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DS Deep Insight Final Report

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings and recommendations from the DS Deep Insight project, aimed at developing an understanding of the symbiotic relationship between Tech City and the Digital Shoreditch Festival in order to better grow, support and strengthen both the Festival itself and the community it supports.

We hypothesise that just as the area in and around Tech City provides a local and enthusiastic audience of the kind essential to the success of a festival such as Digital Shoreditch, so the Digital Shoreditch festival can facilitate the development and activities of a significant innovation network in that area, thereby meeting essential needs of companies in the Tech City area and enabling the local economy to thrive.

In this report, we first present a brief review of the literature on innovation networks, creative clusters and creative climate. We then present the findings from data collection activities carried out at Digital Shoreditch 2013 (DS13). Finally, we present a review of comparable events to inform our recommendations for future Digital Shoreditch festivals.

We conclude that the Digital Shoreditch festival already does an excellent job of bringing together speakers and delegates from the exciting range of industries and sectors that are represented in the area around Tech City, thus enabling some of the greatest benefits of innovation networks, as ideas jump across industries, generating radical innovation. The festival also already maintains an excellent climate for creativity and innovation.

We have identified some opportunities for improvement at an operational level, which can be incorporated into future festivals. However, the main contribution of this work has been to identify a range of possible approaches that could be adopted by future DS festivals to further support networking between speakers and delegates at the event. These approaches relate to scheduling more time in the festival programme for activities that specifically support networking between delegates and speakers; provision of spaces that facilitate networking activities of various kinds, and provision of information about both speakers and delegates before, during and after the event, as well as running additional events throughout the year.

It seems likely that many of the recommendations made in this report in relation to the Digital Shoreditch festival could be relevant to other events supporting innovation networks and creative clusters in other locations, but further research would be needed to determine whether this is in fact the case.



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1 Introduction

1.1 Tech City

The Tech City phenomenon is relatively new, and still evolving. Following a surge in commercial activity in certain sectors in the area of London around the Old Street roundabout at the end of the last decade, the Prime Minister announced his intention, in November 2010, to create a Silicon Valley-like cluster in East London, centred on the area around Old Street roundabout, and extending east to the Olympic Park. At this point, there were approximately 200 digital companies and 85 start-ups in and around the area of interest (Tech City UK, 2013), as well as upwards of 1,500 designers (Foord, 2012). Today, some reports suggest there are as many as 3,200 digital economy firms (Smith, 2012), and over 1,300 start-ups (Tech City UK, 2013) and according to Tech City UK, the Tech City cluster is 'the fastest growing tech cluster in Europe' (Tech City UK, 2013). As David Rowan of Wired magazine has put it:

'a bunch of nimble startups have taken advantage of relatively cheap rents, a critical mass of available programming talent, and just enough outside investment to create a mutually reinforcing spirit of risk-taking. The buzzword is "ecosystem": once an area is known for a few hot startups, it attracts more company founders, plus the financiers, lawyers and marketers who sense an opportunity. And it helps that there are places they can meet each other to power-network, or simply to drink tea' (Rowan, 2012)

Foord (2013) also points to the significance of the specific mix of collocated activities in the Tech City area, identifying 'telecommunications firms, advertising, PR and communications, publishing and printing alongside software development and specialist data analysis', and suggesting that the vitality of current activity in the area stems from 'risky experimentation across collocated sectors', such as software and advertising, that is stimulating the generation of creative new ideas through combinations of existing knowledge. Following analysis of a sample of 261 firms in the area, she further points to the significance of the mix of large well-established companies and early start-ups, stating that 'For many tech entrepreneurs being in close proximity to successful companies gives them 'inspiration and hope'', and explains how 'The proliferation of techcelebrity events, meet-ups, hacks and mentoring schemes contribute to a growing sense of an 'ecosystem' of interconnected individuals for whom place based face-to-face contact is particularly important.'

1.2 The Digital Shoreditch Festival

Digital Shoreditch (DS) is a festival based on the idea of 'celebrating outstanding creativity'. The first DS festival, in 2011, attracted 3,000 attendees; in 2012, there were 7,000, and in 2013, an estimated 15,000 people attended events associated with the festival in one or more locations. The festival is based, as its name suggests, in Shoreditch, in the heart of Tech City, with the main festival venue for 2013 being Shoreditch Town Hall.

1.3 Project Aims and Objectives

In this project our aim was to develop an understanding of the symbiotic relationship between Tech City and the Digital Shoreditch Festival in order to better grow, support and strengthen both the Festival itself and the community it supports. Through building a platform for the growth of Digital Shoreditch, we can

encourage growth in the Tech City cluster, as well as drawing in other organisations from what Smith (2012) describes as a 'digital-creative corridor stretching from the West-End and Soho areas of London through Clerkenwell and on to Shoreditch.

We hypothesise that just as the area in and around Tech City provides a local and enthusiastic audience of the kind essential to the success of a festival such as Digital Shoreditch, so the Digital Shoreditch festival can facilitate the development and activities of a significant innovation network in the Tech City area, thereby meeting essential needs of companies in that area and enabling the local economy to thrive.

We focus in this report on the services that DS can provide to the Tech City community, on the assumption that if DS is able to meet the needs of that community, that will in turn generate significant interest and engagement in the festival from those in the Tech City community. The aim of this report is thus to suggest some approaches that DS could take to further supporting the needs of the developing network of companies in the Tech City area, and thus maintain and grow its own local audiences.

The report is structured as follows. In the next section, we briefly review some relevant literature. We then describe the methods that were used to collect and analyse data relating to Digital Shoreditch 2013, the festival that was held in May 2013, as well as the findings from the analysis of this data. Finally, we present a review of comparable events aimed at providing an overview of the networking opportunities and support provided by other events, from which future Digital Shoreditch festivals may draw inspiration.

We conclude with some recommendations made on the basis of the literature review, the findings from our empirical research, and the review of comparable events.

2 Background

In this section, we briefly discuss the concepts of innovation networks, creative clusters and creative climate in order to provide some context regarding the types of activity that the DS festival could be designed to support.

2.1 Innovation networks

Industrial clustering and innovation networks have been the subject of significant research over the last two decades, especially in relation to the recent surge in interest in open innovation. Chapain et al (2010) explain the concept of industrial clusters as 'geographical concentrations of firms from the same sector – or related sectors along the value chain – that collaborate and compete with one another, and have links with other local actors (such as universities)'. From the information in section 1.1, it is clear that the Tech City area could be seen as incorporating one or more innovation networks in tech and creative sectors.

Chapain et al (2010) note that the benefits of industrial clustering can degrade with distance – in other words, that 'geography and location matter for innovation'. Despite the fact that digital media and information technologies increasingly enable work to happen at a distance, workers, and their work, appear to 'remain bound to place through their social networks, or the set of people and organizations linked by social relationships (Castilla et al. 2000) which mediate entrée into organizations and industries. The focus on key people in the Tech City area can be seen, for example, in Tech City news' 'Tech City top 25', a list of 'the top 25 [people] who've made London's tech scene the great place it is' (Tech City News, 2013).

Even within the industries that create the technologies for distance work, the core business activities often cluster in relatively small geographic areas.' (Neff, 2005). These are the findings of a study of 'Silicon Alley', the home of New York's internet industry, by Gina Neff, in 2005. Neff argues that the tight colocation of companies working in the internet industry at that time allowed, and indeed facilitated, productive activity to occur outside of individual firms, through 'networking', or business-oriented meetings outside of work, and that 'being in the so-called right district means being where the action is. Within Silicon Alley, that action was located in after-hours networking events.' She states that 'social ties are *constitutive* of productive milieus within cultural industries', presents evidence of individuals using location (address, phone number etc) as an indicator of their seriousness and legitimacy in the industrial community, and argues that such location-based networking activities are especially important in innovative industries that rely on the rapid dissemination of information.

The concept of innovation networks is further explained by the InnoSupport guide for supporting innovations in SMEs (InnoSupport, 2013) as being 'organised around constant learning', and serving 'the **exchange of information, knowledge and resources**', in a **self-organising manner**, in other words, 'without centralised, detailed managerial guidance', and it is believed that future competitive advantage for many companies may depend on innovation networks that can help them 'solve problems and find new ideas for creating growth' (Knowledge@Wharton, 2007).

