

## **Portfolio of major events in Auckland: Characteristics, perspectives and issues**

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**Key words:** event policy, major events, event portfolio, destination marketing, event tourism, Auckland

### **Abstract**

Although event portfolios have become an integrated part of destination development, a lack of empirical research into the nature of portfolio design exists. A case study was conducted in Auckland, New Zealand, to explore the nature of the applied portfolio strategy in the city. The findings indicate that Auckland employs an outcomes-driven approach which is characterised by the orientation on economic outcomes, an ‘agnostic’ attitude to the compositional structure of the portfolio, an intensive bidding campaign and leveraging strategies. The current city’s reputation awards, successful event bids and positive economic indicators justify this approach. The identified issues, including a supply-led nature of the event portfolio and its predominantly quantitative measures of success, call for a re-validation of the approach. The results of the study contribute to the ongoing discourse about the value of event portfolios and their sustainable design in different urban destinations.

## **Introduction**

In order to develop and maintain a distinctive individuality, cities try to implement an array of image-making and place development strategies. One of the most popular applied tactics is the staging of large-scale events of national and international significance. Major events can be seen as a competitive feature of a host destination that emphasises its liveability, desirability and visitability. Over the last two decades, there has been an intervention of events into government policies and regional and local development strategies. Events have become an integrated part of social, cultural and tourism agendas in destinations across the globe (Getz, 2013). Events have been re-envisaged as boosterist strategies to mitigate contemporary urban problems caused by world economic changes (Foley, McGillivray, & McPherson, 2012). Events instigate the transformation of cityscapes, add life to streets and catalyse the redevelopment and revitalisation of urban areas (Balsas, 2004; García, 2004; Smith, 2009). Cities increasingly compete on the international event market for the right to host events in their quest for global relevance (Johnson, 2008). Entire cities have been transformed into event stages where an array of different events and festivals is performed (Richards, 2015).

However, it is not enough just to host discrete events in a hope to anchor market attention, attract crowds of international visitors and re-develop the place itself. As the literature suggests, separate events can make international news, but they are hardly capable of affecting people's beliefs about the host city (Anholt, 2007). It is necessary to learn how to use events proactively in order to achieve long-term positive results for the host destination (Richards, 2015). A well-developed event strategy that takes into account different perspectives and city objectives could facilitate the integration of events into the urban life. A recently coined term, 'eventfulness', describes the integration of events with other strategies and policies of a city, such as tourism, economic, social and cultural development, urban regeneration and brand promotion (Richards & Palmer, 2010). In an

attempt to become an ‘eventful city’, many destinations have moved from a random and eclectic choice of events towards the development of portfolios of events.

A portfolio of strategically grouped and managed events could be able to bring a range of benefits to a host destination, including the spreading of risks across many events, sharing costs and transferring knowledge from one event to another (Ziakas, 2014). The delivery of a well-planned portfolio can enhance a city’s infrastructure, and promote the economic, social and sport values of a host community (Ziakas, 2014; Ziakas & Costa, 2011a).

Although the aspects of event portfolio planning and development have become increasingly important from both academic and industry perspectives, there is still little theory and lack of empirical studies in this area. This sets forth a number of questions regarding an event portfolio’s rationale, planning, and management. Using a case study methodology, this article seeks to explore the contextual and operational characteristics of the applied event portfolio approach in Auckland, New Zealand, and their impact on the compositional structure of the portfolio of major events in the city.

The next section reviews theoretical foundations of the event portfolio concept, followed by a discussion of the applied methodology. The findings section analyses the key characteristics of the outcomes-driven approach to event portfolio design, including a portfolio strategic nature, orientation on the stated outcomes, ‘agnostic’ attitude to the portfolio’s composition, an intensive bidding campaign and leveraging strategies. The discussion section outlines and explores the identified issues and emerged ideas about the portfolio programming in Auckland. In conclusion, suggestions for further research are outlined.

## **Literature Review**

Many cities have started to view the development and hosting of major events as a legitimate, strategic policy field (Getz, 2012). A clear and coherent event policy programme and long-term plans to facilitate the utilisation of events as vehicles for economic and social development have been recognised as primary goals for the destinations that tend to deploy events for their strategic needs. Successful events programming requires understanding of the inherent policy-making processes in a city and the conditions that assist with decision-making.

