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EVIDENCE BRIEF
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EVIDENCE BRIEF · INDUSTRY EVENTS AND MARKETS

Permanent Venues Shape Fields

Does place matter for field-configuring events?

Lisbon hosted 188 rotating association meetings in 2025, more than any other city, and destinations compete hard for events. Studies of a Montreal arts venue, Barcelona's Sónar festival, design fairs and a video-mapping scene show that the place behind an event shapes the field as much as the event itself.

By Eventamin · How we work 12 November 2026 Canada, Spain, Italy, France, Europe

5 studies · 1 industry source

event venues | host cities | field-configuring places | creative industries | Sónar festival | Society for Arts and Technology | design fairs | Salone del Mobile | festival export | eventful cities

Also in Destinations and impact

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KEY FINDING

Permanent venues and host cities shape fields alongside the events they host: a Montreal arts center incubated a projection-mapping industry, Barcelona's Sónar became the hub of a network of 24 cities, and design fairs build their host city's profile. A venue works best when it hosts recurring events and connects groups that rarely meet.

Five studies, 2011–2024; industry data 2026

Key findings

- **A venue can grow an industry.** Montreal's Society for Arts and Technology hosted, created and incubated the events and firms of projection mapping, a field that now counts more than 150 studios and 188 million Canadian dollars in annual turnover in Canada[1].
- **Venues work in phases.** The venue first built a community of around 350 members, then catalyzed innovation with almost 200 activities a year, and from 2011 locked the field in around its 360-degree dome[1].
- **A festival can become a network hub.** Barcelona's Sónar, founded in 1994, was exported to 24 cities and returned to five of them, turning the festival brand into an asset alongside its artists[2].
- **Designers go to fairs to be seen.** Among 70 designers surveyed, showing products and making their name known worldwide ranked first and second; building networks ranked seventh[3].
- **Boundary venues connect scenes.** In Nantes, the video-mapping community split into three groups that shared few spaces; one venue and one event bridged them[4].

FOR THE MARKET

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Market outcomes

What the studies mean for each part of the industry.

Venues & destinations	A permanent venue that hosts recurring events, residencies and a research lab can incubate a whole industry; a signature facility such as a dome or a dedicated hall locks the field to the venue, but can leave part of the community behind.
Organisers & associations	Recurring events in one city build trust and local scenes more than one-off editions; exporting a festival works through local partners and short brand appearances rather than full clones.
Investors & advisers	Public money for a signature facility, such as Montreal's 360-degree dome, can anchor an industry in a city for more than a decade; design fairs and festivals feed a city's economic profile and brand only when they connect with the local industry.

Place and the events industry

Cities compete hard to host events. In 2025, ICCA counted 12,438 rotating association meetings worldwide, with the United States the top country and Lisbon the top city with 188 meetings[5]. Studies of a Montreal venue, a Barcelona festival, design fairs and a creative community in Nantes show that the place behind an event can shape an industry as much as the event itself.

Research on such events long treated place as a mere location; economic geographers argue that events structure fields through proximity, power and the spaces they create[6].

A venue that grew an industry: Montreal's SAT

The Society for Arts and Technology in Montreal shaped the projection-mapping field over almost three decades[1]. Between 1996 and 2002 it turned scattered video artists into a community of around 350 members a year, and the electronic music festival Mutek and the studio Moment Factory were founded around it[1].

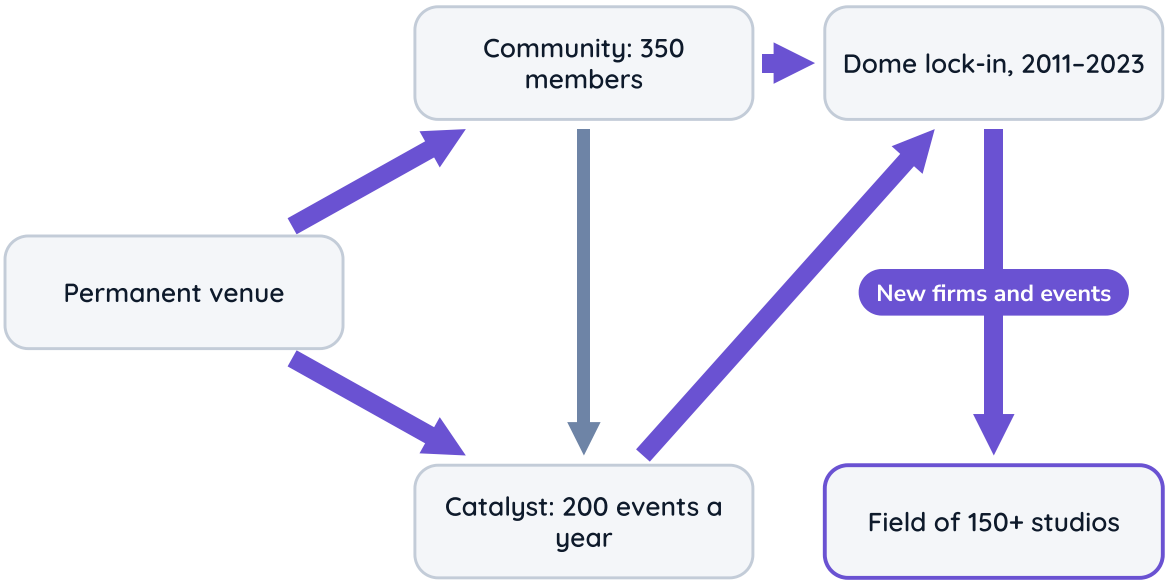
From 2003, in Montreal's entertainment district, it acted mainly as a catalyst for innovation, with a research lab of more than ten employees and almost 200 small-scale activities a year drawing around 6,500 members and 60,000 spectators[1]. In 2011 a publicly funded 360-degree dome, the Satosphere, locked the field in around immersive projection and spawned new firms and events[1]. The field now counts more than 150 studios with five to 400 employees and annual turnover of 188 million Canadian dollars in Canada[1].