Benefits can be further enhanced when several industrial clusters are found in the same location, as is the case in the area around Tech City, as ideas and knowledge are able to "jump" across industries generating unexpected, often more radical innovation outcomes' than might otherwise be expected, creating 'urbanisation economies' (Chapain et al, 2010).

The collective benefits to firms that can arise as a result of geographical proximity are referred to by Chapain et al (2010) as 'agglomeration economies', and include access to **skilled staff** and **shared services**

as well as the opportunity to capture '**knowledge spillovers** that happen when creative businesses share new ideas with their commercial partners, or when creative professionals move into other sectors, bringing useful ideas, technologies and ways of working with them'. Ahrweiler and Keane (2013), also mention the importance of companies using innovation networks to **find the right partners** for future projects, and **access financial resources** when needed. In addition to this, the European InnoSupport guide describes how successful innovation networks allow individual partners to access **markets** and **application possibilities** more easily and cheaply than would otherwise have been possible (InnoSupport, 2013). The guide also discusses the need for **voluntary cooperation** amongst partners, perhaps based on a perception of mutual economic benefits, **stable long-term business relations**, **openness and an atmosphere of understanding** among network partners, **avoiding hierarchies** in the network and development of innovation relevant environmental links, including links with the relevant **political players**. Much of this is especially important for SMEs, such as those that make up a substantial proportion of Tech City companies.

2.2 Creative clusters

Creative clusters are business clusters that are made up of businesses in the creative industries, and can be argued to differ from conventional business clusters in that they may have social and cultural goals, as well as enterprise and growth objectives (Bagwell, 2008). De Propriis and Hypponen (2008) define a creative cluster as a place that brings together: 'A community of 'creative people' who share an interest in novelty but not necessarily in the same subject; A catalysing place where people, relationships, ideas and talents can spark each other; An environment that offers diversity, stimuli and freedom of expression' and 'A thick, open and ever-changing network of inter-personal exchanges that nurture individuals' uniqueness and identity.' (Chapain et al 2010). Foord (2013) discusses how creative networks are 'spatially sticky', due to the desire of creative workers to 'maintain continuity in their personal lives while negotiating complex and unpredictable work arrangements', but also notes the importance of openness, stating that 'sticky places must be porous allowing transient ideas and people to pass by generating an atmosphere of creative novelty'. A festival such as Digital Shoreditch provides an ideal opportunity for a local community of creative workers to meet and absorb new people and ideas in a way that stimulates creative thinking.

Chapain et al (2010) argue that the creative industries have great potential as active players in local innovation systems. They also note the strong relationship between digitization and innovation in the creative industries, with most firms 'devoting large numbers of their staff to technology intensive activities in order to benefit from this digital revolution'. This latter relationship may be of particular interest for Digital Shoreditch.

Finally, Chapain et al note that 'the mere existence of a creative agglomeration is not enough for the benefits from clustering to emerge. The other crucial ingredient is **connectivity** between firms within a cluster, with collaborators, business partners and sources of innovation elsewhere (both in the UK and overseas), and finally, with firms in other sectors that can act as clients, and as a source of new and unexpected ideas and knowledge. Thus, it can be argued that the Digital Shoreditch festival has a crucial role to play in realizing the potential benefits of creative clustering in the Tech City area.

2.3 Creative climate

The final concept, which we explore briefly, being of potential interest in seeking to promote creative and productive interactions between participants in the Digital Shoreditch festival, is that of 'creative climate'. According to Mumford and Gustafson (1988), 'a climate that facilitates innovation is one that provides a cognitive basis for idea generation and encourages the actions required for implementing these ideas while it demonstrates acceptance and recognition for the individual's creative efforts'. The climate for innovation in an organization is at least partially determined by its leaders, and thus we may argue that the climate for innovation at a festival such as Digital Shoreditch may be shaped by the organisers of the festival. Isaksen

and Akkermans (2011) identify nine dimensions of a creative climate. Those of particular potential relevance to DS are shown below:

- **Idea-time:** The amount of time people can, and do, use for elaborating new ideas
- **Playfulness/humour:** Good-natured joking and laughter and a relaxed atmosphere (lower stress) are indicators of higher levels of Playfulness and Humor.
- **Lack of conflict:** When Conflict is high, people engage in interpersonal warfare, slander and gossip, and even plot against each other.
- **Idea-support:** In a high Idea-Support situation people receive ideas and suggestions in an attentive and professional manner. People listen generously to each other.
- **Debate:** The occurrence and open disagreement between viewpoints, ideas, experiences, and knowledge. In the Debating situation many different voices and points of view are exchanged and encouraged.

2.4 Summary

In this section, we have introduced the concepts of innovation networks, creative clusters and creative climate and highlighted elements of each that are of particular relevance to Tech City and the Digital Shoreditch festival.

3 Digital Shoreditch 2013

3.1 Who presented at DS13?

While there was some curation of content for the DS13 festival, the majority of content was crowd-sourced, through a process in which speakers volunteered content that was then voted for by potential festival attendees, with only the most popular being included in the final festival programme.

Most speakers were UK based, with only 23 out of the 364 speakers being international – see fig 1.

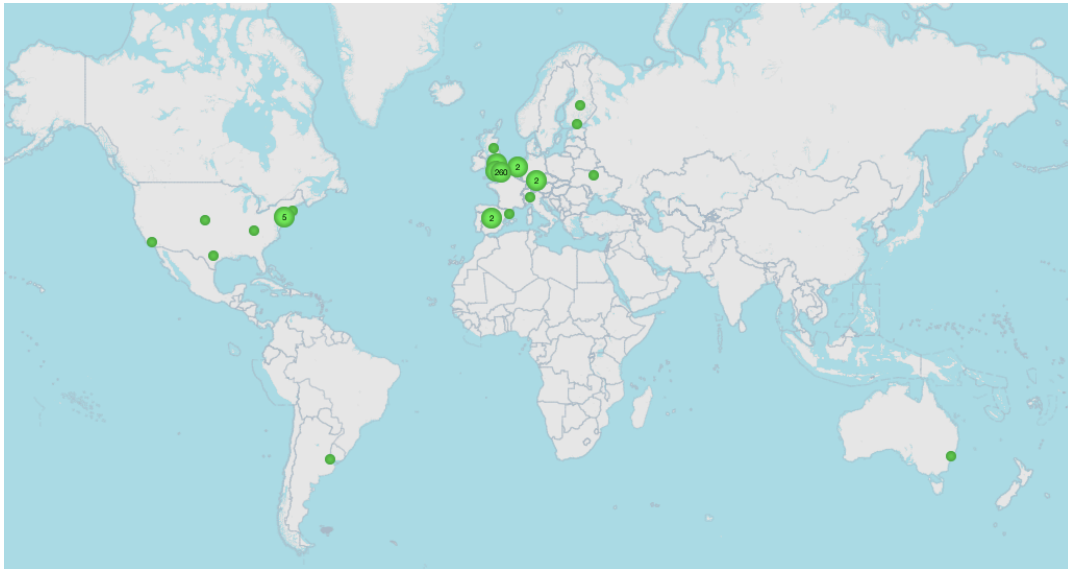


Figure 1: Origins of all DS13 speakers¹

Within the UK, most speakers came from the greater London area, with around 20 from elsewhere – fig 2.



Figure 2: Origins of UK-based DS13 speakers

¹ For figures 1 – 4: Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, Imagery © CloudMade

Most of the London-based speakers were from inner London – see fig 3.