The analysis of the literature suggests that links between public policy and city events are not explored well. Hall and Rusher (2004, p. 229) indicate that “there still remains relatively little analysis on the political context of events and the means by which events come to be developed and hosted within communities”. Pugh and Wood (2004) argue that although local authorities acknowledge the spectrum of benefits arising from the strategic programming of events, they do not incorporate this vision into a formal plan with clear goals, methods and evaluation matrices. For example, in South East Queensland’s Sunshine Coast, Australia, public event management has been included in a small number of policies developed in an ad-hoc manner without recognition of the contribution of events in regional growth and development (Whitford, 2004). According to Hanrahan and Maguire (2016), only 4 out of 32 local authorities in Ireland provide generic planning guidelines and regulations for events.

Getz (2009, 2012) states that government policies in general, and those related to event planning in particular, significantly depend upon existing ideological bases, which can be rooted in philosophies, sets of values or even religious beliefs. Ideologies can be characterised by attitudes towards such issues as social change and inequality, economic growth, market system and the role of the state (Veal, 2010). Foley et al. (2012) critically

examine different event policy formations, specifically the emergence of neoliberalism in urban governance in developed countries. These authors argue that neoliberalism as an urban ideology “hinges on the active mobilisation of state power in the promotion of market-based regulatory arrangements” (Foley et al., 2012, p. 66). Cities are encouraged to be self-reliant and act in partnership with the market to generate economic returns and distribute resources as required or necessary.

Some critics of neoliberal government models in general (Brenner & Theodore, 2005), and in the event sphere in particular (Schimmel, 2006), document a regression in social outcomes and unsustainability of event policies because of a commitment to this urban strategy. Andranovich, Burbank, and Heying (2001) discuss potential negative results for cities from bidding for and hosting sporting large-scale events. Such risks as a boycott or scandal cannot be predicted. The possibility always exists that an event may not be unique enough to maintain political support, push forward the development programmes and enhance the international profile of a city. Their study raises concerns about citizens’ involvement during the bidding and organisation of an event. As the authors found in the case of three Olympic host cities in the USA, the participation of residents in the decision-making was minimal. To resolve this inequality in access to the decision-making process and prospective benefits from events, Getz (2009) introduces a principle of social equity, which requires full integration of residents and other groups of stakeholders in the organisational process.

Local authorities can act differently, use different event strategies and formulate specific policies. Smith (2012) distinguishes three main policy principles with regard to events, namely, policy related to events, events as public policy and policy which is formulated to complement events. Traditionally, governments have acted as regulative bodies to guarantee the safety and relevance of hosted events and to ensure that events promote the values of a current political regime. The development of specific guidelines and

regulations for public event management provides a tool for managing the impacts and issues associated with events as well as contributes to the sustainable development of the local event sector (Hanrahan & Maguire, 2015).

City authorities can also instigate, fund, promote and manage events. In other words, events are used as a policy instrument. Cities increasingly have begun establishing new event development agencies responsible for planning and realisation of city event projects (Getz, 2012). Such organisations have been delegated authority to make decisions with regard to major events calendars and event funding. The reverse side of this relative autonomy from governments is the emergence of secrecy and lack of accountability of such agencies (Getz, 2009). As Whitford, Phi, and Dredge (2014) argue, the creation of such organisations serve to distance local authorities from responsibility for potential negative effects and event failures.

The third approach is focused on the public policy formed around events with the goal to leverage potential positive outcomes. The concept of event leveraging can be viewed, firstly, as a knowledge of the potential that events can generate for the host destination and its residents and, secondly, as an intention to realise this potential on different levels of community operations (Quinn, 2013). This approach emphasises the necessity of pre-event planning, as well as during and after event analysis and evaluation. Smith (2014, p. 21) argues that in order to achieve expected positive results from leveraging initiatives, a leveraging approach needs to be “an integral part of decision-making process in the early stages of event planning”. In other words, it is essential for city event managers to design, implement and evaluate tactics that employ all opportunities that events offer to the community. As Smith (2012) concludes, cities should consider the ways in which to coordinate events in conjunction with their current wider policy goals.

Major events often intersect several political fields and involve more than one level of government; thus, the development of liaison and interconnectedness between different political actors and agencies on event issues is necessary (Getz, 2012). Current research, however, demonstrates that local authority planning processes are rarely compliant with national legislation and strategic vision on events (Hanrahan & Maguire, 2015).

