CHAPTER 11

Semiotics of Edinburgh's Festival City Place-Myth: Management and Community Stakeholders' Visual Representations of Festival Spaces

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Introduction

As Scotland's capital, Edinburgh's identity is forged from multiple sources, drawing upon its rich built, political, cultural and artistic heritage. These qualities are embraced, and utilised, by management stakeholders to maintain the city's contemporary destination brand image, forming present-day place-myths. These images are perceived cultural realities created through dominant discourses and folklore (Barthes 1993) and are subject to orders of meaning where semiotic cultural codes are perceived as factual (Gaines 2007). One of Edinburgh's most persistent identities is its self-proclaimed role as the world's leading festival city (Jamieson and Todd 2020). Edinburgh's long and illustrious history of urban festivals has constructed its festival city identity, something that can be understood as a place-myth.

Eleven annual city-based arts and cultural festivals currently sit within the 'Festivals Edinburgh' strategic brand umbrella (see later discussion). In recent years, the festivals have attracted approximately 4.5 million attendees from 70 countries worldwide; and have generated £313 million for Scotland's economy annually (BOP Consulting and Festivals Edinburgh 2016a). Edinburgh's evolution as the festival city has involved destination managers leveraging the festivals to drive event tourism (Todd, Leask and Ensor 2017). Indeed, recent strategic plans recommend strengthening its festival city status, alongside active promotion of this brand worldwide (BOP Consulting and Festivals Edinburgh 2016b).

Edinburgh's festival city identity and place-myth underpin this chapter, which considers the conflicting stakeholder narratives regarding Edinburgh's contested places and spaces. The chapter opens with an overview of the festival city construct, followed by a discussion of Edinburgh's eponymous title. Informed by festival city discourses, a consideration of place-myth, and an event tourism stakeholder typology (Todd et al. 2017), the chapter then considers the semiotics of Edinburgh's place-myth as the world's leading festival city (Festivals Edinburgh 2020a).

The chapter considers Edinburgh's visual culture as the festival city through a semiotic lens. As a hermeneutical approach to understanding phenomena, semiotics uncovers layers of meaning and myth by studying systems of communicated 'signs' (MacCannell 1999). The foundation of semiotics is thus humans' interpretation of encountered signs (Peirce 1992). In semiotic terms, signs may be written, spoken, or performed; and be visual, audio-visual, or aural. Signs can be natural or created, living or inanimate and, significantly for the present chapter, signs include places and spaces (Gaines 2006). The chapter also explores how two distinct stakeholder groups engage with Edinburgh as the festival city through the semiotics of their imagery. It draws from two discrete, but related, projects. The first is an ongoing study which explores a selection of online digital images shared by destination management stakeholders, via the Instagram social media platform. The second project involves studying visual elements of a participative visual map of the festival city. The map was co-created by members of the Wester Hailes community, an area situated in southwest Edinburgh, which is well beyond designated festival spaces. Wester Hailes is one of the most deprived areas in Scotland (Scottish Government 2020) and contrary to the festival city place-myth, its folklore is marked by this deprivation (Anderson et al. 1994; Grandison 2018).

The analysis also considers the projected and portrayed imagery of both stakeholder groups, and two key narratives of Edinburgh's festival city place-myth are consequently identified. The first narrative is *staging the festival*, communicated via semiotic signs of Edinburgh Castle during the festivals. The second narrative is *performing the festival*, through the semiotics of festivalgoers in the city's streets and spaces. There are other festival city visual narratives but these two were selected to illustrate the present discussion. Additionally, these narratives are synonymous with two of Edinburgh's most enduring

festivals – Edinburgh's International Festival (EIF) and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe (the Fringe). Similar staging and performing the festival narratives of festival city place-myth were shared between the two stakeholder groups, but the distribution of such semiotic imagery across urban space in the city varied significantly. In exploring management and community stakeholders' images of signs, spaces and places, the chapter concludes by reflecting upon the idealised view of Edinburgh as the festival city, alongside its contemporary sociopolitical and cultural context of inclusion and accessibility. The chapter closes with a consideration of the semiotics that sustain the visual culture, consumption and place-myth of the festival city.