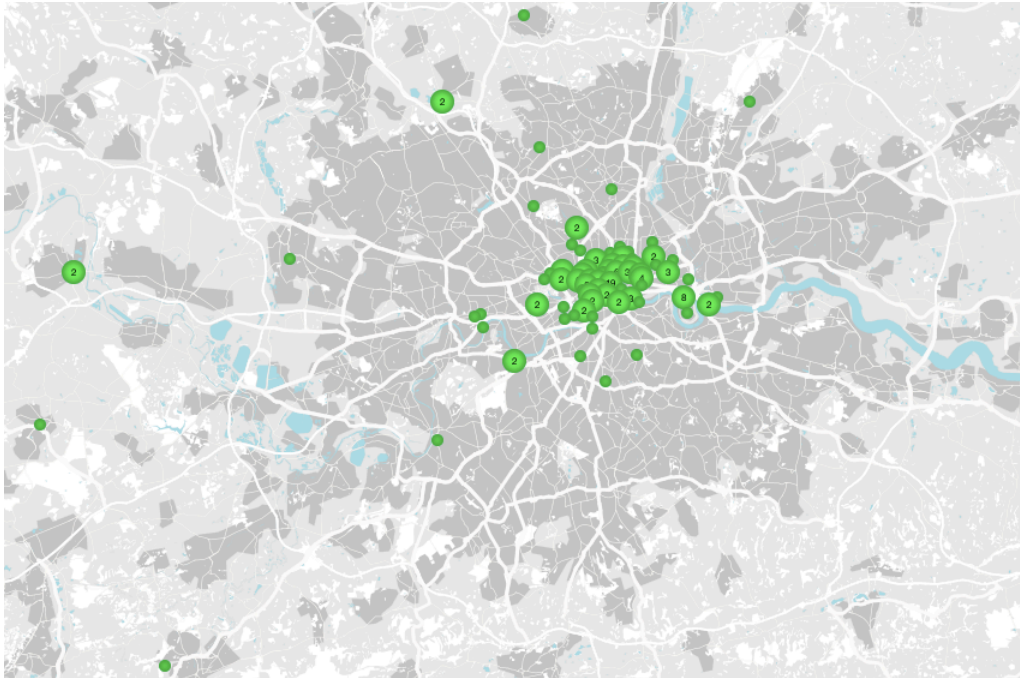


Figure 3: Origins of DS13 speakers from the greater London area

Finally, we can see from figure 4 that the Tech City area itself provided many of the speakers for DS13, but that a very significant proportion came from further west in the city. This perhaps corresponds to what Smith (2012) described as the ‘digital-creative corridor stretching from the West-End and Soho areas of London through Clerkenwell and on to Shoreditch’.

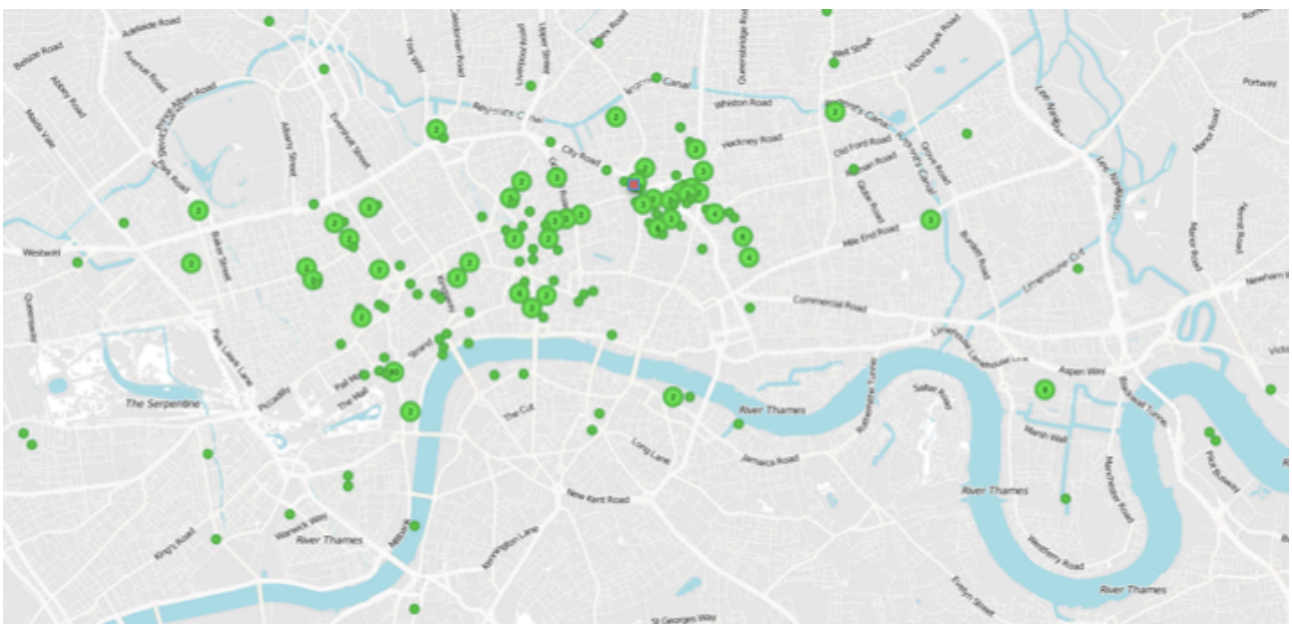


Figure 4: Origins of DS13 speakers in relation to Old Street roundabout (shown in red)

3.2 What were DS13 delegates looking for and offering?

All participants at DS13 were able to post cards on large pinboards supplied for the purpose at the back of the main hall throughout the festival (see figure 5). Cards were headed either 'Offering' or 'Looking for', and hence invited people to advertise what services or facilities they could offer to other delegates, or what services, facilities, skills etc they hoped to find from other delegates.



Figure 5: Offering and Looking for cards at DS13

The analysis of the cards resulting from the activity described above was carried out using a card sorting technique to establish common terminology and identify frequently occurring categories (Hudson, 2013). Cards were sorted into categories based on having similar themes and content. An iterative process was used throughout in order to refine the categories. The goal was to offer an overall picture of common themes across all of cards, as well as to explore possible patterns within and between the two overarching groups ("Offering" & "Looking For"). The card sorting exercise also attempted to look at how frequently location was mentioned, and what the relevance of location was within the two groups of cards, as well as within each groups' categories.

A total of 403 cards were looked at. There were **262** "Offering" cards, of which 227 could be categorised (35 uncategorised "Offering" cards) and **141** "Looking For" cards, of which 120 could be categorised (21 "Looking For" cards uncategorised). Thus 56 cards could not be categorised due to a number of factors, such as illegibility, ambiguous content, or belonging to a niche group/category that only appeared once and could not be grouped with any broader categories. Note also that duplicate cards were not counted.

Category groupings were based mainly on the industry type that was referenced on each card. Similar categories were combined when appropriate. The judgment as to whether an individual category was warranted was based on whether there was a) relevant detail that might be hidden if included in a broader group, or b) similar content and terminology with another group.

3.2.1 Industry types represented

Figure 6 below shows a chart of all of the categories generated and the corresponding totals for each, detailed by card type (“Offering” & “Looking For”).

Note that the “Business Development” category includes marketing, PR, and sales, as cards relating to these topics shared similar content and terminology (eg “improve your business”). The “Creative/Design” category includes various forms of design (i.e. graphic design, UX design, industrial design) as well as other creative services: the different types of creative and design industries did not warrant individual categories, as there were not enough of each to form coherent sub-categories. The “Developers” category includes those specialising in web, mobile and games development for similar reasons. Finally, while most services have their own category, there is a general “Other Services” category for cards that mentioned niche types of services, but did not appear in sufficient numbers to warrant a new category.

