



Prepared on February 27, 2019, by Kerry Cheek.

Living Lab Project Brief – local community and the Festival Fringe

Description of the paper

This paper outlines a potential dissertation topic regarding the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which could benefit the University's efforts to further embed sustainability initiatives and provide support within the Festival.

Draft research questions

Who benefits most (financially or otherwise) from the Edinburgh Festival Fringe? What are the local opinions of the Festival?

Background

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is the largest arts festival in the world. It is renowned for being 'open-access', meaning that any interested performer can participate if they are able to book a venue. As such, there is no centralized control over the Fringe and no physical limit to the Festival grounds. Since its creation in 1947 the Festival has expanded continually, currently attracting over 2.7 million yearly visitors and contributing £260 million to the local economy.

These statements include some of the most commonly referenced benefits to the city of Edinburgh from the Festival Fringe. However, it is unclear what the local opinions are and how communities and businesses benefit from the Festival. Some performers and venues have claimed financial losses from participating in the Festival, locals have dealt with overcrowding and increased pressure on city resources, and year-round tenants have been displaced during August.

While many of these drawbacks are mitigated by the prestige, excitement, financial gain, and/or fun of participating in the festival, a better understanding of local opinions and benefits would help shape future initiatives to improve the sustainability and community engagement related to the Fringe.

Objectives

- To identify who is benefitting from the Fringe (financially or otherwise)
- To assess opinions of residents, performers, and others involved in the festival
- To make recommendations for the University to address identified issues, in order to better support the local community and to potentially engage those benefitting most with sustainability and community engagement initiatives
- To compare to other city-wide festivals and determine best practice in this area.