The Festival City

The template for today's European city-based festivals evolved from the mid nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. At this time, festivals were created to surpass physical and metaphorical city and national boundaries, and to engender freedom from previously dominant societal institutions (Quinn 2005). These festivals emerged from the modern era, when sport and culture assumed a greater societal presence (Smith 2016), and with an emphasis on cultural internationalism (Jamieson and Todd 2019). The Salzburg Festival, for example (established in 1920), is recognised as the first of these festivals. It was followed by post-war urban festivals in other European cities, including Edinburgh, with the aim of 'staging the international and hosting cosmopolitan audiences' (Jamieson and Todd 2019, 4).

   In contemporary strategic management practice, the festival city has become a relatively common element of cities' destination branding. The term points towards a vibrant and cosmopolitan urban setting where the collective and experiential consumption of events is encouraged and supported. Apart from Edinburgh, numerous other cities around the globe adopt this title (or similar ones) in their destination branding and marketing efforts. Indeed, the use of festival city titles includes endorsements from external bodies including, for example, the International Festival and Event Association's 'World Festival and Event City Award'. Since 2010 this scheme has recognised approximately 100 cities that fit with IFEA's competitive criteria (IFEA 2020).

   The practical implementation of festival city branding is traceable to key strands of academic discourse. In tourism and event studies literature, festival and eventful city concepts have been debated for some time. Much of this discussion is concerned with the measurable parameters of the festival city as a managed destination, consumed by tourists and visitors. Consequently, there is emphasis upon characteristics such as the variety, impact, contribution, scale and annual provision of festivals. Additionally, there is concern over associated tourism volume (Getz and Page 2016; Colombo and Richards 2017; Richards 2017), alongside clear top-down stakeholder support through strategic event

portfolio development (Antchak and Pernecky 2017; Ziakas 2020). Within these discourses, prominence is given to the branding potential of the festival city, alongside place-making within the context of festivalised urban space (Prentice and Andersen 2003; Richards and Palmer 2012).

Another perspective highlights the symbolic and creative promise of the festival city for staging the temporal, experimental and conceptual (Dooghe 2015). With less emphasis on tourism potential, the use of public urban space for festivals and events is debated here from a broader perspective (Gold and Gold 2020; Jamieson 2004; Jamieson and Todd 2019; Smith 2019). Similar themes are echoed in popular management literature, considering cities and the creative characteristics of their inhabitants (Florida 2002; Landry 2012).

Essentially, the festival city construct grew from the late twentieth-century concept of 'festivalisation', which describes the use of events within urban policy (Häussermann and Siebel 1993). In this sense, festivalisation refers to a particular means of staging and consuming urban space (see Chapters 1 and 2 for further discussion of the term). However, it has become a contested concept due to the, often, exclusive nature of festivals and their contribution to the commercialisation of urban public spaces (Smith 2014, 2016). Furthermore, the process and associated outcomes of festivalisation may lead to permanent physical change to the cityscape, which can be resisted by local communities and other stakeholders (McGillivray, Guillard and Reid 2020). This chapter now examines the case of Edinburgh, one of the world's most famous festival cities, beginning with an analysis of the city's identities.

Edinburgh's Identities

Today, Edinburgh is regarded as a diverse and vibrant city with a high proportion of residents with international origins, younger people, and residents educated to higher degree level (City of Edinburgh Council 2019). As one of the UK's leading tourism destinations, visitors are drawn to the city's heritage and cultural provision; its location as a gateway to Scotland and beyond, and to its renowned portfolio of festivals (City of Edinburgh Council 2019).

Edinburgh's contemporary identities are grounded in its history, cultural heritage, physical architecture and eternal festivalisation (Smith 2016). Its urban centre is comprised of two UNESCO designated World Heritage Sites: the medieval Old Town, dominated by Edinburgh Castle, which serves as a backdrop to the historic centre, and the neoclassical New Town, which was designed and built in the eighteenth century (UNESCO 2021). Around this time, Edinburgh fostered a reputation as the 'Athens of the North', in response to its architectural and cultural identities. This was complemented by the emergence of the allegorical imagery of a romantic 'Baronial' Scotland, as curated by Sir Walter Scott (Lowrey 2001). In the context of post-World War II Europe, and on the eve of the first of its festivals, Edinburgh was repositioned by its civic

stakeholders as 'the cultural resort of Europe' (Bartie 2013: 37). Edinburgh's identity as 'the world's leading festival city' (Festivals Edinburgh 2020a) is underpinned by this cultural heritage.

