawlor, K. (2011). On the borderline: Exploring liminal consumption and the negotiation of threshold selves. *Marketing Theory*, *11*(2), 207-228.

Debord, G. (1955). Introduction to a critique of urban geography. In Engel-Di Mauro, S. (Ed.), *Critical geographies: A collection of readings* (pp. 23-27). Kelowna: Praxis (e)Press.

Debord, G. (1994). *The society of the spectacle* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.) New York: Zone Books.

EMBOK (2005). *Embok Model.* Available from: https://www.embok.org/index.php/embok-model Date Viewed: 24 Feb 2019

Euripdes (1960). *Bacchae*. Dodds, E. R. (Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Foucault, M (2002). *The archeology of knowledge* (A. Sheridan, Trans.) Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.

Goldblatt, J. J. (1990). *Special events: the art and science of celebration.* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Grotowski, J. (2012). *Towards a poor theatre*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.

Habermas, J. (1987). *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2* (T. McCartney, Trans.) Boston, USA: Beacon Press.

Halsey, T. (2012). *The freelancer's guide to corporate event design: From technology fundamentals to scenic and environmental design.* Waltham, USA: Focal Press.

Holt, D. B. (1995). How consumers consume: A typology of consumption practices. *Journal of consumer research*, *22*(1), 1-16.

Horvath, A., Thomassen, B., & Wydra, H. (Eds.). (2015). *Breaking boundaries: Varieties of liminality*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Jenkins, H. (2012). Superpowered Fans: The many worlds of San Diego's Comic-Con. *Boom: A Journal of California*, *2*(2), 22-36.

Johnson, J. (2011). Through the liminal: A comparative analysis of communitas and rites of passage in sport hazing and initiations. *Canadian Journal of Sociology 36*(3), 199-22.

Jones, M. L. (2017). *Sustainable event management: A practical guide.* Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.

Lefebvre, H. (2004). *Rhythmanalysis: Space, time and everyday life.* (S. Elden and G. Moore, Trans.) London: Continuum.

Machon, J. (2013). *Immersive theatres: Intimacy and immediacy in contemporary performance*. Basingstoke: Macmillan International Higher Education.

Morgan, N (2018). Experience-makers. *Exhibition News.* December 2018, p. 34

Morris, M. W., Leung, K., Ames, D., & Lickel, B. (1999). Views from inside and outside: Integrating emic and etic insights about culture and justice judgment. *Academy of management review, 24*(4), 781-796.

Nietzsche, F. (1967). *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.) New York: Vintage.

Osborne, R. (2004). Competitive festivals and the polis: A context for dramatic festivals at Athens. In P.J. Rhodes (Ed.), *Athenian Democracy*, pp. 207-24. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Pavis, P. (2013). *Contemporary mise en scène: Staging theatre today* (J. Anderson, Trans.). Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.

Pike, K. L. (1967). *Language in relation to a unified theory of the structures of human behavior* (2nd ed.). The Hague: Mouton.

Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy: Work is theatre & every business a stage.* Boston, USA: Harvard Business Press.

Richards, G. (2017). From place branding to placemaking: The role of events. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management, 8*(1), 8-23.

Rowe, S. (2008). Modern sports: Liminal ritual or liminoid leisure. In G. St John (Ed.), *Victor Turner and contemporary cultural performance*, (pp. 127-148). New York, USA: Berghan.

Silvers, J. R. (2003). *Professional event coordination*. Hoboken, USA: John Wiley & Sons.

St John, G. (2008). Victor Turner and contemporary cultural performance: An introduction. *Victor Turner and contemporary cultural performance*, (pp. 1-37. New York, USA: Berghan.

Szakolczai, A. (2009). Liminality and experience: Structuring transitory situations and transformative events. *International Political Anthropology*, *2*(1), 141-172.

Teodorescu, B., & Calin, R. A. (2015). The Base Articulations of the Liminality Concept. *Review of European Studies*, *7*(12), 97-102.

Thomassen, B. (2012). Revisiting liminality: The danger of empty spaces. In H. Andrews & L. Roberts (Eds.). *Liminal landscapes: Travel, experience and spaces in-between* (pp. 37-51). Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.

Tuan, Y. F. S. (1977). *Place: The perspective of experience.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Turner, V., Turner, V. W., & Victor, T. (1967). The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual (Vol. 101). Ithaca, USA: Cornell University Press.

Turner, V. (1969). Liminality and communitas. In V. Turner, *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure* (pp. 94-130). Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.

Turner, V. (1974). Liminal to liminoid, in play, flow, and ritual: an essay in comparative symbology. *Rice Institute Pamphlet-Rice University Studies, 60*(3).