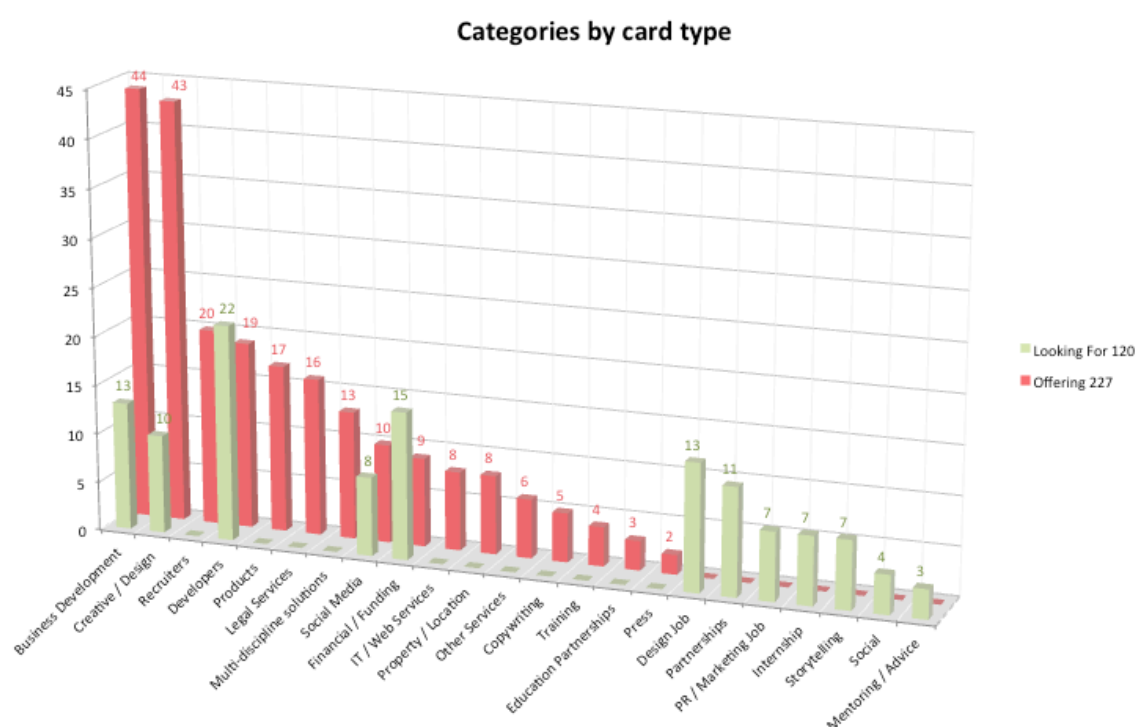


Figure 6: Industry types and activities appearing on the cards

3.2.2 Location

The location statistics are based on any mention of a location on the cards. Inferred locations as a result of website addresses or company names were not recorded: only if a location was specifically mentioned within the content of the card was the location noted. Examples of this included “UK agency”, “Looking for opportunities in Eastern Europe”, and “London based”. The international and UK categories were not further split into more detail as there were not sufficient groupings of other locations. In general, specific locations outside of London, but within the UK, did not appear on the cards. According to these criteria, there were 80 cards, out of 368, that referenced a location. Of these there were 51 “Offering”, and 29 “Looking For” cards that mentioned location. Across both groups of cards the location totals are as follows: London (30), UK (12) and international (38). Thus, of locations mentioned, international locations were

most frequently listed, with London close behind, and other locations in the UK being of markedly less interest in this context.

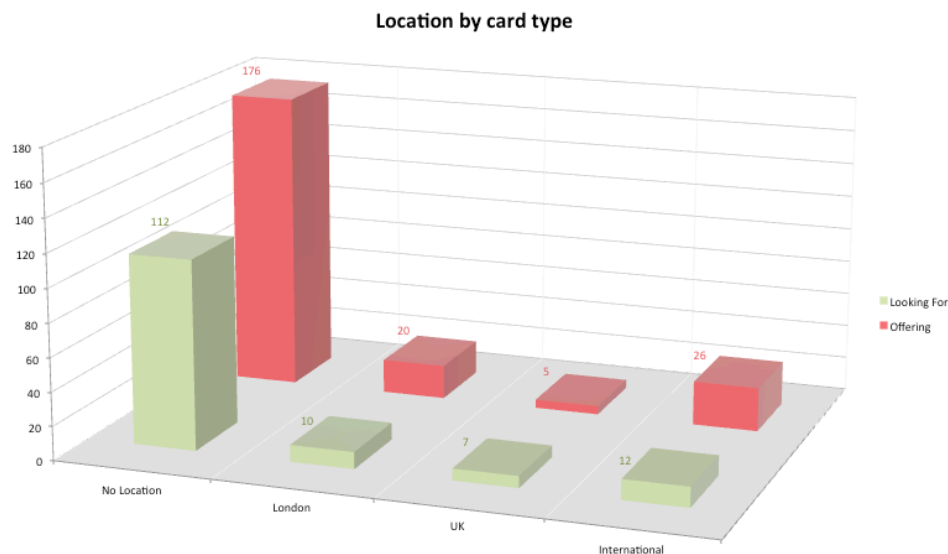


Figure 7: Locations appearing on the cards

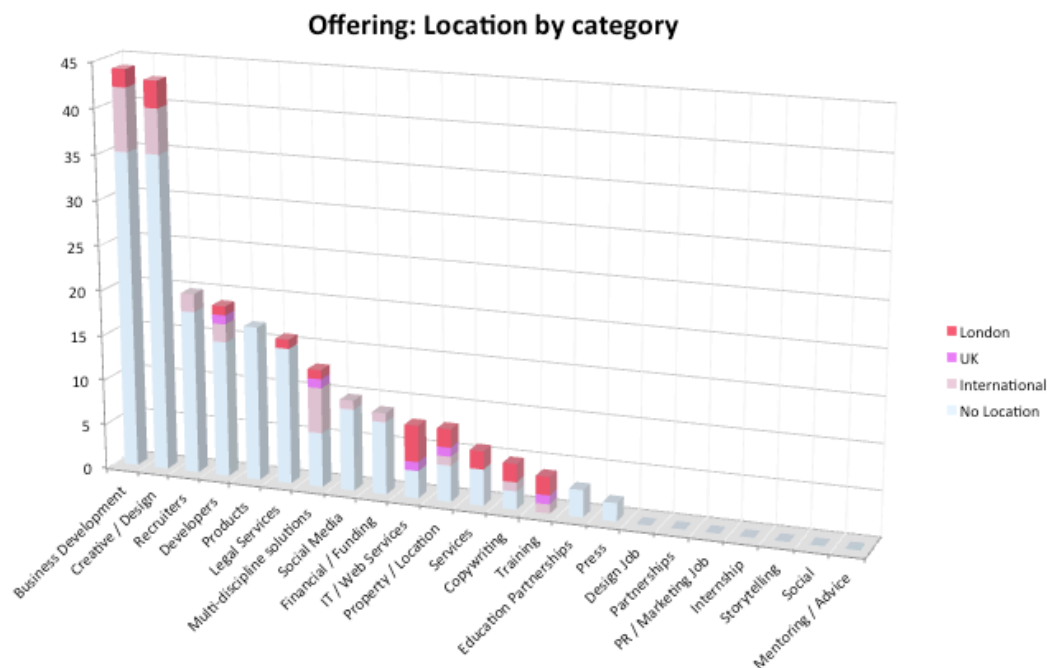


Figure 8: Offering: Industry type, activity and location

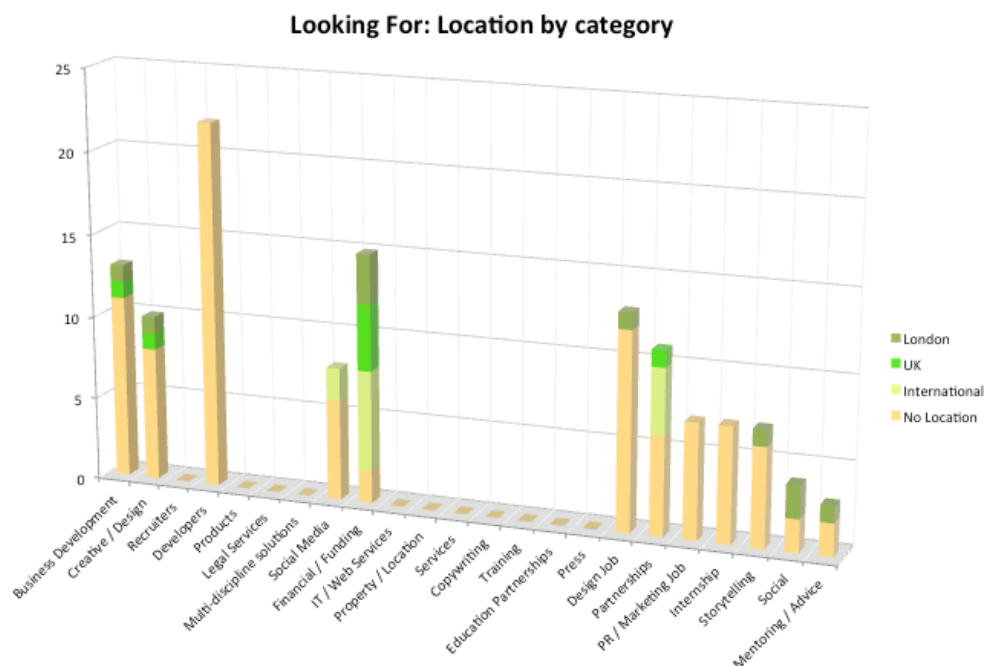


Figure 9: Looking for: Industry type, activity and location

3.2.3 Discussion

In general the “Offering” cards offered services, or expertise, whereas the “Looking For” cards covered both people looking for services or expertise, as well as people looking for jobs (or in other words, offering their services). This made the overall pattern of activity a little difficult to determine, although some possible patterns in the data did emerge as outlined below.