Edinburgh's contemporary festival city identity emerged from the post-war shadows of the 1940s, amidst the prevailing climate of cultural internationalism (Jamieson and Todd 2020). Unlike other European cities, Edinburgh survived the war relatively intact. Yet, far from being associated with festivals, it was viewed as a particularly sombre setting in comparison to some other European capitals. The city's identity was underpinned by the continuing influence of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment; alongside the dominant institutional presence of the Church, and professions such as law and medicine (Bartie 2013).

Edinburgh's first festivals originated in 1947 – EIF, the Fringe and the International Film Festival. All three remain key to the city's festival portfolio to this day. The EIF and the Fringe are crucial to facilitating the Edinburgh festival city place-myth. Edinburgh's festivals occur throughout the year, with the most intense festival period in the late summer, between July and September.

Despite their long history, Edinburgh's festivals were, until recently, managed in a discrete, although collaborative, way. It was not until 2006, on recognising the strategic development of event tourism in competitor destinations, that key government, civic, tourism and arts stakeholders, as well as the festivals' leaders, commissioned industry research to investigate the future of Edinburgh's Festivals. One of the outcomes was the establishment of Festivals Edinburgh, which was founded in 2007 and is overseen by the festivals. Today it represents them collectively, and strategically, to develop and promote the festival city brand internationally (Festivals Edinburgh 2020b).

The tangible impacts of Edinburgh's festivals are reported widely. Until the festivals were interrupted by 2020's global Covid pandemic, there were annual increases in attendee numbers, tickets distributed and economic contribution. The intangible, socio-cultural outcomes of the festivals are less documented, but a Festivals Edinburgh-led industry survey of 29,000 respondents revealed that 89% of local festivalgoers agreed that the Festivals increased people's pride in Edinburgh as a city. Furthermore, 94% of respondents agreed the festivals position Edinburgh as an attractive, creative, international destination (BOP Consulting and Festivals Edinburgh 2016a)

While Edinburgh's festivals bring significant socio-cultural and economic benefits to the city, the festivals, or rather their popularity, have also led to some discord amongst local community stakeholders. Cultural, social and economic engagement is listed as a strategic priority for Festivals Edinburgh (2020a) and the recently published 'Festival City Vision to 2030' Festivals Edinburgh (2020b) emphasises a commitment to public spaces and infrastructure, alongside inclusive cultural provision, with increased opportunities for community-led culture and creativity. Further, Festivals Edinburgh (2016, 3) maintain the festivals combine 'outward-looking internationalism with a deep commitment

to Edinburgh and Scotland' and report widening access and community participation initiatives undertaken by the festivals. Nevertheless, since late 2019 some local communities and the media (McGillivray, Guillard and Reid 2020), have been critical of the commercial agendas of staging year round festivals in the city's historic public spaces (Quinn 2005; Smith 2016). There is a growing feeling that Edinburgh is for tourists rather than its communities (Leask 2019). Following a series of particularly busy summer festival seasons that raised initial concerns, opposition was fuelled by the management of Edinburgh's Christmas and Hogmanay (New Year) festivals in 2019–2020. Being concentrated in the historic Princes Street Gardens, these events reportedly caused significant negative environmental impacts. Issues regarding crowding, noise and disturbance in the compact city centre were also reported. As a result, media and public voices accused destination managers of commodifying these spaces for festivals and event tourism, dubbing Edinburgh as 'the city for sale' (Cockburn Association 2020). Debate has since continued with reports that Edinburgh's destination managers recognise a need for more balanced festival provision in the future (Ferguson 2021).

In terms of Edinburgh's much documented history (Gold et al. 2020), and titular role of world leading festival city, this chapter aligns with the position that the festivals are 'central to contemporary politics of representation where identities, encounters and mobilities are staged' (Jamieson and Todd 2020, 1). In this context, it is important to note that despite Edinburgh's present-day cosmopolitan image as a cultural capital, it is well-documented as being 'the most sharply divided of any British settlement' (McCrone and Elliot 1989, 66). Indeed, its status as a world leading festival city (Jamieson and Todd 2020), alongside other branding-friendly urban identities, may be viewed as evidence of destination management stakeholders' enthusiastic adoption of neoliberal 'competitive cities' titles (Kallin and Slater 2014). Having considered issues of identity, the chapter now turns to explore the notion of place and myth.

