

Creating network value: The Barcelona Sónar Festival as a global events hub

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Abstract

This chapter presents a case study focused on the network value generated by a specific globalised event. We analyse the value generated by Sónar, the Barcelona International Festival of Advanced Music and Multimedia Art, identifying how the event generates different forms of value in a local and global context. The network effects of events are important, as they are now one of the most popular instruments for urban development. The “festivalisation” of cities turns urban spaces into stages of constant events and festivals, building an atmosphere of continuous “happenings” and transforming the city into a magnet for people, tourism, and creativity. Events can be seen as strategic tools to support many different strategies, such as economic development, attracting tourists, animation of static facilities, image enhancement, revitalisation of infrastructure or city branding.

Thus, it is useful to observe the effects generated by these events and to assess the effectiveness of public investment. Many studies have proposed different methodologies for describing and evaluating event impacts, including their economic, social and cultural dimensions. But what value do events actually generate for the city and for the cultural sector? The chapter aims to analyse the ‘network value’ that a cultural event generates at a global and local level, using data from in-depth interviews held in Barcelona with event organisers, journalists, artists, local experts and politicians. We analyse the discourse that has emerged around the value of events in Barcelona and elsewhere, particularly focusing on aspects of value beyond the economic.

The chapter concludes with some critical reflections on the relationship between the city and the festival, underlining the interdependence that emerges between the event and its urban context. In particular the development of a local network can provide the basis for global network value generation through the export of ideas, event formats and symbolic concepts. This global network value in turn has a recursive effect on the ability of the event to lever local network value. This underlines the importance of approaching events not as isolated phenomena but as actors in wider networks that in themselves are capable of generating value.

Introduction

This chapter examines the different ways in which value is co-created between cities and events. We focus on the idea that value is generated through interactions between an event and the network of connections that it has around the world. In particular we consider the concept of ‘network value’ as one of the important benefits that events can generate. We focus our analysis on a specific case of a globalised cultural event, the Sónar International Festival of Advanced Music and New Media Art. This festival was founded in Barcelona in 1994, and from the beginning it has developed strong relationships with the music industry around the world. Sónar is both an event and a cultural form that has been deliberately globalised from a single original location, and it represents an interesting lens with which to examine processes of globalisation and localisation of culture, and how these processes create value for both the city of Barcelona and the event itself.

In the case of Barcelona, it is clear that the local context has had an important influence in shaping the Sónar festival. The festival emerged after the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, helping to provide a contemporary cultural product for the city and also to animate the newly-developed area around the cultural facilities of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) and the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB). The event also fitted with the policy of the Municipality of Barcelona to globalise the culture of the city.

We argue here that the city of Barcelona obtains different forms of value from the Sónar event, and that the city in turn delivers different types of value to the event. In this study we try to expand the analysis of value creation from the traditional areas of economic, social and cultural value towards new sources of value that are particularly important in the ‘knowledge economy’ or the ‘network society’. We focus in particular on the ways in which the Sónar festival has generated ‘network value’ for Barcelona, which in turn provides the physical and symbolic hub around which Sónar has developed.

The concept of network value

Most previous studies of value creation related to festivals and events centre on their economic, cultural or social value. For example, numerous economic impact studies have emphasised the important outputs of employment, income and image change that can accrue to cities staging events (e.g. Richards and Wilson, 2004; Seaman, 2003; Smith, 2012). The economic impact is often seen as the most important and visible form of value, particularly by the host city or region and the sponsors of the event. Social forms of value include the development of social cohesion and social capital, which are often claimed as benefits of events (e.g. Fredline et al., 2003) but which are rarely measured (Richards et al., 2014). This is because the determination of social value is much more complex than measuring economic impacts (Colombo 2009) and often requires the use of qualitative research. As Colombo (2015) illustrates, the cultural value of events is usually related to support for cultural participation, personal and group identity, support for cultural and creative production and preserving cultural heritage. Again, measuring the cultural value of events is challenging, given the complexity of culture and the challenges in developing appropriate measures. The areas of economic, social and cultural value creation represent the bulk of previous research.

