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To cite this article: Jennifer Laing & Judith Mair (2015) Music Festivals and Social Inclusion – The Festival Organizers’ Perspective, Leisure Sciences, 37:3, 252-268, DOI: [10.1080/01490400.2014.991009](https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2014.991009)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2014.991009>



Published online: 06 May 2015.



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Music Festivals and Social Inclusion – The Festival Organizers’ Perspective

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*There is growing interest in how festivals can help to build strong and cohesive communities, particularly whether they can reach a broad swathe of the population or operate as enclaves. This article explores ways in which festival organizers may contribute to social inclusion goals through a qualitative phenomenological study of music festivals. Findings suggest that these festival organizers may contribute to social inclusion across four areas of society—consumption, production, political engagement, and social interaction or *communitas*—through factors such as providing opportunities for local participation, learning new skills, and access to education about social justice. However, it appears that these festival organizers tended to direct their social inclusion efforts toward portable communities, focusing on attendees but failing to reach out to local residents. This limits their ability to embrace the local community in its broadest sense, and calls into question their likelihood of achieving inclusivity outcomes.*

Keywords community, exclusion, festival, participation, social inclusion

Introduction

The importance of festivals as a leisure pursuit has a number of dimensions. They might have strong economic outcomes, including creating employment and attracting visitors to a destination (Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis, & Mules, 2000; O’Sullivan & Jackson, 2002). There are also potential social benefits, such as giving people a reason to celebrate, marking the passing of time, and building social networks or social capital within communities (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Wilks, 2011). More recently, there has been a focus on their ability to deliver social or political messages to audiences (Mair & Laing, 2013; Sharpe, 2008). Many festivals use the rhetoric of social inclusion in their promotion and marketing material, and this is often a major goal of government bodies (Carlsen, Ali-Knight, & Robertson, 2007; Finkel, 2006, 2010). Little work, however, has been done to examine whether festival organizers are truly aiming to make their festivals *spaces of inclusivity*, attracting a wide

Received 22 January 2014; accepted 19 November 2014.

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and diverse audience and staff, as well as achieving a diversity of participation in their management and staging.

This task is not straightforward. To begin with, the term *community* is somewhat contested. It is a “social construct, one that is created (and enacted) by people” (Liepins, 2000, p. 29) and may help to share meanings and build social connections. This may have little to do with the geographical territory being occupied (the community of place), and could be a function of identity, common interests or shared beliefs (the community of interest) (Johnson, 2013; Liepins). New technologies might also play a role in providing new forums or places for virtual communities to interact with each other online (Delamere & Shaw, 2008), not necessarily face to face or even in the same country.

There are also challenges associated with measuring social inclusion outcomes. Foley and McPherson (2007, p. 153), examining the Glasgow Winter Festival, observed: “The lack of evaluation evidence makes it impossible to judge whether that outcome of inclusion is met.” Even if one is able to determine that this outcome has not been met, it is also difficult to assess what has contributed to this failure and how it might be overcome in the future (Foley & McPherson). Therefore, although social inclusion may be the stated aim of a festival, assessing the extent to which this has been successful is not straightforward. Adding to this complexity is the notion that festivals are often held with the aim of providing positive social outcomes for “the community.” It is generally accepted that this refers to the local community of place. However, these positive outcomes may accrue to different people, depending on which community is being considered.

This article aims to explore the different ways that festivals can be used to further social inclusion goals and to consider the complexities inherent in achieving this, including whether the geographically local community is the community most likely to benefit from an inclusive outcome. Rather than addressing social inclusion *outcomes*, bearing in mind Foley and McPherson’s (2007) concerns about measurement above, it concentrates on examining the *intentions* of festival organizers with respect to these outcomes, as part of a wider study looking at festival organizers’ interest in greening. It uses data collected with respect to six music festivals located in urban and rural areas in Australia and the United Kingdom. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings for festival organizers and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

The review starts by exploring the links made in the literature between staging festivals and achieving social inclusion goals. It then moves on to an examination of the multifaceted concept of community and how this might underpin the current study.

Social Inclusion and Festivals

The concept of social inclusion can be traced back to European social policy debates in the 1980s with respect to social exclusion. The emerging paradigm reflected the existence of and the importance of addressing the needs of those who had in some way deviated from the social norm (Sandell, 1998). Drawing on the work of Levitas (1998) and Silver (1994), Wilson (2006) articulated three discourses of social exclusion. The first is a redistributive, egalitarian discourse, based on social rights and citizenship, where the state must intervene financially to reduce social exclusion by redistributing wealth. The second discourse takes a more moralistic tone, suggesting that exclusion is a result of laziness or shirking. As an individual’s predicament is largely caused by his or her own actions, the state has little imperative to intervene. The third discourse is based on mutual obligations, which may be

seen as a social integrationist perspective informed by Durkheim's (1893/1984) concept of social solidarity. All three discourses are based on the belief that the capitalist system is just, and problem individuals and classes are cultural misfits who require social responsibility to be instilled.