Turner, V. (1977). Chapter III: Variations on a theme of liminality. *Secular ritual, Assen: Gorcum*, 36-52.

Turner, V. W. (1982). *From ritual to theatre: The human seriousness of play*. New York, USA: Paj Publications.

Turner, V., Abrahams, R. D., & Harris, A. (2017). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.

Van Gennep, A. (2013). *The rites of passage*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.

Veblen, Thorstein (1899). The theory of the leisure class: An economic study of Institutions. New York: MacMillan.

Viehoff, V., & Poynter, G. (2016). *Mega-event cities: Urban legacies of global sports events.* Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.

White, G. (2012). On immersive theatre. *Theatre Research International*, *37*(3), 221-235.

Wilson, P. (2003). *The Athenian institution of the Khoregia: The chorus, the city and the stage.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zurowski, A. (1985). 'Pulling faces at the audience': The lonely theatre of Tadeusz Kantor. *New Theatre Quarterly*, *1*(4), 364-368.

Appendix: List of texts reviewed

Allen, J. (2002). The business of event planning. Behind-the-scenes secrets of successful special events.

Allen, J. (2008). Event planning: The ultimate guide to successful meetings, corporate events, fundraising galas, conferences, conventions, incentives and other special events. John Wiley & Sons.

Allen, J. (2010). The business of event planning: behind-the-scenes secrets of successful special events. John Wiley & Sons.

Allen, J., O'Toole, W., Harris, R., & McDonnell, I. (2008). Festival and Special Event Management. John Wiley & Sons. 4th ed.

Andersson, T. D., Getz, D., & Mykletun, R. J. (Eds.). (2014). Festival and event management in Nordic countries. Routledge.

Andrews, H., & Leopold, T. (2013). Events and the social sciences. Routledge.

Berridge, G. (2007). Events design and experience. Routledge.

Bladen, C., Kennell, J., Abson, E., & Wilde, N. (2012). Events management: An introduction. Routledge.

Bowdin, G., Allen, J., Harris, R., McDonnell, I., & O'Toole, W. (2011). Events management. Routledge. 3rd ed.

Clement, D (2015). Corporate event production.   Entertainment Technology Press. Cambridge.

Columbus, G. (2011). The complete guide to careers in special events. Wiley Global Education.

Conway, D. G. (2009). The Event Manager's Bible 3rd Edition: The Complete Guide to Planning and Organising a Voluntary or Public Event. Hachette UK.

Ferdinand, N., & Kitchin, P. (2012). Events management: an international approach. Sage.

Foley, M., McGillivray, D., & McPherson, G. (2012). Event policy: From theory to strategy. Routledge.

Getz, D. (2012). Event Studies: Theory. Research and Policy for Planned Events, 2nd ed.

Goldblatt, J. (2014). Special events: creating and sustaining a new world for celebration. Wiley Global Education. 7th ed.

Halsey, T. (2012). The Freelancer's Guide to Corporate Event Design: From Technology Fundamentals to Scenic and Environmental Design. Focal Press.

Matthews, D. (2015). Special event production: The resources. Routledge.

Matthews, D. (2016). Special event production: The process. Routledge. 2nd ed.

Merkel, U. (Ed.). (2013). Power, politics and international events: Socio-cultural analyses of festivals and spectacles. Routledge.

Monroe, J. C. (2006). Art of the event: complete guide to designing and decorating special events (Vol. 14). John Wiley & Sons Incorporated.

Nelson, K. S. and Goldblatt, J (2001). The international dictionary of event management. Wiley.

Page, S., & Connell, J. (Eds.). (2012). The Routledge handbook of events. Routledge.

Quinn, B. (2013). Key concepts in event management. Sage.

Raj, R., Walters, P., & Rashid, T. (2013). Events management: principles and practice. Sage. 2nd ed.

Reynolds, R and Louie, E (2003). The art of the party. Gibbs M. Smith. Layton, USA.

Richards, G., Marques, L., & Mein, K. (Eds.). (2014). Event design: Social perspectives and practices. Routledge.

Shone, A., & Parry, B. (2013). Successful events management. Cengage. 4th edition.

Van der Wagen, L., & White, L. (2010). Event management: For tourism, cultural, business and sporting events. Pearson.

Wolf, P., Wolf, J., & Levine, D. (2005). Event planning made easy. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Yeoman, I., Robertson, M., Ali-Knight, J., Drummond, S., & McMahon-Beattie, U. (Eds.). (2004). Festival and events management. Routledge.