The Festival City Place-Myth

When viewing Edinburgh's festival city place-myth through a semiotic lens, it is important to consider the term 'myth', which originates from the Greek 'mythos' – meaning what could not really exist (Williams 1985). Myth is often related to folklore and legend, which have similar meanings and are narratives that are co-created in social contexts. In essence, myths are perceived cultural realities with layers of meaning. They become authoritative through their social persistence (Gaines 2007). Myths exist therefore in the imagination as much as in reality, and this duality is similarly true of place-myths (Shields 1992) which are defined as meanings ascribed to places through discursive narratives. These narratives evolve a dominant set of collected core images, including stereotypes and clichés, that refer to the place. As these images are disseminated,

circulated and repeated within social contexts, they become durable, wide-spread and commonly ascribed, thus creating place-myths. This happens whether the narratives are faithful to the realities of the place to which they refer, or not (Crouch and Lübbren 2003; Scarles 2014; Urry and Larsen 2011).

As a place-myth, the festival city is relatively unusual as it is not exclusively aligned to one urban location. This was considered by Thomasson (2015) in the context of the place-myths of Edinburgh and Adelaide as festival cities. She noted that place-myths evolve over time, with certain images more enduring than others. In Edinburgh's case, heritage, culture and literature contributed to the formation of its festival city place-myth, and this was revitalised through its contemporary identity. This chapter builds upon this to consider the semiotics of Edinburgh's festival city place-myth, and specifically, the layers of meaning within discursive visual images portrayed by festival management and local community stakeholders. This is undertaken through visual research methods within a semiotic methodology. The resulting key narratives that are uncovered each contribute to Edinburgh's festival city identity and place-myth.

The Semiotic Lens and Myth

Semiotics is concerned with the study of 'signs' and their layers of meaning (Banks and Zeitlyn 2015). Human communication relies upon signs in visual, verbal or other forms. Modern semiotics is commonly viewed to have been developed in the 1930s by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and American philosopher Charles Saunders Peirce (Echtner 1999; MacCannell 1999). Being concerned with language, Saussure proposed an analytical framework which presented any sign as being the relationship between the signifier (the sound and/or image) and the signified (concept/object being referred to). In proposing his framework, Peirce included a third element. This was an interpretant, which was added to his presentamen (signifier) and designatum (signified), to contemplate the interpretative meanings of a sign. The addition of an interpretant allowed the consideration of connotative (deeper) layers of meaning. These had capacity to become myths, later described by French philosopher Roland Barthes (1993), as bearing an order of cultural signification, where semiotic code is perceived as fact. Barthes added to Saussure's framework, while building upon Peirce's interpretant, by enabling different layers of denotative and connotative meaning or myths. Significantly, in the semiotic paradigm, signs therefore point towards the mythologies of the phenomenon which is under consideration (Barthes 1993).

Semiotics has been applied in, and is relevant to, tourism studies (see Albers and James 1988; Berger 2011; Culler 1981; Echtner 1999; Pennington and Thomsen 2010, amongst others) and space as a semiotic sign has been subject to academic analysis (e.g. Gaines 2006; Lagopoulos 1993, 2014; Murray, Fujishima and Uzuka 2014). Nevertheless, physical space and geographical

place are generally understood in relation to other semiotic signs that exist within physical and symbolic boundaries. To date, there has been little consideration of the semiotics of place-myth, or to studying festival contexts through signs within space. This method is particularly novel, therefore, in considering the place-myth of the festival city.

Adding to this study's semiotic paradigm are visual methods in each of the stakeholder settings. Visual methods involve the incorporation of visual materials in research. These can be the part of the process, the analysis, or both (Banks and Zeitlyn 2015) and are concerned with narratives inherent to visuals. In the remainder of this chapter, visual methods in general – and semiotics techniques in particular – are used to explore Edinburgh's status as a festival city.

Edinburgh Festival City Stakeholders

Stakeholders are defined here in terms of their continuous and dynamic roles within the Edinburgh festival city setting. This chapter adapts a stakeholder typology developed in Edinburgh's event tourism context (Todd, Leask and Ensor 2017). By examining the Fringe as a hallmark event, this research identified primary and secondary stakeholders, and is applicable to the wider festival city context. Primary stakeholders are those essential to festivals occurring, whereas secondary stakeholders are not fundamental to festivals taking place. They are, nevertheless, contextually unique, and thus crucial to their setting. This chapter is concerned with findings from two projects, each concerned with distinct stakeholder groups and specifically, their visual representations of festivalised spaces. These are primary festival management stakeholders and secondary community stakeholders. Firstly, by drawing from an ongoing study, this chapter refers to online digital images shared by festival management stakeholders via the Instagram social media platform. It then considers visual elements of a map of the festival city. This was co-created by members of the Wester Hailes community in Edinburgh. Although these projects are discrete and distinct, both stakeholder groups' portrayals are viewed through a semiotic paradigm where signs were sought to uncover key narratives that contribute to Edinburgh's festival city place-myth.