Moreover, when city authorities become involved with events, it often happens on an ad-hoc basis (Whitford, 2004) or, as Getz (2009) adds, as an answer to the pressure from different interest groups, in particular, tourism. An analysis of the public agencies' intervention in event tourism in Australia, for example, indicates that the dominant priorities were economic and tourism-oriented with minor focus on promoting indigenous culture and entertainment for the local population (Stokes & Jago, 2007). The key argument for justification of government investment in events is the assumption that events deliver a set of significant benefits to the host community, including new jobs, opportunities for local businesses and city brand awareness (Getz, 2009). Increase in visitor numbers and their spending are presented as a 'good news' story (Foley et al., 2012). As Stokes (2008) summarises, commercial realities always prevail in the public event discourse. Such an approach can lead to a situation where the perceptions and well-being of local residents are neglected in favour of corporate interests. For example, mega-events like the Olympic Games require large-scale public expenditure, new infrastructure and new urban redevelopment strategies. That may deliver short-term positive results for corporate interests and undesirable or negative outcomes for the community in the long term (Hall, 2006).

To avoid an ad-hoc city events programming, when events are organised without strategic vision, and to meet the requirements of a sustainable event policy, Getz (2013) calls for the necessity of developing an event portfolio that contains a strategic mix of events that target different audiences, meets various objectives of a host city and delivers positive



outcomes. Portfolios exist within a general population of events, which refers to “the entire complement of planned events held within a specific area, including one-off events” (Getz & Andersson, 2016, p. 250). As “the strategic patterning of desperate but interrelated events” (Ziakas, 2014, p.14), a portfolio of events is able to generate sustainable impacts as well as increase the size of a local event market, respond to different community issues and appeal to a variety of people’s interests (Ziakas & Costa, 2011b). Portfolios start to play an integral role in city attractiveness and destination visitability (Dragin-Jensen, Schnittka, & Arkil, 2016). Implementation of the event portfolio strategy could become a critical transformative step for a city on its way from being “a city with events” to becoming “an eventful city” (Richards & Palmer, 2010, p. 43).

An event portfolio integrates contextual, operational and socio-cultural dimensions (Ziakas, 2013). The contextual dimension comprises the local policy setting, economic and market conditions as well as stakeholder networks, resource capacity and community characteristics that affect portfolio planning and management. The operational dimension determines and regulates portfolio composing strategies, including selection of events, their frequency, size and market orientation. Finally, the socio-cultural dimension encompasses and expresses different local viewpoints on events and their symbolic meanings within the local community (Ziakas, 2013).

From the contextual and operational perspectives, the conditions of an institutional structure that establish the organisational environment, where events are planned, delivered and leveraged, play a critical role (Ziakas, 2014). This structure entails local governance and administrative systems which facilitate the incorporation of events into policy agendas and foster collaboration between event stakeholders and policy-making agents. As the literature demonstrates, although, cities may have some elements of a

portfolio approach, a lack of connectivity and institutional structure stops them from a sustainable and synergetic portfolio development (Clark & Misener, 2015).

Resource dependency also plays an important role and can significantly affect the development of the portfolio approach. Dependence occurs when one stakeholder controls the resources that are required by another party to satisfy its needs (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Andersson and Getz (2008, p. 203) argue that the initialisation of events and festivals “ensure sustained support and resources”. A portfolio approach in this instance is capable of facilitating resource distribution and satisfying both resource owners and buyers as it creates a structural network and interdependence among key actors. An institutional status of an event portfolio can be achieved by gaining and maintaining its legitimacy from the stakeholder perspective (Andersson & Getz, 2008). Overall, a holistic portfolio approach is required to plan and develop synergies among events and stakeholders, and create conditions for leveraging and cross-leveraging strategies within a portfolio (Ziakas, 2010).

The inquiry into the patterns of event portfolio design and functionality substantially extends the scope and focus of event studies and event management (Ziakas, 2014). Although nowadays, cities across the world have been actively planning and implementing event portfolios, the topic is still at an “embryonic stage of development” (Ziakas, 2014, p. 183). The aim of this article is to contribute to the existing literature and explore the complexity of event portfolio development from contextual and operational perspectives in the city of Auckland, the largest urban area by New Zealand standards.

## **Research Design and Methods**

In this research, a case-study methodology was applied. Case study is a type of design in qualitative research in which a researcher explores a bounded system or a case over a period of time through in-depth data collection (Creswell, 2007). This methodology is appropriate when the inquirer seeks for better understanding of or providing insight into a particular issue (Stake, 2000). The section further outlines the employed data collection and data analysis strategies and offers a detailed description of the case.

### ***Data Collection***

Strubing (2007) suggests that research data should be seen as a relationship between a researcher, research issues and the research context. Data collection in this instance represents a strategic intervention into the field with a particular goal to obtain a valuable set of information that focuses on the stated problematic situation and the ways to improve it within the particular context. Semi-structured interviewing and document selection were chosen as appropriate methods of data collection.