Much less attention has been paid the ‘new’ forms of value that relate to the recent major changes that have taken place in the economy and society. In particular the rise of the ‘knowledge economy’ has created more attention for the ‘soft factors’ of development in cities and regions, such as the quality of public space or the ‘atmosphere’ of places. One of the important areas in which cities and regions increasingly need to compete is in the development and utilisation of networks. In the

contemporary network society, Castells (2010) argues, the countervailing forces of globalisation and localisation increase the importance of networks that link people, locations and organisations. Events, like most other organisations, increasingly have to consider how to operate within networks of stakeholders, and how they can create value through these networks. The network can deliver value by attracting attention, resources and flows of power to specific actors who are able to attain a powerful and/or central position in the network (Richards, 2013). Events that are able to generate value from and with their networks will arguably be more successful than others.

In the network society, value is created through linking actors, or organisations and individuals. A value network facilitates exchange relationships among actors distributed in space and time. Network value is defined here as *the value that can be created through the linkages provided by a network, above the value created by the links available to individual network members alone* (or ‘intrinsic value’, as defined by Oestreicher-Singer et al., (2013)). As Stabell and Fjeldstad (1998) note, network value will tend to increase with the size of the network, as this provides more potential linkages, and therefore opportunities, for each member. In a traditional value chain, economic value is added in each successive level of the chain, in a linear fashion. In a value network, actors may increase the value they can extract not just by expanding the number of network links they have, but also by obtaining a more central role in the network. Actors in networks compete to establish a more central role by positioning themselves so that flows of resources and knowledge have to pass through them (hub function). Actors who are not able to establish themselves as a network ‘hub’ can only act as network nodes, capable of sending or receiving resource flows to other nodes they are connected to, but unable to direct flows across the network as a whole. The value that actors may accrue through the network may be economic, but it can also include social, cultural, reputational and other forms of value. One of the distinguishing features of network value is its dispersed quality. Unlike social capital, for example, network value is not dependent on membership of a physically-located community, but is spread across the network between non-proximate actors.

This definition of network value has a number of implications:

1. Total network value will be positively related to network size.

2. Actors will compete to establish a more central position in the network, since this yields greater potential network value.
3. The actual network value available to each actor will depend on their ability to utilise their network linkages and position to extract value from the network.

Because the flows of resources and knowledge within a network may vary considerably in terms of quantity, quality and type, the sort of value extracted by network actors from the network may also differ. Actors will often seek to extract economic value, but they may also be interested in generating cultural, social or symbolic value through their network membership. Actors will also vary in terms of their networking abilities and strategies. Some may actively use the linkages provided by the network to generate value and may also be willing to help the network as a whole to grow in order to increase their own ability to extract value from it (altruistic strategy). Others may be content to profit from the network building activities of others without contributing to the network themselves (free rider strategy).

This 'network approach' to events (Richards et al., 2014) is now becoming evident in many studies of events and event networks. For example Bærenholdt (2012) has considered the role played by the Roskilde Festival in Denmark in 'making things happen' in a small Danish city. He demonstrates how the network as a whole helps to stimulate and consolidate change, rather than individual actors. Sacco (2017) likens events to creative clusters in which different local and external actors can come together to create value at both local and global scale. Richards and Palmer (2010) also illustrate that for some 'eventful cities' one of the major benefits of organising events may be the development of 'orgware' (or administrative systems or operational structures) that enable further event-based or wider cultural driven development to continue in the longer term. Crowther and Orefice (2014) summarise these different roles of events in terms of a 'value creation platform', in which an event functions as a vehicle for creating different forms of value for a group of stakeholders clustered around an event. The recent work on event networks therefore suggests there is a need to pay more attention to the network value being derived from the organisation and staging of events, both at local and global level. This chapter attempts to analyse the network value being generated by a specific event, the Sónar Festival, which operates both in a local and a global context.

