Field-Configuring Events: Time, Space and Relations
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Temporary clusters, FCEs, and the economic geography perspective on events
Geography and events?

- Economic geography has long been fascinated by agglomeration and localization economies but has largely assumed these accrue through regular everyday proximity.
- Economic geography tends to look for situated and stable economic spaces.

- What then of the event?
- What then of the wider field of endeavour?
- What then of the market?
The field of design

Where do we locate design?
Where is the field that products are constructed within?
Scandinavian design?

- An artistic and design school/philosophy?
- High-end design?
  - Big-name designers, including Arne Jacobsen, Verner Panton, and Jørn Utzon (Sydney Opera House).
- Mass production interiors?
  - 10% of Europeans were conceived on an Ikea bed
- A market segment or a marketing myth applied to all sorts of stuff?
Constructing Scandinavian Design from the outside - events

- 1951 as the title of an exhibition of home decorations and furniture – ‘Scandinavian Design for Living’ - at London’s Heal’s Department.
- 1954-1957. ‘Design in Scandinavia’ toured Canada and America
- in Milan during the 1950s and Paris in 1958 (‘Formes Scadinaves’)
- 1980 designers in Oslo conduct mock burials for the term
- 2007 travelling showcase the Nordic Council of Ministers sponsored exhibition ‘Scandinavian Design Beyond Myth’
Where else is it constructed?

- In design texts at home and abroad
- In press and magazines
- In tourist promotion
- In other industries unrelated to art and design
- **At trade fairs**

- In a variety of spaces that overlap across time and space...
Overlapping spaces

• Exhibitions, showcases, trade fairs are less temporary clusters than they are cyclical clusters; they are complexes of overlapping spaces that are scheduled and arranged in such a way that spaces can be reproduced, re-enacted, and renewed over time.

• Examples of overlapping spaces:
  – Sales and contracts
  – Creating network capital
  – Creating symbolic capital
  – Spaces for knowledge diffusion
  – Space for careers and recruitment
A space for sales and contracts

- Trade fairs function as market places: for production contracts; intellectual property; services.
- They help firms reach new markets: buyers and suppliers that can not be found locally and are hard to locate in one other place
- Reduced costs for closing deals
- Negotiation of rights contracts
- Sale and contracting of services
Knowledge and innovation arise in trade fairs due to:

- **Exchange**: Flow of ideas, knowledge, innovations, intellectual property

- **Oversight and buzz**: Seeing competitors' collections; getting inspiration; seeing new innovations in technology and materials; meeting new designers

- **Spying**
Global circuits

- ‘The meaningless talk about local versus global’ (Dicken et al 2001).
- It seems then that we need to look not just for local capacities and practices but also to how our firms connect into global circuits.
- Temporary events should be viewed not as isolated from one another, but as arranged together in an almost continual global circuit.
Cyclical clusters

- Temporary events/clusters (e.g. exhibitions, trade fairs).
- Temporary events as microcosms of the ‘real’ industry.
- Temporary events - long lasting effects.
- Cultural industries firms – even those who are not located in successful clusters - tend to be involved in virtual or cyclical clusters.
- Cyclical clusters are absolutely vital for isolated firms in global marketplaces; but also equally vital for firms blessed by proximity to strong local clusters.
Economic geographies and events

There are many spaces and actors involved in these cyclical clusters and they are linked (horizontally and vertically):

• **Nodes and networks** arranged in complexes of overlapping spaces that are scheduled and arranged in such a way that spaces can be reproduced, re-enacted, and renewed over time.

• **Flows and hierarchies**: nodes, networks, events should not be viewed as isolated from one another, but as arranged together in an almost continual global circuit; albeit one that is deeply hierarchal.
Cyclical clusters, overlapping spaces and global circuits

- It's a production story but not as we know it…
- It is a story about products and indeed fields that may or may not originate in a local milieu (of localized assets and capacities), they may also originate outside the local context… nonetheless they have a geography.

- It is a geography where temporary events constitute necessary infrastructures for the diffusion of such products and fields
- One where overlapping spaces are the glue/connectors between events, local clusters etc.
- It is a space economy we are talking about, but one where globalized connections/circuits characterize, rather than the usual local-global, temporary-permanent or place-industry dialectics.