There were more cards “Looking for” “Developers” than there were “Offering” development skills, and no posts “Looking for” development jobs (see Figure 6), supporting recent suggestions that there is an overall shortage of development skills. For the “Business Development” and “Creative/Design” categories however, a different picture seems to emerge. A total of 20 posts were “Looking for” a “Design job” or a “PR/Marketing job”, and there were many more cards “Offering” “Business development” (31 more) and “Creative/Design” (33 more) than “Looking for” people in those areas. Overall, there seems to be an implication that developers are currently in demand, while there may be more designers and business development people than there are jobs within those categories. Other results were more or less as might be expected, for example with more cards “Looking For” “Financial/Funding” opportunities than “Offering” them, though it appears there may be an interesting gap in the market relating to storytelling, with 7 cards “Looking For” storytelling skills, but none offering.

The strongest link with location seemed to be in relation to people “Looking For” “Financial/Funding”, with all except 2 cards in this category being explicitly tied to a location. A relatively high proportion of the cards “Looking for” “Partnerships” had an international dimension, while London was mentioned specifically in 7 of the 12 categories of things people were “Looking For”, and 10 of the 16 categories of “Offering”. “Product” offerings were, perhaps not surprisingly, not related to location at all. More interestingly though, those “Looking for” developers did not explicitly mention location at all, perhaps suggesting a willingness to consider remote working in this community, or at least an assumed fluidity of movement amongst developers.

3.3 What did delegates think of DS13?

When leaving the main festival venue, attendees were invited to complete a one page form containing 9 questions designed to elicit their views on various aspects of the festival, that required a mixture of multi-choice and open-ended answers. A total of 174 forms were completed, by a range of different types of attendee, as shown in figure 10 below.

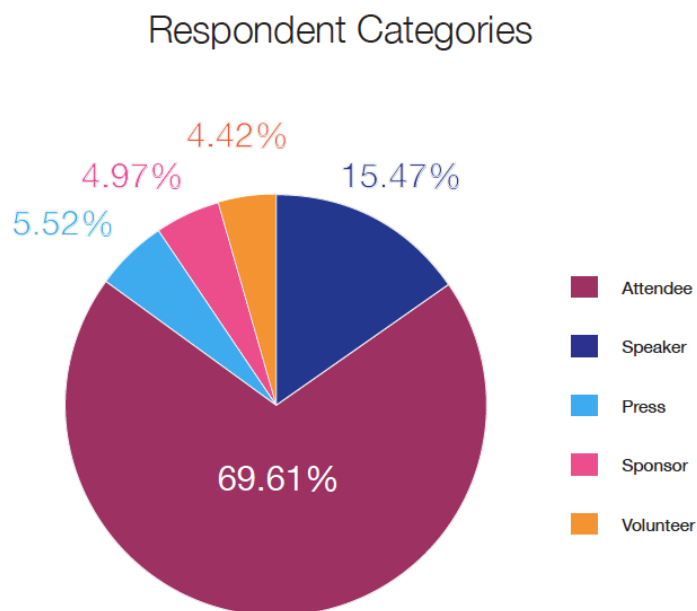


Figure 10: Feedback form respondents

3.3.1 Festival highlights

Responses to the question 'What was the best thing about today?' are shown in figure 11, below. These results were obtained by categorising open-ended responses.

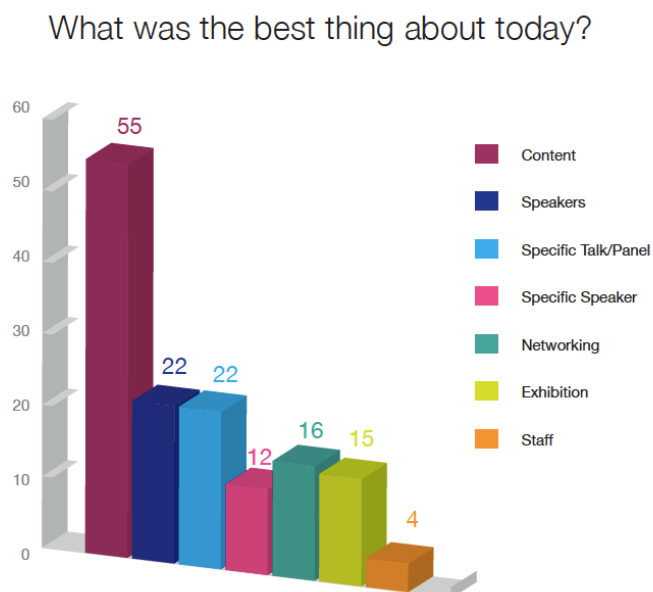


Figure 11: Responses to 'What was the best thing about today?'

By far the most popular response was 'content' (55 people). This is positive, given the need, identified above, for exchange of information, knowledge and resources in innovation networks. Speakers and specific talks and panels were named by 22 people each, and networking and exhibition were identified by 16 and 15 people respectively as being their best things.

3.3.2 Expectations and actual experiences of the festival

Responses to the questions 'Before you arrived, what did you expect to gain from coming?' and 'What did you actually gain from today?', which attendees were invited to answer using multi-choice tick boxes, are shown combined in figure 12.

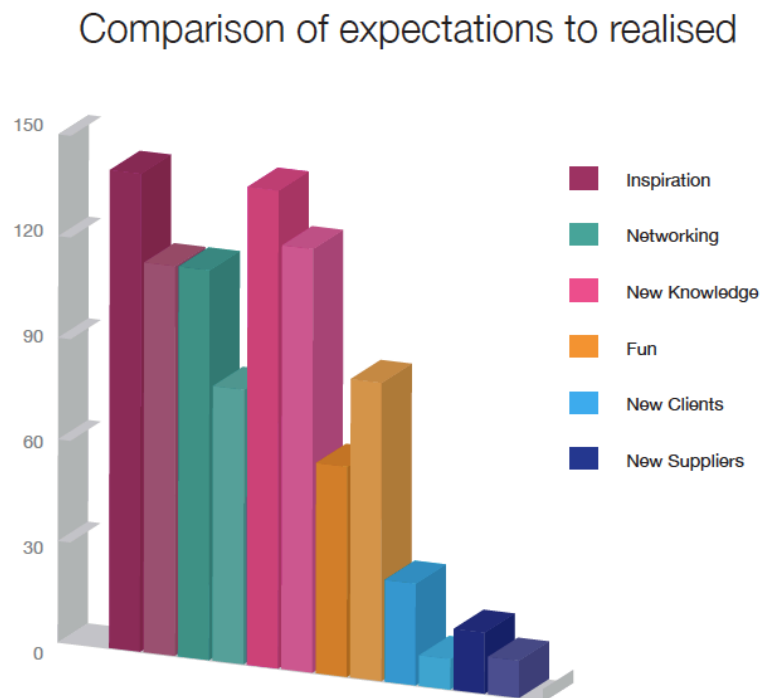


Figure 12: Comparison of attendees' expectations with their actual experiences

We can see that delegates to DS13 seemed to have more fun than they expected to (expected: 62, actual: 88), which is positive, given the association of playfulness and humour with a creative climate, as described above. However, in other areas, also identified as important, such as providing inspiration (expected: 141, actual: 115), supporting networking (expected: 115, actual: 81), and finding new knowledge (expected: 141, actual: 125) and clients (expected: 30, actual: 9), expectations were apparently not always met, with the biggest gap being in relation to networking.