Methodological approach

The methodological approach of this chapter is based on a combination of a case study approach (Yin 2009) and different qualitative techniques. The case study relies on two main data sources: collection of primary data through semi-structured in-depth interviews and analysis of archival data. Data from different editions of the event around the world were collected from sources including festival programmes and other documents such as reports, media coverage and websites; interviews undertaken between 2009 and 2013 (including interviews conducted for the European financed research project EURO Festivals Arts Festivals and European Public Culture - see Giorgi 2010); personal presentations, discussions and panels; additional reports; and media reviews among others.

Interviews were held with three main groups of actors; (1) location-related stakeholders, journalists, local artists and programmers; (2) international professionals, such as festival organisers, buyers and programmers; and (3) national and international festival consumers. A total of thirty-four interviews were collected, distributed across each of the three groups.

The festival was subject to in-depth analysis guided by the research goal of mapping the role of the initial festival in Barcelona as a network ‘hub’, connecting different festival nodes around the world. Complete transcripts of the interviews were made, and these were first subject to open coding to identify concepts and categories in the data, which were then entered into a matrix for analysis (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2013). The axial coding entered in to the data matrix facilitated the analysis by concepts and categories contained in the theoretical framework.

Because the festival has a substantial history, it was also important to extract a temporal dimension from both the interviews and the secondary documentation. The different festival events developed over time have therefore been selected as explanatory cases. The dimensions that were analysed for the events included the different programming and production models, the scale and dimensions of the event and their geographic location.

Barcelona as starting point

The Sónar Festival is an annual two day music festival held in June in Barcelona. The event was founded in 1994, when the city was experiencing a lack of resources for culture and social investment, as a consequence of the high expenditure on the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games. As Victor Nubla (personal interview 2009) pointed out, the city faced a reduction in public sector funding following the Olympics. In the absence of public funding, civil society organisations and the commercial and voluntary sectors began to create new cultural initiatives, although not all managed to survive.

One of the few projects that thrived was the Sónar Festival, designed as a platform to promote and produce electronic culture. The first edition of the Festival was made possible thanks to the support of institutions such as the Sociedad General de Autores y Editores (SGAE) which is the Spanish national association with responsibility for copyright issues, and the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB). The CCCB is a multidisciplinary cultural institution in the centre of Barcelona, inaugurated in 1994, dedicated to the study of cities and urban culture. One of the CCCB's main goals is staging temporary exhibitions related to contemporary urban culture and other related events and festivals.

Thanks to such support, and healthy box office revenues, Sónar was successful from the very first edition. The local administration adopted the festival as a strategic initiative in 1996, when the Barcelona City Council became Sónar's main partner. Sónar fitted the strategy of festivalisation (Häußerman and Siebel, 1993; Karpińska-Krakowiak, 2009; Hitters 2007; Jakob 2013) of the Catalan capital, although some partners of the festival also had different aims and goals. For example SGAE aimed to construct a platform in Barcelona dealing with electronic music and therefore helped Sónar to build a network of professionals and musicians involving highbrow, experimental and electronic musicians, which also included professional associations, such as the Asociación Española de Editores de Música (Spanish Association of Music Publishers) (Magaudda and Colombo, 2010). In 2005 Advance Music SL, the promoter of the festival, assumed

full control of the festival organisation, gradually becoming the main actor in Sónar's development after SGAE left the organisation in the same year.

Because the Sónar Festival appeared at a critical moment in Barcelona's development, several local stakeholders and administrations identified the event as a strategic tool for the city. Probably because the main costs of the event were covered by the box office revenues, most of the public partners saw the event as an opportunity to associate themselves with a popular cultural event that did not need much financial support. As a result the festival was embraced by different local cultural institutions and administrations, who have helped the organisation to develop a strong relationship with the city, embedding the festival firmly in the cultural scene of Barcelona, but also in the international networks provided by the stakeholders. This local embedding has arguably enabled the festival to develop a global network, which now delivers value both to the event itself and to the city.