A purposeful approach to the selection of interviewees (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) was applied. Only those participants “who best fit the purpose of the research” (Harding, 2013, p. 17) were interviewed. In total, eight interviews were conducted with representatives of Auckland Council and Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development, a local economic development agency. The selected participants were in a position to make meaningful comments on current issues pertaining to event policies and strategies in Auckland. As the main intention was to understand the official city vision and applied strategic approaches to event portfolio design, other relevant stakeholders such as event organisers, community representatives and professional associations were not invited to participate in the research. All the interviews were conducted between September 2014 and February 2015.

Document selection was a complementary, or secondary, data collection method. Auckland and national event policies and strategies, annual reports, statements and activity plans were selected and analysed. The documents were accessed through the Auckland Council, ATEED and National Government web-sites.

### *Data Analysis*

Thematic analysis was applied to identify and analyse critical patterns within the collected data. This type of analysis facilitates the descriptive organisation of data and the interpretation of the key aspects of the research (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Taking into account that the intention was to produce a complete and generic analysis of the event portfolio strategy in the city under study, both primary (interviews) and secondary (documentation) data were analysed together using the same pool of techniques. This helped to avoid discrete comparisons between the data sets and construct themes across both types of evidence (Bowen, 2009).

A three-stage procedure of the thematic analysis was adopted: 1) Familiarising with the data; 2) Generating codes and themes; and 3) Reviewing themes. The first stage involved interview transcribing, reading and re-reading of the transcriptions and collected documents, and noting of initial ideas. During the second stage, firstly, interview transcripts and documents were broken down into discrete segments, and examined and compared for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Secondly, pattern codes were developed – those that “identify an emergent theme, configuration or explanation” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 86). At the final stage of thematic analysis, the key objective was to review emerged themes and to group them in larger thematic areas that correlated research goals and explained the phenomenon under study. Following Saldaña’s (2013) and Creswell’s (2007) advice to narrow down the final number of themes to a minimum, one complex theme and five

sub-themes were created to grasp the meaning and peculiarities of the applied portfolio strategy in Auckland (Table 1).

**[Table 1 about here]**

The thematic map in Table 1 outlines key characteristics of the portfolio approach to major events in Auckland. It informs and guides the analysis and discussion sections in the article.

### *Setting the Scene*

Auckland is located in the North Island of New Zealand and is the largest urban area in the country. The city has a population of 1,415,500 people, which is more than 30% of the total population of the country (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). It contains around 190 ethnic groups and can be called “the population portal for New Zealand” (Neill & Shirley, 2013, p. 184).

Auckland is New Zealand’s principle business centre and the most visited tourist destination in New Zealand, attracting 72% of all visitors to the country (Tourism sector: Bold plans for a thriving industry, n/a). The city accounts for 35.3% of New Zealand’s GDP and is a major national gateway for imports and exports (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Today, Auckland is envisaged as a modern city with a high quality of living, which is recognised in different international comparative studies such as Mercer Quality of Living Survey, where Auckland was ranked the third most liveable city in the world (Mercer quality of living rankings, 2015). Lonely Planet named Auckland one of the world’s Top 10 Cities in 2014 in its ‘Best in Travel’ guide (Lonely Planet's best in travel 2014: Top 10 cities, 2014).

Every year Auckland hosts around 30-35 major events. The key recurrent major events in the city are presented in Table 2.

**[Table 2 about here]**

Some events have a status of city ‘anchors’, which are “typically large, regular events with distinctive qualities that cities become known for” (ATEED, 2011, p. 18). For example, the Pasifika Festival is an annual Pacific Islands-themed event. It is the largest festival of its type in the world. The festival presents a wide variety of authentic experiences, including traditional cuisine, performance and crafts from the Cook Islands, Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Maori and other Pacific ethnicities. The Auckland Lantern Festival is one of the biggest and most popular cultural events in Auckland, celebrating the city’s vibrant ethnic diversity and marking the end of Chinese New Year festivities. NRL Auckland Nines is a rugby competition organised by the National Rugby League and is hosted annually in Auckland with 16 competing teams from Australia and New Zealand. Auckland Pride Festival is an annual celebration of culture, sexuality and gender identity.

In addition to annual events, every year Auckland invests in around 15-20 one-off events of different scale. Overall, in 2014/2015, 37 major events were hosted including 18 events that were selected through the annual major event contestable fund, 10 multi-year sponsorships and three international sporting major events, namely ICC Cricket World Cup, FIFA U-20 World Cup and the Volvo Ocean Race Auckland Stopover. In total, the portfolio delivered NZ\$73.1 million return on investment and 390,000 visitor nights (ATEED, 2015).