Festival Management Stakeholders

In its aim to consider the conflicting narratives of management and community stakeholders over the contested places and spaces of Edinburgh, this chapter draws firstly from a current study which considers Edinburgh's visual culture as the festival city (Todd and Logan-McFarlane 2019). Images depicting the festivals in the city's spaces were collected from Instagram accounts managed by Edinburgh's festivals. These were categorised on the bases of displaying

semiotic signs fitting with Peirce's (1992) triadic typology of iconic (similar), indexical (causal), and symbolic (arbitrary) semiotic signs. All referred to the festival city in some way, whether by visual similarity, social agreement or cultural learning (Echtner 1999).

As 'digital media are part of how events are conceptualised, made, and experienced by participants, viewers and users' (Pink et al. 2015, 165), Instagram was selected as an appropriate platform. It has an inherently visual culture (MacDowell and deSouza 2018), where meanings are portrayed through sharing images, alongside limited text, and hashtags, to provide contextual details. Further, using Instagram images was useful in the visual analysis to fit with Pearce's (1934) typology of signs, (Laestadius 2017). While it is not possible to include a large sample of the specific Instagram images in this chapter, as discussed later, two examples of management stakeholders' images are included. These depict the festival city place-myth narratives of staging and performing the festival.

Initial findings revealed that images across all festivals' accounts are particularly rich in terms of presenting key semiotic narratives of the festivals and spaces of central Edinburgh during the festivals. Images commonly include Edinburgh Castle; fireworks; crowded streets in the Old Town, festivalgoers, and street performers; alongside iconic festival venues. Imagery is concentrated within Edinburgh's central Old Town area, and the main festival settings. It is important to note that, as management-portrayed images, these are curated, top-down, visual representations of the festival city. Although Instagram is designed as a democratic platform for sharing user-generated imagery, it has been widely adopted by managers in portraying idealised destination images as marketing communications tools. This draws upon the perspective that the distribution of destination images becomes a hermeneutic circle of representation (Albers and James 1988; Urry 1990).

Community Stakeholders

The second study this chapter draws from was a participative public engagement (and research) initiative undertaken with community stakeholders. Participants were residents of Wester Hailes, which lies around five miles to the southwest of Edinburgh's centre, outside of the festival areas. Wester Hailes was conceived in the mid twentieth century as one of a series of council residential developments on the urban periphery of the city. These were designed as 'slum clearance' projects, where many of the city's most deprived residents were rehoused from poor-quality, outdated, tenement housing (Glendinning 2005). Nevertheless, alongside other similar developments (Sighthill, also west; Craigmillar, south; Granton and Muirhouse, to the north) it became part of 'Edinburgh's other fringe – a belt of poor and intensely stigmatised peripheral housing estates' (Kallin and Slater 2014, 1356).

Despite its tourism-focused brand identity, Edinburgh remains a city segregated by class, and deprivation has remained a defining characteristic of some communities (Lee and Murie 2002). Today, Wester Hailes occupies the first decile of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), deeming it one of the most deprived areas in Scotland in terms of the extent to which it is disadvantaged across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing (Scottish Government 2020). Contrary to Edinburgh's festival city place-myth and identity, the 'folklore' of Wester Hailes is thus constructed from crime, poverty, drug abuse and undesirable behaviour (Anderson et al. 1994; Grandison 2018), presenting a countervailing place-myth of deprivation.

Throughout the city, including the less deprived areas of southwest Edinburgh, between 65% and 70% of residents have attended a festival in the past two years, (City of Edinburgh Council 2018). This total is only 50% for Wester Hailes residents. A similar disparity is seen in respect of residents who believe the festivals make Edinburgh a better place to live. Seventy-two per cent agree with this across the city but only 58% in Wester Hailes (ibid). Anecdotally, engagement with the festivals is not high in Wester Hailes, although it should be noted that many of Edinburgh's festivals undertake community engagement initiatives and most maintain school outreach programmes to engage children and younger people.