Sónar as a model

In the early 1990s, the electronic music scene in Spain was divided between the wild nightclubs on the Valencian coast (Sáenz 2008) and a minimal scene interested in new rhythms generated by electronic trends going beyond the 'dance floor'. At that time, Spain had no clear offer of non-conventional music, such as alternative, experimental or electronic music. Therefore, in 1994 the Sónar Festival offered an innovative platform where different kinds of music could gain an audience.

During the early editions, the festival maintained its original focus on electronic music and became part of a global network of electronic music and culture. Two pieces of evidence highlight this situation: (1) from the beginning the festival programmed internationally well-known musicians and artists, such as Laurent Garnier (programmed in the first edition 1994), Richie Hawtin (set in 1996) and Jeff Miles (in 1997) among others; and (2) from the second and third edition, as Teglietti pointed out (personal interview 2013), "the festival audience, as well as accredited professionals, changed from being local and national to being international". In this sense, from the beginning,

Sónar started to be internationally well-known as a festival with its specific aesthetics and iconography related to electronic music and electronic culture.

At the same time, from the early editions onwards, Sónar established a structure that made the festival unique. Sónar presented different platforms for different music streams, such as experimental and alternative music and as well as a platform focused on electronic and different dance music labels. This division led to the basic and most characteristic structure of the festival, the contrast between Sónar By Day, where experimental and advanced music from well-known and unknown artists is presented and Sónar By Night, featuring big concerts with both well-established artists and newcomers.

During recent decades Sónar has adapted its specific language and iconography to international trends in electronic culture, and to advanced and experimental music and culture. As Luis Hidalgo explained (personal interview 2009), “the festival has focused its aesthetics on an ambiguous concept (advanced music) so that could easily be adapted to the trends of new times, globally”.

With these features the Sónar Festival was able to introduce itself to the global cultural scene with a clear and specific identity, as a summer festival in a sunny Mediterranean European city where the latest trends in music, culture and art can be discovered. At the same time, the festival presents itself to local audiences and to the local music scene, as a well-connected and internationally-recognised music festival with a special focus on the latest international trends. These different positions give the event a dichotomous identity, which makes it locally, nationally and internationally different. “I love Sónar by Day, the better part of the festival, more than the big rave at night, because there is more space for experimental sounds. So By Night is like all the other festivals, but By Day is special” explained Olaf Bender, manager of Level Raster Norton in Germany (interviewed during the festival in 2009).

As Enrique Palau pointed out (personal interview 2010), from the first edition, “the festival has been an international event and has had a clear international projection with artists, audience and professionals from all over the world”. In that sense the festival has

been always linked with international and global networks, and therefore through this aesthetic, the festival becomes internationally connected.

Taking into account both the festival structure and the context, Sónar has globally generated content and at the same time also has strong links to international stakeholders. Therefore the festival is embedded in the global 'space of flows' (Castells, 2009, 2010), transforming these flows through the concrete use of local places. Over the years the festival has expanded the number of networks links and places (nodes), established through network relationships. Therefore the event has built a global network based on a specific Sónar model, in which it has a central role.

Exporting the festival

The Sónar Festival has developed innovative strategies to transform its international relationships into an established network of collaborations. The most obvious example has been the desire to present the festival around the globe, developing diverse festival formats in several cities and countries around the world.

During the last few years, Advanced Music S.L., the festival promoter (from now on AM), has exported the festival characteristics, the image, the structure and aesthetics, or 'brand', to different cities, countries and audiences. The festival has been adapted and cloned around the world as Ricard Robles explains "the quality of art direction, event format, characteristics, sound level standards and technical equipment has branded itself" (Bernárdez, 2011) but as Luis Hidalgo suggests, Sónar did "not introduce itself as a brand, rather the festival got the brand after several years demonstrating its viability" (interviewed in 2009). Therefore the Barcelona Sónar DNA is adapted or cloned in different ways, but always with the spirit and the supervision of the Barcelona event and team, ensuring the coherence of the brand.