One of the key factors that determined the active role of the city authorities in major events was the transformation of Auckland’s government structure due to the amalgamation of the regional councils into a new region-wide political structure. The process of amalgamation was initiated by the National Government of New Zealand. Auckland came into the national objective at the beginning of the 2000’s when its economic role became a part of the Economic Transformation Agenda of the National

Government (Neill & Shirley, 2013). One of the initiatives stated in the Agenda was the development of an internationally competitive Auckland by “making the city a world-class hub of innovation and internationalisation” (Hodgson, 4 December 2007).

On 1 November 2010, the Auckland ‘Super City’ was born and the new Auckland Council started its work. The amalgamation has enabled Auckland to develop a more strategic approach towards future development of the city. The idea behind the amalgamation was to unite Auckland with a single leader and a single vision of Auckland as the world’s most liveable city.

Following the international trend of establishing regional or city economic development agencies, Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED) started its operations in 2010. The core areas of the agency’s activity include tourism and destination management, industry and business growth, investment attraction and city brand development (ATEED, 2013b). With regard to major events, ATEED is the leading agency in the city, responsible for major event development and facilitation (ATEED, 2013a).

In 2010, ATEED announced the development of the Auckland Major Events Strategy (AMES). Created within a ‘Mayor’s 100 projects’ (Auckland Council, 2010), it emphasises the key role of major events in achieving long-term economic and social goals (ATEED, 2011). The concept of an event portfolio was introduced as a key element of the strategy.

In addition to the city’s major events strategy, Auckland Major Events Protocol (AMEP) was announced in 2013 (ATEED, 2013a). The protocol regulates the relationship between key event stakeholders in the city, and clarifies the operational procedures that drive major event selection and funding. In 2013, Auckland Council released an official Auckland Events Policy. The document articulates how and why the Council is involved

in events (Auckland Council, 2013). The Policy suggests a general framework that embeds city events into a wider context and strategically aligns them with other strategies, programmes and plans in the city.

The established event policy framework strongly correlates with the current changes in the National Government's approach to major events. In 2004, a New Zealand Major Events Strategy (NZMES) and Major Event Development Fund (MEDF) were developed (Office of the Minister for Industry and Regional Development, 2004). This paved the way to the strategic use of major events in the development and sustention of national prosperity in New Zealand. Major events became a recognised and approved tool to deliver economic and social value to New Zealand citizens and related national industries. One of the key rationales behind the national strategy was to establish market mechanisms which would guarantee the support and delivery of the whole major event's 'package', including a broad range of leveraging activities. The government intended to occupy the central position in major events to achieve national goals in sustainable economic development and the country's brand profiling (New Zealand Government, 2009).

Since 2005, the government has supported 160 events and invested over NZ\$77.51 million (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment of New Zealand, 2013). The analysis of the evaluation reports suggest that major events prove to be a beneficial investment for the Government of New Zealand: meta-evaluation of 18 major events that received an investment from MEDF between February 2010 and April 2012 indicates an approximate return on investment (ROI) of 96% and NZ\$32.1 million of net economic benefit (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment of New Zealand, 2013). The data emphasise the strategic importance of hosting events that are capable of generating high numbers of international visitors and, as a result, high levels of tourism related income, promotion of the country's image abroad and a high destination profile (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment of New Zealand, 2013). Importantly, the



Government has emphasised the necessity of implementing a portfolio approach to major events, wherein the overall balance of the events' criteria and their potential outcomes should be planned and measured taking into account the contribution of the whole programme, and not of separate events (Ministry of Economic Development of New Zealand, 2007).

Overall, the existence of a special economic development agency, ATEED, responsible for major events planning, as well as a developed event policy framework in the city, make Auckland an interesting case to explore the strategic, authority-led approach to major events. The national context where major events have been viewed as opportunities to achieve national reputational and economic outcomes provides an important benchmark for the city event planners in terms of event portfolio planning and goal-setting.

## **Findings**

The rationale behind the creation of the portfolio of major events in Auckland lies in the strategic desire to balance productive and consumptive outcomes (ATEED, 2011). This entails the achievement of ongoing city prosperity, the growth of the visitor economy, the enhancement of the city's status as a major event and tourist destination, as well as the development of a creative, vibrant international city. The event portfolio is viewed as an investment portfolio, the value of which is estimated on the basis of the sum total of the events included into this portfolio. As one of the interviewees mentioned:

Portfolio is an approach we take like a sort of any business investment. You have a portfolio of investment and you want to make sure that across this portfolio you deliver all the outcomes you are trying to achieve.