Wester Hailes Festival City Map

Selected images from the festival management stakeholders' Instagram accounts informed the first stage of the festival city map, which was drawn by the author as a simplified, large-scale map of Edinburgh (See Figure 11.1). This focused on Edinburgh's central Old and New Towns, as discussed above; and included collaged images and sketches of key attractions, alongside mappings of local communities of the greater Edinburgh area. This initial map then formed the basis of the participative public engagement research initiative, undertaken by the author and members of the Wester Hailes community. As a participative form of gathering data, beyond dissemination, public engagement is 'a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit' (NCCPE 2017). The aim was to co-design an Edinburgh festival city map for Wester Hailes. Public engagement as an approach includes a dyadic approach and involves equitable and democratic partnerships amongst researchers and participants to empower the wider research community (Evans and Jones 2004). The initiative was undertaken during a day-long community festival in September 2019, at WHALE Arts, a community-led charity and social enterprise in Wester Hailes. During the festival various arts, entertainment, collaborative projects and a community meal took place. Attendees

were adults and families with children who were members of the Wester Hailes community. They were provided with arts materials including stickers, colouring pens, photographic images from brochures and magazines; and invited to co-create the festival city map. Above the map was the heading: 'Make an Edinburgh festival map for Wester Hailes', alongside questions, placed around the map, including:

- What is a festival?
- What should a festival be like?
- What do you want to see/do at the Edinburgh festivals?
- Where do you want to see the festivals?

The author discussed Edinburgh's festivals with attendees and encouraged them to contribute their images and written ideas around these themes. The Wester Hailes festival city map emerged over the duration of the event. Figure 11.1 shows the festival city map and the section of the map depicting Wester Hailes. At the top of Figure 11.1 is the map as it developed. Edinburgh Castle is situated near the centre of the map, while Wester Hailes is in the lower left corner of the map. It was between these two areas that many of the festival city activities were depicted by the participants. The castle was portrayed as surrounded by fireworks and other activities; illustrated by images and words, including a request for a 'fun fair', a performance by 'animatronic dinosaurs', 'arts and crafts stalls' and a 'talent show'. Nearby, an 'animal parade' from Edinburgh Zoo was requested alongside 'flashmobs', 'more bagpipes' and 'busking' throughout the city centre streets. These were similar semiotic signs to the images depicted in the festival managers' Instagram accounts, being iconic, symbolic, and indexical images of the festival city (Pearce 1992). As signs, these communicated meanings around the staging of the festival and the performance of the festival in the city centre.

The lower part of Figure 11.1 is the section of the map depicting Wester Hailes. This part of the map received the most attention from participants who created images and requests for more festival activity around the Wester Hailes area. Many of the adult participants when asked said they rarely attended Edinburgh's festivals, with one saying they had never been to the festivals. There were requests for more 'Fringe' and 'Science festival events outside the city centre'; a 'circus around Wester Hailes'; 'music on a barge' (on the nearby canal); 'plays at the WHEC' (Wester Hailes Education Centre); 'free clubs for kids'; alongside other music, entertainment, and science activities. In these images and words, there were also similar signs to those depicted in the Instagram images. Nevertheless, while there was recognition of the value of these festival city signs of staging and performing the festival, it was clear such signs were currently largely absent from this corner of the city during Edinburgh's festivals.

Figure 11.1: The Festival City Map (top) and the section depicting Wester Hailes (below). Photograph: Louise Todd.

Edinburgh Festival City: Place-Myth Narratives

It is possible to uncover two narratives that underpin the Edinburgh festival city place-myth and these have been developed from the semiotics of the stakeholders' visual images. Both narratives reveal the visual culture of Edinburgh's festivals are part of the process of forming place-myths (Crouch and Lübbren 2003). These may be framed by performance theory (Goffman 2002; Schechner 1977), viewing Edinburgh's festivals as socially constructed phenomena. They are inclusively staged and performed by their producers and consumers as they co-construct the semiotic narratives of the festival city place-myth through their gaze (MacCannell 1999; Urry and Larsen 2011). The first narrative is 'staging the festival', which is communicated through the semiotic sign of Edinburgh Castle. In the festival management Instagram accounts, the castle is depicted frequently. It is generally immersed in light, or surrounded by fireworks, while overseeing the city. It is often depicted as the centre of festival activity. This was a similarly common portrayal for the community stakeholders.