However, research on social inclusion (as opposed to social exclusion) has tended to be less moralistic and more optimistic, particularly in the UK context, with a strong focus on education, social policy and cultural diversity, as well as poverty alleviation (e.g., Bates & Davis, 2004). It is the opposite of social exclusion, which refers to nonparticipation "in key activities of the society in which [one] lives" (Burchardt, Grande, & Pichaud, 2002, p. 30). Governments commonly seek strategies to support a more cohesive society by addressing social exclusion (and promoting social inclusion) through the removal of barriers to participation by disadvantaged social groups (O'Sullivan, 2012). However, these efforts are often largely symbolic (Allison & Hibbler, 2004, p. 264).

Burchardt et al. (2002) argued that participation in mainstream social, cultural, economic, and political activities is at the core of most definitions of inclusion, with a corresponding lack of participation representing exclusion: "An individual is socially excluded if (a) he or she is geographically resident in a society but (b) for reasons beyond his or her control, he or she cannot participate in the normal activities of citizens in that society, and (c) he or she would like to so participate" (Burchardt et al., pp. 30, 32). Scharf, Phillipson, Smith, and Kingston (2002) concurred and conceptualized social exclusion as encompassing five dimensions: exclusion from material resources, exclusion from social relations, exclusion from civic activities, exclusion from basic services, and neighborhood exclusion. Taking a participatory approach, the key activities of a society that an individual should be able to take part in can be categorized as *consumption*, *production*, *political engagement*, and *social interaction*. This approach has been used in several studies relating to leisure, including a study of transport to arts and cultural facilities (Johnson, Currie, & Stanley, 2011) and it is used as a theoretical framework for this study. Johnson et al. also identified a list of the positive outcomes sought from increasing social inclusion, namely, (1) greater confidence and the development of social support networks, (2) increased self-determination and control for communities, (3) improved mental health and happiness, (4) learning new skills and improved access to education, and (5) improved opportunities for employment. It appears that where social inclusion initiatives are successful, they are likely to flow on to local (geographically specific) communities, as is generally the intention. However, not all of these positive outcomes need be limited to those in any particular locale, and indeed may be of benefit to a wider range of people than initially intended.

Social inclusion has been considered in a number of different contexts. Examples have included the role of transport to arts and cultural activities as a facilitator of social inclusion (Johnson et al., 2011) and the contribution of public art to urban regeneration, and how this promotes inclusion (Sharp, Pollock, & Paddison, 2005). One key area of research involves social inclusion outcomes for people with disabilities. Anderson and Heyne (2000) examined the inclusion of people with disabilities in community-based recreation and found that considerable constraints to inclusion persisted, including lack of awareness, acceptance, and information about people with disabilities; a dearth of prepared recreation staff, and physical access; and a deficiency in communication and networking between various service agencies and consumers. More recent research in the recreation context has suggested that for children with disabilities, there were still exclusionary issues, which included negative attitudes of community members and poorly prepared recreation program staff (Schleien, Miller, Walton, Scott, & Pruett, 2013).

Leisure and the arts have long been considered an avenue for addressing social inclusion. It is seen as contributing to community and social wellbeing, as well as revitalization

of communities, particularly in rural areas (Derrett, 2003; McHenry, 2009). Museums, for example, might be seen in some instances as instruments of social exclusion. They appear to operate a range of mechanisms which may serve to hinder, or prevent access to services by a range of groups, reinforce economic, social and/or political exclusionary practices, and represent the dominant values and an image of a society that may not resonate with all its members (Sandell, 1998). However, an inclusive museum, representing the history and culture of minorities, may seek to increase its relevance to a diverse audience and as a result may help to create access to its services (Sandell, 1998). There is similarly recognition that social inclusion might be an outcome of festival involvement and attendance, but as yet, little research has been conducted to explore how this might occur through the efforts of festival organizers.

Research to date suggests that social inclusion might be a potential outcome of a festival, in the sense of “engaging sections of the community not commonly participating in community and political activities” (Johnson et al., 2011, p. 69), or breaking down barriers and building strong communities (Derrett, 2003; Finkel, 2010). Drawing on earlier work by Argyle (1996), O’Sullivan (2012) noted that festivals should be seen as a form of social integration, providing opportunities for social advantage, identity, and improved self-esteem. A festival might also be an expression of acceptance of diversity or a focus for an otherwise marginalized group within a community (Gorman-Murray, 2009). Finkel (2010, p. 277) pointed out that it is often these social inclusion goals or benefits “that are a source of pride for organizers and a reason they decided to become involved in the festival in the first place.” For Morgan (2008), a local festival can reflect both community identity and *communitas* (Turner, 1974). Many local festivals are free or charge nominal entry, giving greater access to lower socio-economic groups to cultural activities (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Carlsen et al., 2007). The lack of formality of an outdoor setting compared to a theatre or opera house might also help to broaden access (Carlsen et al.). Festivals generally encompass a range of different programming, which may highlight cultural and ethnic diversity or involve minority groups (Carlsen et al.; Finkel, 2006). They may also facilitate relationship and skills development, such as experience in leadership or hands-on management skills, covering areas as broad as logistics, hospitality, or human resources, which may improve employment prospects (Johnson et al., 2011). Broad community involvement as volunteers also might have social inclusion outcomes, as people mix with others across a wide spectrum of backgrounds and interests (Finkel, 2010; Lockstone-Binney, Holmes, Smith, & Baum, 2010; Morgan, 2008). This might facilitate interaction across social strata, ethnic background, and gender divides.