How the Society for Arts and Technology in Montreal shaped the projection-mapping field, 1996 to 2023

Main roles of the venue by phase; line width shows the main route, not a measured value.

Main route Other links

Arrow width marks the main route, not a measured value · dashed: weak or no link



Source: Capron & Delacour · Release date: 2024 · Region: Canada (Montreal) · Interviews: 29 · Classification: Eventamin

A festival as a network hub: Sónar

Sónar, Barcelona's festival of electronic music and digital creativity, was founded in 1994, soon after the 1992 Olympics left a cultural vacuum in the city[2]. Its audience and accredited professionals became international from its second or third edition[2].

From 2002, the organizer took the festival abroad, first to London, Hamburg and Tokyo, and realized it had built a brand with power alongside its artists[2]. Sónar was exported to 24 cities and returned to five of them, either as a short promotional preview or as a larger city version, and local partners and brief brand

appearances proved the main success factors[2]. Recurring editions built trust and open exchange more than one-off events[2].

CITY	EDITIONS	FORMAT
London	2002–2005, 2009–2012[2]	Closest to the Barcelona format[2]
Hamburg	2002–2006[2]	Closest to the Barcelona format[2]
Tokyo	2002, 2004, 2006, 2011–2013[2]	Closest to the Barcelona format[2]
São Paulo	2004, 2012[2]	Regular collaboration, not fully successful; 2013 canceled[2]
Seoul	2006[2]	Exhibition with performances[2]
Chicago	2010, 2012[2]	Regular collaboration, not fully successful[2]
Cape Town	2012[2]	Short preview; 2013 canceled[2]