The second narrative is 'performing the festival': seen through the semiotics of festivalgoers, consuming the festival in the city's places and spaces – alongside depictions of arts and entertainment performances on the streets and elsewhere. This aspect of *performing the festival* is largely absent from Wester Hailes during the festivals. However, community stakeholders added iconic, symbolic and indexical semiotic signs of performing the festival to their festival city map, and these were more concentrated around Wester Hailes than in the city centre. These narratives will now be discussed. Both are related, respectively, to two of Edinburgh's most enduring festivals, and their associated myths, as outlined below. Figure 11.2 depicts exemplars of the management-created narratives and semiotic signs of staging and performing the festival. These images are typical both of the Instagram images as discussed earlier; and of the co-constructed signs on the community map.

Staging the Festival

The narrative and semiotic sign of staging the festival – which contributes to Edinburgh's festival city place-myth – has origins in Edinburgh's International Festival, Edinburgh's first festival. EIF's establishment (in 1947) is associated with Rudolf Bing (1902–1997), the general manager of Glyndebourne Festival Opera, which had become renowned for its own summer festival, before closing during the war. EIF folklore recounts a romantic narrative which contributes to Edinburgh's modern festival city place-myth. Here, Bing was visiting Edinburgh in 1942 with his friend, the soprano, Audrey Millman. Having attended an opera, the pair were walking in Princes Street. On seeing Edinburgh Castle, bathed in moonlight, Ms. Millman remarked the city would be an ideal setting for an arts festival (Edinburgh International Festival 2018). This legend

Figure 11.2: Staging and performing the Festival. Examples of semiotic narratives contributing to Edinburgh's festival city place-myth. Photographs: 'Czech Dancers' © the Royal Military Tattoo and 'Street Performance at the Fringe 2', David Monteith Hodge, courtesy of Festivals Edinburgh.

(Bartie 2013) was later referred to by Bing (1972, 70) who noted that Edinburgh's castle, positioned above the city on a hill, gave it a 'Salzburg flavour'. However, despite being an enduring myth of today's Edinburgh festivals, the view of the romantic light-bathed Edinburgh Castle and its visual similarity to Salzburg was not truly behind the choice of Edinburgh to host the first edition of the EIF.

According to historical records, EIF was established for more prosaic reasons. As noted earlier, Edinburgh was viewed as a rather sedate and formal capital. At this time 'culture' was considered as attractive to affluent city residents and international visitors. The Scottish Tourism Board was established in 1946; and following this, to reposition Edinburgh's image, EIF was created by civic leaders and a group of world-leading artists as a post-war approach to enrich the cultural context of Edinburgh, while attracting tourism-related revenue to the city and to Scotland as a whole. As leader of the new EIF, Bing sought to rekindle Glyndebourne through the establishment of a European arts festival. Edinburgh was however below Oxford, Bath, Chester, Cambridge and Canterbury on the list of cities he would have chosen to host this festival (Bartie 2013). Nevertheless, due to the forces at play, EIF was created, and has remained one of Edinburgh's leading festivals. Its founding vision persists in its aim: to reunite people through great art and 'provide a platform for the flowering of the human spirit' (Edinburgh International Festival 2018).

Performing the Festival

The second place-myth narrative of Edinburgh as the festival city is that of performing the festival as people perform places in semiotic self-constructed encounters with the festivals (Crouch and Lübbren 2003). This narrative is illustrated by the semiotics of festivalgoers in the city's spaces and places. While busy streets are a visual marker of festivalisation in any city, this enduring narrative of Edinburgh's festivals can be traced to the evolution of the Fringe. Also conceived in 1947, unlike EIF the Fringe was not planned by civic stakeholders or artists, and its origins relate to a different chronicle of Edinburgh folklore. That year, eight groups of performers that had not been invited to appear at the EIF decided to take advantage of the Festival atmosphere in Edinburgh and travelled to the city to perform independently (Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2020). The results were said to engender a sense of spontaneity and transience, different to other festivals. Indeed, in 1948, the title of 'Fringe' festival was conceived by the playwright and journalist, Robert Kemp, of the Edinburgh Evening News, writing: 'round the fringe of the official Festival drama there seems to be a more private enterprise than before' (Moffat 1978, 17).