Event portfolio is capable of “ticking all the boxes” at the programme level, rather than requiring each event to “tick all the boxes on a stand-alone basis” (ATEED, 2011, p. 14).

Some events, generally cultural celebrations, can provide liveability, while sporting events can provide economic benefits and international exposure:

I mean, if you think in terms of our liveability outcomes and participants and spectators in events, it is the non-sporting events, specifically Lantern, Diwali. They drive most of our outcomes. So, those are non-sporting events. In terms of our international profile, it is primarily the sporting events that help us to achieve those. I think we have got a pretty good split but again, remembering that underneath our strategy our portfolio is not about what to put into it in terms of type of events. It is about what comes out in terms of outcomes.

The review of the outcomes, stated in AMES, clearly demonstrates the dominance of the economic growth paradigm. Major events have been recognised as key providers of substantial economic benefits to the city. This includes the injection of new money into the economy, and increase of visitation and global profile that, in turn, brings new investment and skilled migrants. The only socially-oriented outcome to “make Auckland a great place to live” (ATEED, 2013a, p. 6) is less tangible and less clear. According to the interviewees, clear measures of success of this particular outcome are still under development. The currently applied parameters, such as number of event attendees and the level of audience satisfaction, do not provide the city event planners with a real picture of the event results with regard to the development of a liveability factor.

The orientation on outcomes determines the selection of events for the portfolio:

You have a portfolio of investment and you want to make sure that across this portfolio you deliver all the outcomes you are trying to achieve, recognising that each individual event not necessarily delivers all of them. So, we have targets to achieve, and some events more than others will do that. It is important to take a portfolio approach to the events we support.

Such an agnostic attitude diminishes the importance of the portfolio's genre structure: "We are completely agnostic to the nature of events." In reality, Auckland's portfolio represents a mix of cultural and sporting events. However, the design principles do not emphasise the genre balance as a critical component of major events programming.

The 'agnostic' vision of portfolio structure advocates a different rationale for major event programming. A conventional split of events into sporting and non-sporting has some limitations, for example, in terms of unclear motivational factors that determine the level of popularity of an event. Hence, events that compose a portfolio should be analysed in terms of audience motivators (e.g., to celebrate, to participate, to support), community groups' directionality (e.g., family, youth, subcultures) and a diversity of events elements that contribute to the compositional balance in the portfolio (e.g., cultural festivities within a sporting event, sporting competitions during a cultural festival).

The incorporation of some cultural, music or heritage elements that accompany, for example, the main sporting event may provide an array of opportunities for locals, visitors and participants to affirm and celebrate their shared identity and enhance the value of the main event. During the 2015 NRL Auckland Nines, a lot of rugby-around events were organised, including a rugby festival with participating teams' appearance, live music, thematic exhibition and free festivities, and attractions for children.

The city event planners actively enter the international market with the purpose of securing major events that have a potential to deliver economic outcomes. This strategy

predetermines the city's interest in one-off sporting tournaments and championships that bring high visitation and positive financial indicators:

The reason [for focusing on sporting events] is because of quick wins. You can secure them quickly; you can get the benefits from them quickly. They have definitely looked towards the economic side of the matrix.

It is obvious that large-scale sporting events, in general, are more aligned with the range of benefits Auckland event planners tend to achieve and capitalise on. Although recurring major events can deliver an array of positive social and cultural outcomes, they do not meet the requirements for net economic benefits that one-off events do.

The intensive bidding strategy of Auckland fits in with the national major events approach. The operational evaluation of MEDF for 2010-2012 (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment of New Zealand, 2013) showed that sporting one-off events represented 78% of events that received funding (13 sporting events and 5 cultural events). They captured 87% of all investment. This consistent pattern reflected the first priority stated in the updated NZMES to invest smartly in events with the most potential for economic return (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment of New Zealand, 2010). Large-scale sporting events were in general more aligned with the range of benefits the National Government and city councils intended to achieve and capitalise on.

Portfolio strategic value manifests itself in event leveraging activities. In Auckland, major events included in the portfolio have been viewed as an important source for delivering and maximising benefits that are not directly related to the events: "I think the event itself can only do so much if you don't actually leverage this event to achieve other outcomes. Events is a platform to achieve." Programming of an event portfolio places leveraging on a more holistic and strategic basis. Indeed, it is more beneficial to develop and accumulate

all the leveraging strategies within one entity than it is to estimate and plan for discrete events. A portfolio approach allows looking beyond direct events impacts:

I think that is something that we will do more and more in the coming years: develop programmes even around small investments and look outside of the footprint of an event itself to see how we can derive some benefits for the other 51 weeks of the year.