In this sense the festival organisation has transformed the local event structure into an international one, exporting the event through different formats. This process has been long, spread over several years in which different formats, such as the *A Test of Sónar* or *SónarSound* have been developed.

For the festival organisers *A Test of Sónar* is basically an appetiser held early in the year, before the main Barcelona festival. If we take *A Test of Sónar London* as an example, it can be seen that the event has been presented over several years in the period prior to the Barcelona event (in March 2012, 2011, 2010 or in May 2009) and also that most of the artists presented at *A Test of Sónar London* also performed in Barcelona in the same year. Hence it could be considered that this format represents a promotional strategy, aimed to energize “an audience that would be talking about the Sónar for a while, developing a promotion for the festival in Barcelona” as Ricard Robles argued (Bernárdez, 2011). Similar tests have been presented during the last decade in several cities, including London, Cape Town and Osaka.

The *SónarSound* is a different large-scale presentation of the festival around the world. Normally longer than the *Test*, this event has diverse formats, depending on the city where it is located. In Seoul (2006), for example, it consisted of a few selected performances, whereas in São Paulo (2004,) it had practically the same format as the festival in Spain. Therefore in this format some artists at the festival represent the global Sónar brand, while the rest of the programme is filled with local artists. Then it could be understood that this format reaches local audiences at the same time that it links the festival with the local music sector. *SónarSound* has been presented in many cities around the world, notably Tokyo, and several cities in the United States and Latin America.

Besides these two general exporting models, other sporadic network-building initiatives have been taking place, such as; *HyperSounds*, a series of concerts, DJ sessions, installations and screenings based around sound research; a parallel festival in A Coruña (2010); or *Sónar on Tour* developed in 2012 as a one-off experimental tour around the United States.

Through all these different initiatives, AM has developed a network of professionals, artists and places around Sónar. Especially with the *Test* the festival reaches international audiences, who supposedly will also attend the event in Barcelona, while through the *Sound*, the festival links more closely with local audiences and the local music sector.

Although AM initially started to develop this network of events around Europe, in the last few years they have been more interested in initiating collaboration with countries in South America (starting in 2004), Asia (2006), North America (2009) and Africa (2012). As Taglietti (personal interview 2013) pointed out “as the audiences in Europe are already the ones going to the main festival in Barcelona”, AM wants to focus on new target markets.

This indicates that the creation of the network is based on AM’s interest in generating attention for the main event in Barcelona. The Barcelona event could therefore be considered as the focal point for the original Sónar concept, where all actors and flows of the network converge. Therefore, after twenty years of network-building at an international level, the festival has come to be understood as a ‘hub’, linking different nodes around the world.

Strategies to increase network value

Sónar has transformed the original Barcelona festival into a global network of festivals, which may contribute to the music sector as a whole, creating relationships between professionals, markets and industries in what Castells (2010, 2012) terms the global ‘space of flows’. The special kind of cultural aesthetics related to advance music and multimedia art is now well known around the world, at least partly thanks to the Sónar Festival and its networks. Therefore it seems that the festival organisers may generate network value through the festival, by using it to link different festival collaborators around the world, from promoters to artists to audiences.

For the well-known French musician and producer Laurent Garnier (Font and Salat 2007), “the professionals and artists need to be at the Sónar Festival to know what’s happening in the music world, when the brand goes big and strong and crosses frontiers, the people talk about it, the organisers bring different things to different places”. With this comment the artist suggests two general ideas; on the one hand that the Barcelona event is a platform where the professionals need to be to know what’s happening in the

advanced music scene, and on the other hand that the festival organisers move artists and performances around the world through the festival network.