3.3.3 Suggestions for improvement

Responses to the question 'What could be improved for Digital Shoreditch 2014?' are shown in figure 13, below. These results were obtained by categorising open-ended responses.

The data in figure 12 confirm findings reported above and suggest that the main focus for improvements in 2014 should perhaps be the provision of better facilities for networking, while other more operational issues, in relation to availability of information and scheduling as well as provision of wifi and other venue improvements should also be addressed.

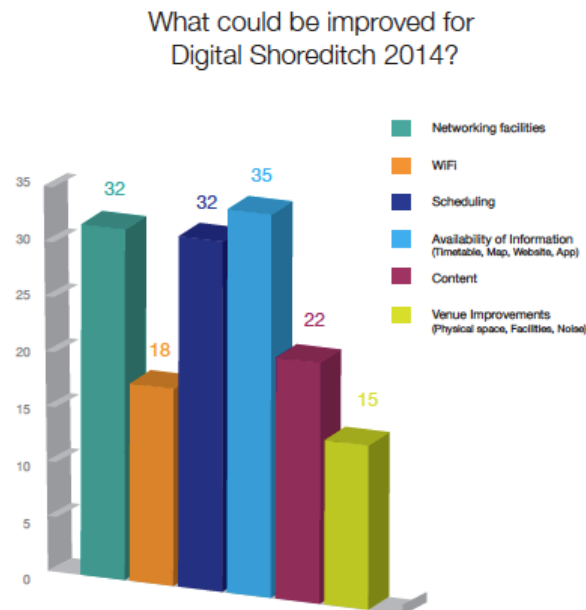


Figure 13: Suggested areas for improvement for Digital Shoreditch 2014

3.3.4 Location

Responses to the question 'Do you think the Festival would work as well, or better, if it were held in another location?' are shown in figure 14.

Interestingly, just over half the respondents seemed to feel that the success of the festival does not depend on where it is held, though there may have been an underlying assumption that it would always be held somewhere in Shoreditch. Judging from the open-ended comments that accompanied this question, the 9.2% of respondents who felt the festival would definitely be better if held elsewhere were mainly referring to the venue, and the kind of areas for improvement identified above, with some suggestions that a bigger and more modern building would be more appropriate, and concerns over the availability of wifi. The 40% of respondents who felt that next year's festival would definitely work best in the same location, cited Shoreditch as a 'Good digital location', 'where the start-ups are', and the venue as having 'great character'.

Do you think the Festival would work as well, or better, if it were held in another location?

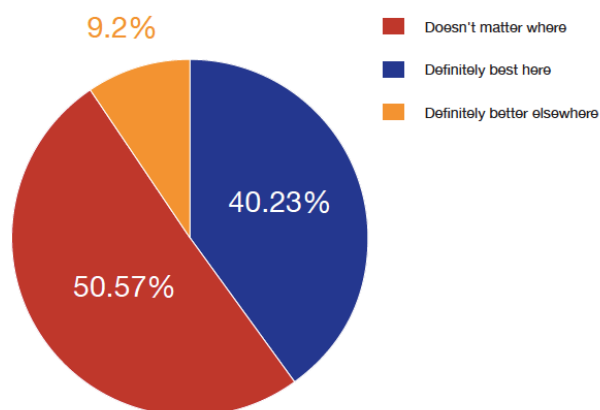


Figure 14: Preferences on festival location



3.4 Further feedback from DS13 delegates

A total of 15 semi-structured interviews, each lasting around 5 minutes, were conducted during the festival, with a variety of interviewees, including a speaker, a panel chair, a journalist and a range of attendees.

3.4.1 Purpose of attending

For attendees who were not specifically involved in presenting or co-ordinating activities at the festival, the range of reasons for attending confirmed those identified from the literature in innovation networks, and included making **contacts**: 'Trying to make some contacts' (P2); **seeking information**: 'I'm here to learn about raising finances' (P5), and 'I'm here to listen the presentations and also get a feel for where we are in terms of startups in the UK right now and certainly digital startups' (P6); and **seeking inspiration**: 'I've attending this conference because I run a startup and I'm looking for information and inspiration' (P8) and 'I'm just getting a few ideas about starting a business' (P12).

3.4.2 Support for networking

Interviewees raised several issues in relation to networking. As suggested by the literature, networking is an important issue for those working in areas such as Tech City, and events such as the Digital Shoreditch festival could therefore play an extremely important role in facilitating the kind of social networking described by Neff (2005) and all its accompanying benefits. Unfortunately, analysis of the feedback forms, as described above, suggests that this was an area where a proportion of delegates expected more from DS13. However, a number of participants made useful suggestions during interviews regarding possible improvements to support for networking in future years.

First, it was suggested that it would be useful to schedule in more **time** for networking activities between talks. One participant mentioned his perception that 'you don't really get a chance to chat because you just want to sit in and listen' (P8).

Related to this, a number of participants talked about how useful it would be to have more **space** dedicated specifically to networking activity, including space where sensitive issues such as finance could be discussed: 'have an area where people can go off and discuss sensitive matters like getting funding' (P6). The space at the back of the main hall was appreciated eg 'The space at the back has been kind of useful.' (P10), but it was mentioned several times that more would be useful eg 'I think it would be good to have some sort of break out area' (P4); 'I think it would be good to have more of a breakout space. I think that's probably the thing that's missing.' (P1); and 'The one thing you that need, I haven't found a breakout area, so... And last year you had a really good breakout area in Hackney House, and that was really really useful. People here would be making calls. So I went to a coffee shop to make a call' (P4).

Finally, a number of interviewees talked about the need for more **information** about fellow delegates that would enable them to get in touch with people they wanted to meet. One interviewee suggested that it would have been very helpful to have contact details such as Twitter accounts for all speakers available in advance of the event via the DS schedule on the website, and then the programme and app, whereas another was interested to have a searchable digital repository of contact details for all delegates: 'Yeah, that might have been really useful, so you know in advance I could have approached some companies which might have been I wanted to speak to.' (P11). Finally, in relation to the paper postcards that were used to exchange contact details on the pinboards at the back of the hall (see below), one interviewee expressed his frustration as follows: 'I just want to do mobile apps, I'm a strategist, right? I can't be bothered to like, I have to do this...' (P15), while another suggested that a digital version of such cards,

which could be made available before the event, would enable searching and therefore make the process of finding much needed contacts more efficient.

3.4.3 Other suggestions for improvement

In addition to suggestions regarding networking, a number of quite specific suggestions were made regarding operational-level improvements that could be made for future festivals. These related to **signposting** 'I think the signposting isn't as good. I think I got a little bit lost.' (P2); availability of information such as **timings** for specific talks 'its bizarre at the entrance, having a screen, with all this cool stuff on it, but no times?' (P13); **wifi** 'I can't use the Wifi with my mac, but my phone is fine. But the mac doesn't work at all. So actually, ironically, all the technology stuff doesn't work' (P12) and the festival **app** 'I sort of looked at it. ... I went on the mobile website and some of the times aren't there. Its confusing when the talks are. That would be a criticism.' (P5).

3.4.4 Location and venue

Responses to the **location** of the festival in Shoreditch were almost uniformly positive: 'The location is perfect. Very central, easy to find, easy to get to' (P1), 'Good, I think it should be around here. Makes sense. Shoreditch is good. Everything else is here.' (P4), 'Yeah, its perfect. Perfect due to the fact that its about Tech City and we're right in the heart of it. In the Shoreditch town hall.' (P7). A number of interviewees cited the time and cost of travel as being potentially off-putting if the festival were to move to another location: 'We wouldn't go. I don't think we have time to travel around. It's very ok to take a day off. It doesn't cost us to come here. Just a tube. This is in zone 1, we work in zone 2, so it's like... If we had to go up to Manchester, we probably wouldn't...' (P2); 'It would be tough for people to get to and I think the numbers would go down.' (P7) and 'Brighton? No one would go. You'd lose like 90% of the people. No one will go. It has to be London for sure.' (P12). There was also evidence of emotional attachment to the location: 'Outside of London!? There is somewhere outside of London? I don't think so. NO. Sorry, London is the center of the world. You ain't going outside of London. No. No.' (P13).