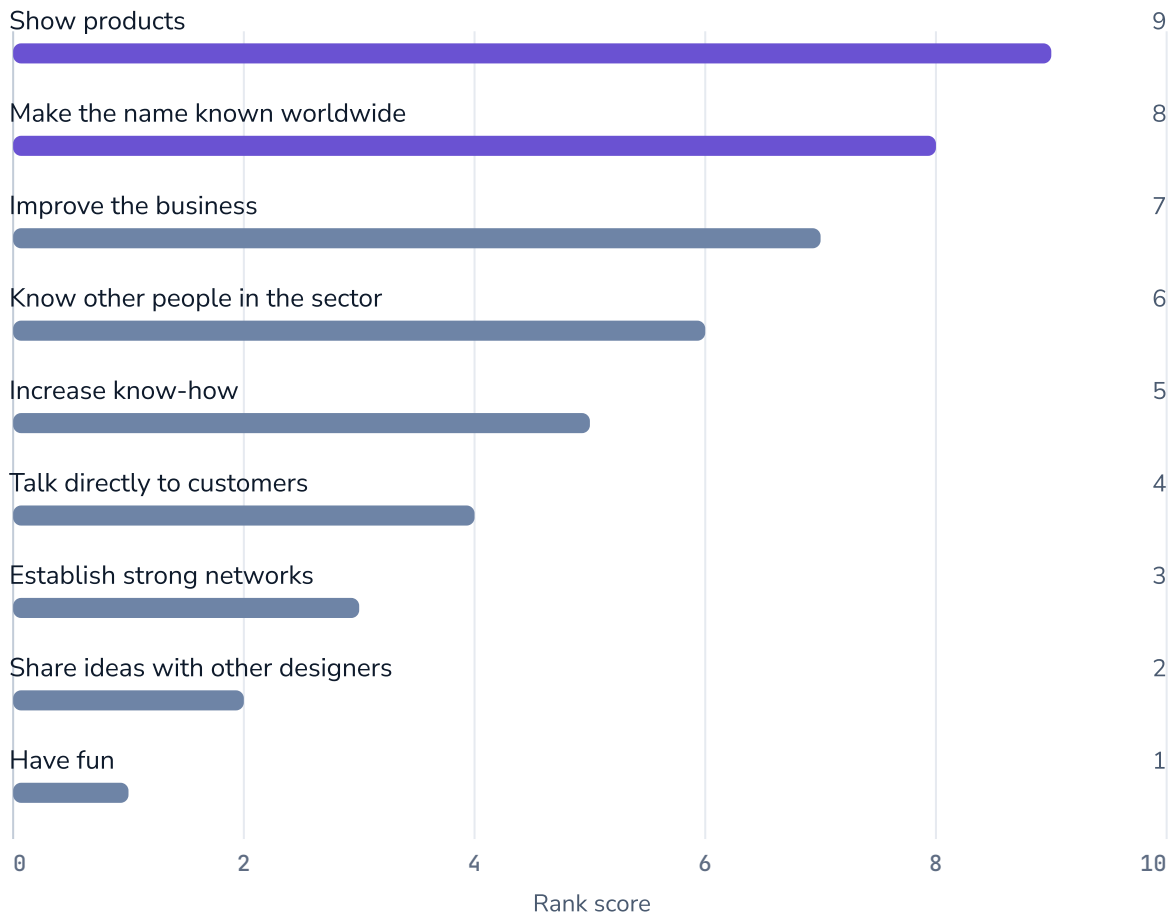
Design fairs and their cities

Design fairs help define their host city's economic profile and brand[3]. In an exploratory survey of 70 designers, mainly from the Netherlands, Italy and the UK, 74 percent had attended a design fair for work, and all respondents named Milan's Salone del Mobile as Europe's most important design fair[3].

Designers attend mainly to be seen and to sell. Showing products ranked first among nine goals, followed by making their name known worldwide and improving business; meeting people in the sector ranked fourth, while building strong networks and sharing ideas ranked seventh and eighth[3].

Designers' goals for attending design fairs in Europe, by rank of importance

Rank among nine goals; 9 = most important.



Source: Sedini · Release date: 2011 · Region: Europe (mainly Netherlands, Italy, UK) · Number of respondents: 70 · Survey period: 2010 to 2011

Boundary spaces in a creative scene

In Nantes, interviews with video-mapping practitioners between 2019 and 2020 identified three sub-groups with distinct frames of reference[4]. The groups shared few spaces, two individuals acted as brokers, and one venue and one event served as boundary spaces with strong potential to bring the community together[4].

Notes on the data

The figures are based on five studies published between 2011 and 2024: a longitudinal case of one Montreal venue with 29 interviews and five observations, an exploratory online survey of 70 designers, 34 interviews and archives on the Sónar festival, a four-page conference proposal on video mapping in Nantes without a stated sample size, and a conceptual review [1–4,6]. The ranking of design-fair goals is shown as rank scores derived from the reported order. The designer sample is small and not random. The classification of the venue's roles is Eventamin's coding of the case.

Sources

● Study ○ Industry source

1 Capron, E., & Delacour, H. (2024). Field-Configuring Places: Unpacking the role of place in field evolution [Journal article]. *Organization Studies, 45(11), 1669–1696*. https://doi.org/10.1177/01708406241280010 — First-hand

2 Colombo, A., & Richards, G. (2017). Eventful Cities as Global Innovation Catalysts: The Sónar Festival Network [Journal article]. *Event Management, 21(5), 621–634*. https://doi.org/10.3727/152599517X15053272359077 — First-hand

3 Sedini, C. (2011). Field-Configuring Events: Design Fairs and Cities [Journal article]. *Redige, 2(2), 64–78*. — First-hand

4 Capron, E. (2020). Le rôle des individus, lieux et événements dans la structuration d'une communauté créative : l'exemple du vidéo-mapping à Nantes (The role of individuals, places and events in structuring a creative community: the example of video mapping in Nantes) [Conference paper]. *Paper presented at the colloquium Beyond Creative Cities: People, Places, Innovation, Nantes*. Retrieved November 7, 2026, from hal.science — First-hand

5 ICCA. (2026). GlobeWatch country and city rankings 2025 [Article]. Retrieved November 7, 2026, from iccaworld.org

Reported

6 Lange, B., Power, D., & Suwala, L. (2014). Geographies of field-configuring events [Journal article]. *Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie, 58(4), 187–201.* https://doi.org/10.1515/zfw.2014.0013

First-hand

The evidence

5 studies · 1 industry source

SAMPLE

Five studies: a 27-year case of one Montreal venue with 29 interviews, a survey of 70 designers, 34 interviews on the Sónar festival, interviews on a video-mapping community and a conceptual review; one industry ranking

YEARS

2011–2024 (studies); 2026 (industry data)

METHOD

Longitudinal and single case studies, an exploratory online survey and a conceptual review

About Eventamin

Eventamin reads the peer-reviewed research on events, exhibitions and hospitality, sets it against industry data and states what it means for the market. Every brief is published by Eventamin as an organisation: its sources, method and corrections are open.

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