Related to the first idea, the festival has been delivering surprises, because the audience often do not know what they would like to see, until they have already seen it. As Ben Osborne (Font and Salat 2007) a professional music journalist from the magazine DJ comments: “even if I’m working in the field and I usually receive new material from diverse artists, the Sónar people always get some performances and artists that are new for everyone”. This gives the festival the possibility to present a programme with a high proportion of unknown artists to the international advanced music scene. This characteristic is interesting for professionals who want to know the new tendencies and performances in the field. Therefore the festival has become the ‘place to be’ for the international advanced music sector. This in turn increases the network value of the event, because it has become a ‘hub’ through which all the key actors in the scene have to pass in order to ensure their own position in the scene.

In terms of using the festival network, well-known DJ and producer Jeff Milles comments that the “festival organisers travel all year round to find new artists and musicians to bring them to play at the (Barcelona) festival” (Font and Salat 2007). This also suggests that the festival organisers take special care with the programme, researching new influences, performances and artists to present an interesting experience. The festival organisers therefore have the possibility to contact international artists, producers and agents to sound out the new trends around the globe, as well as to be able to present artists to different places. Effectively the network delivers novelty in two ways: new acts can be introduced to the electronic music field through the Barcelona ‘hub’, and these acts can then be staged in different places around the globe to create new programmes in new locations.

We can therefore see the Barcelona event as a central place in a globalised network, as a ‘hub’ where professionals need to be present to be part of the new trends in the electronic music scene. At the same time the network built through the festival contacts and exporting model, generates valuable knowledge about global music trends. The larger the size of the network, the greater the value of the Sónar festival as a ‘hub’, which can build relationships and knowledge and also generate interest for different

locations (or nodes) in the network. In order to make this possible, AM has had to develop different strategies in forming relationships with partners and institutions. These might broadly be grouped into (1) organic relationships, (2) commercial relationships and (3) developmental relationships.

We see *organic relationships* as those developed in a ‘natural’ way with other professionals. As Olaf Bender (manager Level Raster Norton Germany, interviewed during the festival in 2009) suggests, “since 10 years we are every time at Sónar, and we grew up with the festival. The Sónar festival has developed as the music sector, like us, in the beginning the festival was more experimental and then it grew up to more popular sounds. I think that’s the development of Sónar, I don’t know if it’s good or bad, but it has developed”. On the other hand, Seth Hodder, promoter of Novamute (Font and Salat 2007) also commented “...Sónar has been growing and changing as the sector has done, at the same rhythm, on the same direction, adapting themselves to new perspectives and tendencies”. Sónar therefore has long-established relationships with music professionals, which have also developed and changed in the same way as the festival has. Therefore we consider these relationships as ‘organic’.

In contrast, *commercial relationships* are usually developed in collaboration with local partners. The local professionals know the audience, the market and the local industry, and generally suggest marketing strategies, logistics and production as well as some ideas about local musicians and performances. In this sense the content of the local festival, and also the ‘hub’ in Barcelona, thrives on the context where the festival takes place. For example, since the festival has been taking place in Tokyo there is a significant presence in the Barcelona programme of Japanese performers. The local professionals have commercial exchanges with AM to be able to present the festival in the new location, sometimes on a regular basis and sometimes just once. Georgia Taglietti explains (personal interview 2013) “... our relationship with local partners is always different in each case, for example we could sell the brand, parts of the programme, we could organise the event, but in any case we are always there, working with the local partner, controlling the quality, and operative aspects”. In this sense the commercial relationships give AM the possibility to tour Sónar around the world and at the same time to gather information and knowledge about different local music scenes.

Finally the *developmental relationships* are based on the growth of the local music scene in different places around the world. As festival director Enric Palau commented, “sometimes you feel that the festival also enriches the local scene as you find artists from the same city at the festival that they do not know each other”. The festival therefore generates information exchanges for professionals, creating a platform for local music sector development. As Seoul-based artist Fortune Cookie commented, "I think we need a festival like this to help us create a scene of electronic music" (Font and Salat 2007). These developmental relationships are those the festival has with professionals, generating progression in their area of expertise or their career. These kinds of relationships are really strong as some professionals have a sense of belonging to a global Sónar community.