There was some positive feedback regarding the **venue** of Shoreditch Town Hall: 'Actually its quite fun.' (P13); 'It's ... a very attractive building.' (P1); and 'I think its good. Its well set up with all the different rooms, very spacious' (P7). However, some feedback was more mixed: 'Well I think the building itself is cool, but I don't think that its necessarily that good for a conference like this. Because its very crowded...' (P16); 'It's big, but sometimes its too cramped.' (P2); and 'It's not perfect, because its not purpose built for it.' (P3).

3.5 Summary

The literature briefly reviewed in section 2 suggests that, in as much as the Tech City area incorporates a number of overlapping innovation networks and creative clusters, it can benefit from support for networking activities of various kinds, especially those that bring together and interconnect individuals from different industries and sectors. Our analysis of data from the DS13 festival reveals that the majority of speakers came from either the Tech City area itself or elsewhere in central London, which suggests that the Digital Shoreditch festival is well-placed to play an important role in supporting networking in the Tech City area. Indeed, delegates at the 2013 festival themselves suggested a number of ways in which they would like to see networking better supported at next year's festival.

There is strong support for continuing to locate the Digital Shoreditch festival in Shoreditch, in the heart of the Tech City community. The festival is already playing an important role in supporting many of the activities identified as important in the development of innovation networks, including the search for

inspiration; the exchange of information, knowledge and resources, including shared services; access to appropriate finance; and links with key political players. Significantly, it is doing this for companies working in a range of different sectors, including those in the creative industries that have been identified as potentially very important in boosting the innovation potential of local innovation networks.

The existing Digital Shoreditch festival climate fits well with those aspects of climate identified as being appropriate to fostering innovation, and developing productive innovation networks. The festival is to a large extent self-organising (through the crowd-sourcing of much of its content), participation is voluntary, and there is a feeling of openness and apparent lack of hierarchy, as well as an underlying spirit of playfulness.

Therefore, the main focus in the rest of this report will be on identifying possible ways in which support for networking could be further enhanced at future festivals in order, potentially, to both increase interest and engagement with the DS festival and boost the benefits to the local economy. Suggested areas for consideration here include:

- scheduling more **time** into the festival programme for networking rather than presentation activities;
- allocating more physical **spaces** for networking activity of different kinds, ranging from free-ranging contacts with new individuals to more sensitive one-one discussions about finance;
- providing **information** in the form of an open, searchable, digital repository of contact details for all festival attendees, including speakers, that could open before the event to enable planned interactions during the festival, and persist after the event to enable follow-up contacts

This would enable other key innovation network activities including gaining access to appropriately skilled staff and finding business partners, as well as finding potential clients, markets and applications for products. In the following section, we review a range of other similar events, both in the UK and abroad, with the aim of identifying a number of possible ways in which each of these issues may be tackled.

4 Review of comparable events

4.1 Overview of events

This section presents the results of a review of festivals and events that serve other creative clusters and innovation networks, both in the UK, and in other countries around the world, in a way similar to that in which the Digital Shoreditch festival supports the Tech City community. It focuses in particular on the networking opportunities and support provided by other events, from which future Digital Shoreditch festivals may draw inspiration.

The comparator events were chosen to highlight best practice for Digital Shoreditch based on the similarity of the events to the DS festival in terms of their aims, the locations in which they are based and the audiences at which they are directed. Thus, the events considered are all based in locations characterised by the presence of tech and/or creative industries and, often, high proportions of start-ups, such as Cambridge's 'Silicon Fen' and New York's internet industry cluster, termed 'Silicon Alley' (Neff, 2005), as well as the original Silicon Valley. An overview of these events is provided in Table 1. Approaches to networking support at these events vary, and are summarized below.

4.2 Support for Networking

4.2.1 Time for networking

Considering first the issue of time for networking activities, it is clear that networking can be facilitated by organising particular kinds of **activity** as part of an event's schedule. This can be related to **pitching business ideas**, as, for example, in the LeWeb, NEXT Berlin, techweek and startupfest events, where startups compete to be able to pitch their ideas either from the main stage, or to a judging panel comprised of select venture capitalists and industry innovators; or to jointly **attempting to solve a pressing societal issue**, as, for example, in Campus Party events, where delegates seek out partners with particular skills to work with on addressing the event's challenges.

Some other specific and more unusual approaches include:

- **Mentor Sessions**, included as a new addition for the 2012 SXSW event to allow SXSW registrants to sign up with a well-established industry professional for a short one-on-one meeting to discuss career-related advice; and
- **Road Trips**, encouraged by Startupfest, in which groups from some way away from where the event is being held rent buses, trains and planes to travel to the event together, with the journeys including planned events such as pitching clinics, workshops and one-to-one mentoring sessions.

4.2.2 Space for networking

In relation to space for networking, one commonly used approach to the support of networking between delegates of different kinds is to incorporate an **exhibition space** of some kind into an event. This can be used simply as a place for delegates of different kinds to **meet** and talk in a way that is not possible during talks and presentations. For example, Startupfest provides a dedicated 'Tent Expo' aimed at facilitating meetings between investors, co-founders and media. Such a space can take on the feel of a **trade show**: for example in the NExT event, the 'Expo' will showcase over 120 companies building innovative products, services and technologies, with the aim of bringing a range of creative industries 'under one roof to meet, collaborate, bounce ideas and converge technologies', and in the Startupfest event, startups will be able to

Event	Aims and audience*	Location
RE.WORK https://www.re-work.co/	RE.WORK 'combines entrepreneurship, technology and science to solve some of the world's greatest challenges using emerging technology'. The event showcases the opportunities of exponentially accelerating technologies and their impact on business and society.	London, UK also Berlin, Dublin, San Francisco
LeWeb http://leweb.co	An international conference aimed at start-ups and all web entrepreneurs. Aims to support networking between leaders, venture capitalists, and visionary speakers of the web ecosystem.	London, UK Paris, France
Cambridge Wireless http://www.cambridgewireless.co.uk/futureofwireless/	The mission of Cambridge Wireless is to establish itself as 'the world's leading technology community through promoting innovation in the development and application of wireless, mobile, Internet, software and related technologies'. The annual international conference aims to do this by bringing together a diverse set of hi-tech companies from across the world through high quality networking events and by actively supporting the CW SIG Champion community in tracking emerging technology and market trends.	Cambridge, UK
NEXT Berlin http://nextberlin.eu/	NEXT Berlin is a meeting place for the European digital industry. At the conference, 'marketing decision-makers and business developers meet technical experts and creative minds to discuss what will be important in the next 12 months.'	Berlin, Germany
Startupfest http://startupfestival.com/	The International Startup Festival is an event on the business of startups that brings together 'aspiring founders, groundbreaking innovators and veteran entrepreneurs from around the world to share thoughts, do business and have a lot of fun'.	Montreal, Canada
NXNE http://nxne.com/	NXNE is a ten day festival of Music, Film, Interactive, Comedy, and Art. NXNE Interactive hosts five days of presentations, panels, and workshops focused on the creative applications of digital interactive media.	Toronto, Canada
SXSW http://sxsw.com/	SXSW's original goal was to create an event that would act as a tool for creative people and the companies they work with to develop their careers, to bring together people from a wide area to meet and share ideas. That continues to be the goal today whether it is music, film or interactive technologies.	Austin, USA
Wisdom 2.0 http://www.wisdom2summit.com/	Wisdom 2.0 'addresses the great challenge of our age: to not only live connected to one another through technology, but to do so in ways that are beneficial to our own well-being, effective in our work, and useful to the world.'	San Francisco, USA
Northside/NExT http://northsidefestival.com/	NExT (Northside Entrepreneurship and Technology) continues the Northside tradition of having the best entrepreneurs and technologists speak about rapid changes to the world and the role of makers, technologists, and innovators. NExT aims to 'bring the ever-evolving relationships between media, technology, creators and consumers under one roof... to meet, collaborate, bounce ideas and converge technologies.'	New York, USA
C2SV http://c2sv.com/	C2SV aims to showcase 'independent, original performers and ... Silicon Valley technology on its own turf'. Attendees are invited to 'experience our music scene, enjoy our weather, taste our food and celebrate the digital culture explosion'.	Silicon Valley, USA
Campus Party http://www.campus-party.org/	Campus Party is 'an annual week long, 24-hours-a-day technology festival where thousands of "campuseros" (hackers, developers, gamers and geeks) equipped with laptops camp on-site and immerse themselves in a truly unique environment.' The event aims to 'create the largest geek innovation community on the planet and encourage them to use their talent and expertise to create a better world through technology'.	Various
techweek http://techweek.com/	'Techweek's mission is to showcase, celebrate and enable emerging innovation ecosystems in the great cities of America....In addition, Techweek prides itself on having a mixture of both startups, growth companies and established large businesses. This mixture creates a self-reinforcing cycle of innovation.'	Various USA, including Miami, Detroit, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles

Table 1: Overview of events comparable to the Digital Shoreditch festival

* Much of the text shown here is taken directly from the relevant events' websites.

showcase their offerings at a 'Demo Table' in the main exhibition space. Some events also incorporate elements of a **careers fair** in their exhibition component: for example the Campus Party Market Place has several exhibition stands that are free to visit where Partners are highlighting their business, their services and any available careers. Here delegates can find out more about what the companies can offer and any jobs that are open and ready to be applied for. The Market Place also has several seminar rooms where the Market Place Partners address the digital recruitment issues of the day, with an online microsite constantly being updated with new information on these.

Other space-based facilities provided by events to facilitate networking include dedicated spaces both for general networking and for smaller meetings, as at the Cambridge Wireless conference, and for planning a day's activities with like-minded delegates, as in the SXSW 'Home Rooms', where both first-timer attendees and more experienced delegates can start each day of the festival in a session that is 'part information, part meet-up' by gaining insight and guidance from Home Room Leaders about the day's schedule and special events, while they network.

4.2.3 Information for networking

In relation to information, it is clear that most events facilitate the sharing of digital **information about speakers**, to enable delegates to connect with them. For example, LeWeb, techweek and Wisdom 2.0 events provide photos and short biographies of speakers. RE.WORK and Startupfest provide interactive walls of speaker photos that link to speakers' Twitter profiles, Northside provides links from speakers photos to their websites, NEXT Berlin provides a little more information about each speaker, including links to all social media profiles, and C2SV links speakers photos to their websites and brief biographies as well as their slot on the event schedule. LeWeb also uses the Google+ platform to arrange Hangouts with event speakers directly after their talks, to enable delegates to connect and ask questions.

SXSW, C2SV, LeWeb and Cambridge Wireless aim to facilitate **connections between delegates**, rather than just with speakers. In 2013, the Cambridge Wireless conference did this by employing Blendology's physical 'tap to connect' badges, which enabled delegates simply to tap each other's badges in order to exchange details for follow up after the event. LeWeb provided a conference app, including a dedicated networking tool to enable attendees to find, communicate and set up one-to-one meetings with other attendees by using their Twitter profiles and websites. SXSW provided the online SXSocial platform, to allow SXSW registrants to create their own profiles, and search for and message other conference attendees before, during and after the event by searching other profiles, interest-based tags, and links with popular social media platforms (see below). Finally, C2SV provided a similar platform, allowing delegates to list themselves in the directory of attendees, find friends from Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Foursquare, as well as customising an event schedule that could be printed or viewed on a mobile device.

All events also use a variety of **social networking** platforms to promote both their own activities, and the networking of event delegates. Table 2 shows the social networking tools currently employed by each of the events reviewed. From this it is clear that Twitter and Facebook are currently by far the most popular tools with Google+ and LinkedIn being next most popular tools to enable networking amongst delegates. It is also clear that most events use a number (between 2 and 8) of different platforms to become and stay connected with their delegates, as well as helping delegates to connect with each other.

	Twitter	Facebook	Google+	LinkedIn	Instagram	Pinterest	Lanyrd	Tumblr	Vimeo	YouTube	E-newsletter \maillist	Blog	RSS feed
RE.WORK	■	■		■		■	■			■	■	■	
LeWeb	■	■	■					■		■	■	■	
Cambridge Wireless	■			■									
NEXT Berlin	■	■	■							■	■	■	■
Startupfest	■	■						■					
NXNE	■	■											
SXSW	■	■	■		■	■			■				■
Wisdom 2.0	■	■						■	■		■		
Northside/ NExT	■	■			■				■		■	■	
C2SV	■	■	■	■	■						■		
Campus Party	■	■	■	■		■				■		■	
techweek	■	■	■	■		■						■	

Table 2: Social media channels used to support networking around events

4.2.4 Additional events

Finally, one of the most common approaches to maintaining networks that are established or developed during annual festivals or events is to run **additional events** through the course of the year. Examples of this include:

- Year round events run by the Cambridge Wireless Special Interest Groups (SIGs) that provide members in the Cambridge area with a forum to share the latest technological and market developments, debate hot topics, promote their organisations, network with renowned experts as well as recruit highly skilled individuals;
- Wisdom 2.0 events including unconferences, lunches and talks;
- Techweek events in different cities across the USA in March, May, June and September; and
- RE.WORK events with different foci in London, Berlin and San Francisco during June, September, November and December, 2014.

4.3 Summary

Building on both the literature reviewed in section 2, which pointed to the importance of networking activity in developing innovation networks and creative clusters, and research done with delegates to DS13, which highlighted a desire for more time, space and information to support networking activity, this section has reviewed the work of 12 other events in locations similar to Tech City to identify a range of possible approaches to supporting networking activity that could be adopted by future Digital Shoreditch festivals.

In relation to time for networking, it was suggested that the festival programme could include more time for:

- pitching of business ideas by startups;
- developing solutions to pressing societal challenges in hackathons, maker days or sandpits;
- mentoring sessions between more and less experienced entrepreneurs and innovators; or even
- by co-ordinating groups of delegates travelling to the festival together.

In relation to space for networking, it was suggested that the festival could:

- provide a general break-out area with space for calls and coffees;
- include an exhibition space aimed at facilitating meetings between delegates;
- incorporate elements of a trade show, with demo tables for startups;
- incorporate elements of a careers fair, with breakout events on recruitment;
- provide some small spaces for private meetings; and maybe even
- provide general information spaces where delegates can come at the start of each day.

Regarding information that can support networking, suggestions were that the festival could:

- provide more comprehensive information about speakers at the event;
- provide opportunities for direct digital interaction with speakers immediately after their talks;
- provide a dedicated platform for interaction between festival delegates and speakers before, during and after the event;
- follow and integrate with current trends in the use of social networking platforms.

Finally, it was suggested that a range of different types of additional events run throughout the year could be used to sustain and further develop the kind of networks that may be fostered during the festival itself.

5 Future directions

This report has highlighted the huge opportunity that exists for a mutually beneficial relationship between the Digital Shoreditch festival and the Tech City community in which it is based.

The festival already does an excellent job of bringing together speakers and delegates from the exciting range of industries and sectors that are represented in the area around Tech City, thus enabling some of the greatest benefits of innovation networks, as ideas jump across industries, generating radical innovation, as described in section 2. The festival already maintains an excellent climate for creativity and innovation. Both of these contributions should of course be maintained in future festivals.

On the basis of feedback from delegates to the DS13 festival, the report has identified some opportunities for improvement at an operational level, which can be incorporated into future festivals. However, the main contribution has been to identify a range of possible approaches that could be adopted by future DS festivals to further support networking between speakers and delegates at the event. These approaches have been described and summarised in outline in the previous section.

It seems likely that many of the above recommendations could be relevant to other events supporting innovation networks and creative clusters in other locations, though some suggestions (such as the pitching of business ideas) would be less appropriate in locations with smaller numbers of startups, and others (such as the provision of a specialised digital platform to support the exchange of contact information) would be less appropriate to networks and clusters for whom technology was not a particular focus. Further research would be needed to investigate these issues.



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