The Fringe is now the world's largest multi-arts festival and accounts for more than half of Edinburgh's annual visitors (BOP Consulting and Festivals Edinburgh International 2016a). It is supported by the administrative Festival

Fringe Society which was established in 1958 and has responsibility for centrally supporting the functions of the festival. Rather than curating the Fringe, the Society ensures the festival retains its open-access constitution, maintaining that 'anyone can take part in the Fringe' (Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2020). This narrative of the Fringe being for everyone readily contributes to Edinburgh's festival-city place-myth, where anyone can perform and consume the festivalised city. While the Fringe itself is not curated, this is not the case for many of its 300 or so venues. Often, performances and entire programmes are curated as part of venues' Fringe festival offers. Nonetheless, the Fringe itself has in recent years built upon its open-access origins by facilitating and managing street performance spaces in the centre of the city. These can be booked by anyone wishing to perform (Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2020), and in this context they lend an embodied sense of performance as they are produced and consumed in city centre spaces. In recent years, there has been some Fringe activity delivered outside of Edinburgh's centre, but this has not yet extended to Wester Hailes.

Conclusions

This chapter has considered the semiotic narratives of management and community stakeholders regarding the contested places and spaces of Edinburgh as the festival city. These narratives of *staging* and *performing the festival* and their contribution to Edinburgh's Festival city place-myth have been discussed. These are based on myths associated with EIF and the Fringe; and are founded upon post-war cultural internationalist notions of bringing people together and being for everyone. It is possible to reflect upon this idealised view of Edinburgh as the festival city, alongside the contemporary socio-political and cultural context of inclusion and accessibility. Arguably, these narratives and their associated semiotic signs have been instrumental in contributing to Edinburgh's place-myth of being the world's leading festival city. It is clear, however, that for members of one community based to the southwest of the city, the festivals are not viewed as being for everyone. In other words, the places and spaces of Edinburgh the festival city are contested.

In terms of methodological significance, as mentioned, there has been some use of semiotics to understand urban and tourism settings. This approach has not been used previously in understanding place-myths or the layers of meaning associated with the festival city as a construct, beyond the brand. The present semiotic approach would lend itself to further studies in this area. Images may be objective and material or subjective and intangible: all crucial components of place-myths (Crouch and Lübbren 2003). Furthermore, those who create and consume such images are themselves semioticians who engage with a hermeneutical and circular process of collecting and communicating these place-myths (MacCannell 1999; Urry and Larsen 2011; Scarles 2014).

There are practical implications of this study that are significant to the use and management of urban space. As highlighted earlier, Edinburgh's festival

and destination management stakeholders face criticism for the concentration of festival activities in the historic centre of the city, and the associated negative impacts. Conversely, communities outside the city centre, such as Wester Hailes, would value more inclusive and localised festival activity. At the time of writing, Edinburgh's festivals remain threatened by the ongoing global pandemic. Rather than event tourism activities being of strategic concern, Edinburgh's festival managers, and other city-based festivals stakeholders, could shift focus towards stronger engagement with local communities. As highlighted by the semiotics of the Wester Hailes festival city map, residents are keen to highlight their preferred festival activities and locations. Managers could collaborate with community stakeholders therefore to co-design the staging and performing of the festival within local communities, to build upon the current centre-focused Edinburgh festival city identity and place-myth.

The similarity of semiotic signs between stakeholder groups was striking, but their locations varied. The narrative of staging the festival was communicated through the semiotics of Edinburgh Castle surrounded by light, fireworks and images of festivalisation. Such signs were dominant in the festival managers' Instagram images. It is notable however, that similar signs were depicted by the Wester Hailes community stakeholders on their map. This was interesting as it supported the notion of the city effectively staging the festivals from the platform of Edinburgh Castle, in the centre, itself on a raised volcanic rock of a stage. Both groups presented iconic, symbolic and indexical signs that communicated layered narratives of staging through fireworks, light, festival activities and performances around the castle. It was clear, however, that these were very much confined to the Old Town in the city centre, where most of the activity is concentrated. The festival city map replicated these signs but concentrated in the Wester Hailes area. This supports the value of some festival activity being redistributed away from the centre to better engage with communities.

The narrative of performing the festival was significant in its tangible absence from Wester Hailes, and its presence in the various requests and suggestions for more festivals, arts, performances and other types of activities locally. Practical suggestions of festival activities, along with suitable places and spaces to perform the festivals in Wester Hailes were offered. This too may be of relevance to festival managers in future planning for more inclusive festivals for local community stakeholders; and in continuing to develop Edinburgh as the world's leading festival city.

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