ATEED tries to implement a leveraging programme for every significant event in the portfolio. Some strategies include the use of an event in the city's promotion campaign: "If an event has a potential to deliver a good international exposure we will spend our leverage money on producing of good content. We use athletes who come here in destination marketing purposes." Other plans have focused on the amplification of visitation and support of the local hospitality industry. Leveraging synergy of the event portfolio increases the city's ability to plan for improvements in other industries and sectors. In this case, events play a role of contributors to solving social or economic issues:

For example, we know that in Auckland, youth unemployment is a real issue. Skill shortfall for business is a real issue. They are not events issues. That is not something an event is going to solve. But we might be able to build an event that can help to address that issue for example. Let's start from that as our first point and then see what we can do to help to achieve that outcome.

To summarise, the outcomes-driven approach, established in line with the national approach to major events, has been mainly concentrated on the achievement of a particular set of predominantly economic and reputational outcomes. It fits the general city and national strategy to position Auckland as an economic centre of New Zealand, a vibrant and liveable place. A positive economic contribution of the previously hosted major events as well as an enhanced international city profile back up the rationale for such a strategy and justify, at least in the authority's eyes, significant investment into the major event sphere that has been made since 2010.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

From the contextual perspective, management of cities in New Zealand is set in the context of local governments that are responsible for social and economic development and play a broad role in promoting cities' investment attractiveness, infrastructure development and overall wellbeing of the local community (Nel, 2014; Pearce, 2015). Local government in Auckland tends to be directly engaged in major events, supporting strategic initiatives by 'in-house' operations within the council or by recent inclusion of major events into the agenda of the established semi-autonomous agency responsible for local or regional economic development. The nature of ATEED predetermines its market-led orientation in the events sector. Nel (2014, p. 74) argues that economic agencies in New Zealand are "overwhelmingly focused on pro-market support with there being minimal consideration of broader social and community-based economic development". This narrow specialisation leads to a situation when an overall population of events (Getz & Andersson, 2016) in the cities is segregated based on those that are major and bring visitors and new money, and those that are smaller and serve community needs. Such an approach cultivates not only a disproportion in government support but also considerably downplays the social and cultural importance of major events.

From the operational perspective, Auckland's portfolio focuses on developing and boosting the marketing of existing events with the highest potential to attract visitors and bidding on events with high short-term positive impact. Getz (2013) argues that such a strategy is unsustainable in a long-term perspective, but can be employed when destination repositioning or rebranding is required. Foley et al. (2012) add that such an approach is common for relatively peripheral destinations that aspire to secure the recognition of the city's brand. The evidence from Auckland's case demonstrates that after the establishment of ATEED in 2010 and proclamation of the city's ambition to become the most liveable city in the world, Auckland has had a strong desire to strengthen

its competitive advantages. Major events have been chosen as one of the most effective ways to achieve this objective.

In spite of the current success of the outcomes-driven portfolio approach and associated leveraging projects, a portfolio model with a focus on bidding and hosting events that gain predominantly economic benefits, has some limitations that might affect the synergy and overall multidimensional value of the portfolio. Through the interview process, it became evident that the city event planners have been overmuch focused on delivering solely economic results. At the same time, the social-oriented events that meet social outcomes have been down-graded in their significance for the city's prosperity. The economic orientation of the city event planners has caused a situation where current major social events in the city, which are supposed to deliver mostly social outcomes and reflect the cultural diversity of Auckland, have been criticised by the community for losing their identity in favour of economic results. 2015 Pasifika Festival may be a good example. The event with a 23-year history of celebrating Pacific Islands' traditions, music and food was labelled by participants and attendees as "too commercialised, too regimented and very expensive" (Tapaleao, 2015, March 13).

The predominance of the bidding element in the portfolio strategy has some pitfalls. First, the restrictions that come together with large events may negatively affect local business, community satisfaction and image promotion. Another issue with the bids is the element of the 'unknown'. Bidding for and then hosting a large event is an expensive and risky project with some potential of unfavourable legacies. The short-term duration of an event might affect the image and competitiveness of the host destination.