These different types of relationships deliver various types of value to the festival and to its wider network. The organic relationships create embedded trust that helps to cement the position of Sónar as the ‘hub’ or the ‘place to be’ in the music scene. This in turn can be used to generate economic value by using the reputation of Sónar to develop commercial relationships with partners in other parts of the world, which in turn help to develop the local music scene. The spread of electronic music around the globe in turn helps to cement the position of Barcelona as the original Sónar city, and to increase its influence and value as a festival ‘hub’.

Conclusions

Sónar illustrates the need for a network approach to the study of events. The festival is no longer just a single event, but a ‘hub’ in a broader network. The ‘hub’ function in turn generates network value by creating different kinds of relationships locally and globally that create economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. In many cases the symbolic capital created by achieving a certain position in the ‘scene’ delivers much more value than the purely economic spin-off that most events (including Sónar) usually underline as a major source of value creation.

The study of value creation also benefits from a longitudinal approach such as that adopted in this chapter. Seen over time, the festival can be viewed as a slowly extending

network that links the local cultural space of Barcelona with an emerging global electronic music scene. Within this network some actors have achieved a more central position over time, and they have been able to consolidate themselves as fixed nodes in the Sónar value network, for example those cities where the festival has taken place several times. The network has spread through the formation of different kinds of relationships that have allowed Sónar to experiment with different versions of the event in different locations. The growth of the network has not only strengthened the central position of Sónar as the ‘hub’ event in the network, but it has also increased the cultural and symbolic value of Barcelona as the home of Sónar.

Developing a network event such as Sónar (and there is a growing number of examples of similar ‘exporting’ festivals (Ferdinand and Williams, 2013) such as Rock in Rio and the Hay on Wye Literature Festival), requires not just an understanding of the basic content being circulated through the network, but also of the distribution of value. In contrast to traditional value chains, the power relationships between the different actors in a value network remain relatively fluid. At any point in time the power of different actors depends on their ability to link the local ‘space of places’ with the ‘global space of flows’, leveraging global and local network value. AM has understood this dynamic well, managing the globalisation of the Sónar concept without loss of originality by collecting and mixing content and ideas from a large range of different locations. Rather than diminishing the power of the original festival, therefore, AM has skilfully managed to generate value from multiple editions of the festival globally and to use this value to strengthen the local ‘hub’. These kinds of dynamics call for a network approach to events that considers the distribution of value among all network actors, rather than simply an event and/or its host city.

This Sónar study illustrates the capacity of a music event to generate a value based on a network, transforming the original event as a ‘hub’, to be linked to several local nodes. This capacity underlines the value that the festival has for the global music industry as well as for the development of the local music scene. Therefore there is an interdependence between the city where the festival takes place and the festival itself as a ‘hub’.

This chapter illustrates several important points about the generation of network value through events such as Sónar. As predicted by the theoretical principles of network value, the total value of the Sónar network has increased as the number of actors associated with it has grown. The addition of new nodes to the network has not only increased the total network value, but it has also strengthened the position of Barcelona as the network ‘hub’, and as the location of the ‘original’ festival. Sónar has also stimulated competition between cities around the globe to become nodes in the network and to establish their own position as regular venues for different editions of the event. It therefore also seems that some local actors are better able than others to extract value from the linkages provided by the network.

These findings suggest a number of fruitful avenues for future research on network value and on the role of events in generating network value. In particular, the types and qualities of relationships developed between network hubs and nodes seem to be of importance in value creation. It would be interesting to examine in more detail the volume and types of value created by the different types of relationships between the ‘hub’ and the network nodes. Does an organic relationship, for example, offer a richer diversity of types of value than a commercial relationship, which seems to be based mainly on economic value? How do power relationships, for example between global and local actors, affect the value generated for the different partners and for the network as a whole? Is it important for a ‘hub’ to secure its centrality in the network in order to minimise competition with emerging nodes and to prevent a potential loss of power and symbolic value?

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