Finally, as is evident from the findings, sporting events represent the majority of successful bids in Auckland. As the interviewees point out, the main causes of this disproportion is a lack of cultural events on the international bidding market. This is

understandable due to the specific character of cultural celebrations and their traditional embeddedness in community's life. It is impossible to bid for the Rio Carnival or Oktoberfest. However, as the example of European Capitals of Culture project demonstrates, a cultural element in bids is becoming more salient (e.g., Richards, Dodd, & Palmer, 2014). Over a period of one year, a city-winner organises a series of cultural events with a strong European orientation. Such events invariably enrich the city's event portfolio.

One of the solutions for Auckland might be the strategy of buying cultural touring exhibitions or travelling art shows. Although there is a huge gap in investigating the potential of such events for host destinations, the available evidence demonstrates that some touring projects are capable of generating significant economic, educational and image benefits for the city (e.g., Axelsen & Arcodia, 2004; Mihalik & Wing-Vogelbacher, 1993). These events may benefit an annual portfolio of major events.

Overall, the research has indicated the existence of a relatively successful portfolio approach to major events in Auckland. A focused and well-articulated authority-led strategy of using events as a pillar for economic development and image promotion has put the city on an international visitor map, emphasising its points of difference and attractiveness for tourists, businesses and investors.

However, the nature of the outcomes-driven approach limits the multipurpose functioning of the current portfolio. A paradigm shift is required from a supply-led reactive approach based on bids and quantitative measures of success to a more demand-led portfolio strategy with attention to internal demands and socio-cultural peculiarities. From the perspective of a demand-led approach, the initiative to select and further develop events for the portfolio should come not only from city event planners, but also be driven by professional institutions associated with certain types of events. For example, local



sporting associations could demonstrate the willingness to attract or bid for particular sporting events, while art galleries and museums – for arts and cultural major events.

Community integration in the decision-making process can be also applied. Networking engages public organisations, government agencies and the private sector into a collective process of discourse, strategy-making and partnership development. This could lead to knowledge sharing, information exchange and creation of a collaborative environment (Malek & Costa, 2014). Direct participation of community groups, individuals and the private sector increases the collaboration between different actors and distribution of tangible and intangible resources (Presenza & Sheehan, 2013).

To sum up, the suggested paradigm shift requires a comprehensive revision of event strategies and approaches. This could include the development of new portfolio evaluation matrices, the revalidation and revision of the outcomes, and better stakeholder communication and integration.

The analysis and discussion of the findings must be placed within the limitations of this research. The research was limited to the data collected in one large urban area in New Zealand. The focus was on contextual and operational dimensions of portfolio development (Ziakas, 2013, 2014), and only the opinions of the public event planners were analysed. The socio-cultural dimension of the portfolio of major events in Auckland could be explored in the future by engaging with a wider group of stakeholders. For example, major event organisers and promoters, representatives of cultural institutions and members of the local community could widen the problematics of the portfolio studies and provide insights and different viewpoints on the symbolic meanings of events and the way portfolios express community values and affect the social capital development. Further investigation and comparative analysis of diverse event portfolio

strategies in different urban contexts could enrich empirical evidence and contribute to the development of theoretical underpinnings of event portfolio strategic values.

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**Table 1:** A thematic map

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
Outcomes-driven portfolio	Portfolio as a set of investment
	Orientation on stated outcomes
	Agnostic programming of the portfolio
	Intensive bidding
	Leveraging



**Table 2:** Key recurrent major events in Auckland’s portfolio in 2015 sponsored on behalf of Auckland Council

<b>Event</b>	<b>Venue and Dates</b>	<b>Description</b>
ASB Classic	ASB Tennis Arena, 5-17 January	International tennis tournament (WTA and ATP Tours)
NRL Auckland Nines	Eden Park, 31 January-1 February	A two-day Rugby Nines tournament
Auckland Pride Festival	Various venues, 21 February	Rainbow community celebration
Auckland Lantern Festival	Albert Park and surrounding streets, 26 February-1 March	Celebration of the Chinese New Year
Pasifika Festival	Western Springs, 14-15 March	The world’s largest Pacific festival with traditional and contemporary entertainment, festive flavours and vibrant stalls
New Zealand International Film Festival	Various venues, 16 July-2 August	Premiere screenings of the latest and best shorts, documentaries and animated films
New Zealand Fashion Week	Viaduct Event Centre, 24-30 August	Annual fashion event of international scale
Auckland Diwali Festival of Lights	Aotea Square and Queen Street, 17-18 October	Indian cultural festival
Auckland Marathon	Various venues, 1 November 2015	Auckland's premier racing event featuring a marathon, half marathon, 10km road race and 5km walk
ITM 500 Auckland V8 Supercars	Pukekohe, 6-8 November	Car racing event