However, the literature also suggests that festivals could be an agent or tool for social exclusion. Finkel (2010) noted that the Up Helly Aa Festival in Lerwick, Shetland, involved men in prominent roles while women were restricted to menial tasks. While the women involved might state that they were happy with this gender division, Finkel (2010, p. 282) observed that this ignores “politically correct notions of diversity and equal access.” Tourists were similarly marginalized from involvement and treated as “outsiders,” and there was community resistance to widespread publicity for this festival. Similarly, Lockstone-Binney et al. (2010) highlighted the potential underrepresentation of socially disadvantaged groups as volunteers.

Whether festivals act as spaces of inclusion or exclusion, the general thrust of the literature so far has been to consider the impacts of festivals on the “community.” However, a closer look at the contested definitions of this term suggests that unpacking exactly what is meant by “the community” is important in order to better understand the social impacts of a festival.

Exploring the Community

Traditional sociological conceptions of community appear to presume geographical or spatial locality. This is also what is usually implied by colloquial use of the term *community* by politicians and other stakeholders. While it can be argued that the concept of a community is widely understood and does not need to be defined (Creed, 2006), it has also been described as having a wide range and variety of meanings (Gardner, 2004). The difficulty lies in the values that are inherent in the word and the different ways in which it is used (Creed, 2006). He also noted that we can, and should, expect the meanings of community to vary according to social, cultural, geographic, and historical circumstances. If community is a thing, it is *virtual* in the sense of being an intangible good known through its effects (Shields & Sharkey, 2008).

In his work on community, Simonson (1996) drew on the historical concepts of social theory in an attempt to differentiate between different types of community and referred to *Gesellschaft*, *Gemeinschaft*, and *Sittlichkeit*, terms initially developed by Toennies (1887/2001). These terms are used by Simonson (1996) to differentiate between a group of people brought together for trade or business reasons (*Gesellschaft*), a communal group of people brought together by shared interests and habits (*Gemeinschaft*), and a locality where we live and work and where social issues and problems may be addressed (*Sittlichkeit*). All three terms may reasonably be considered to describe the concept of a community, yet there are important differences between them, notably the need for a shared geographical space to facilitate both *Gesellschaft* and *Sittlichkeit*. However, using the theory developed by Toennies to conceptualize community is problematic, as his communities arguably represented backwards-looking nostalgia for a simpler and more wholesome way of life, where family and structure were paramount (Dunlap & Johnson, 2010).

Another way to conceptualize community as a geographical location is the notion of *communities of memory*. Drawing on the work of Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985), Ketelaar (2005) explained that communities of memory are places whose individuals participate in a long shared history or communal past. Again, this emphasizes the geographical nature of this conceptualization of community.

Gardner (2004) introduced the idea of *portable communities* and described them as “purposeful, motivated responses to the perceived alienating and isolating conditions of modern *sittlichkeit*” (p. 156). A portable community is made up of a group of like-minded people who do not need to be near one another to keep in touch. Gardner argued that people in portable communities create their own spaces for inclusive social relations, as an alternative to the traditional geographically-rooted idea of a neighborhood.

This type of community also bears similarities to the more recent development of the *online* or *virtual* community. While many of our social interactions still require face to face communication, there are others that can be done online (e.g., online study, working online, emails, social media). An online community may be defined as “an enduring but loosely knit network of linked individuals who share social interests and norms, social interactions and a sense of belonging to each other” (Chayko, 2007, p. 375). Hemingway (1999, p. 160) suggested that as a response to dissatisfaction with conventional politics in the United States, new “clusters” of alternative groups have emerged. He referred to these communities as “new social movements” and included within this heading feminist, ethnic, ecological, lifestyle, and issue-oriented groups. Interestingly, these groupings are reminiscent of the make-up of attendees at music festivals, particularly those associated with counter-culture such as Glastonbury, and may represent an alternative conception of community.

Notions of communion and *communitas* may be useful ways to conceptualize the community of people that forms during a festival. *Communitas* refers to a relationship

between participants at a festival, where traditional social inequalities no longer apply for its duration (Turner, 1969). Music festivals are often considered to be marginal, liminal zones, outside the constraints of daily life, which results in *communitas*—“an intense community spirit, resulting from a shared experience associated with an atmosphere of social equality, sharing, intimacy and togetherness” (Stone, 2008, p. 215). *Communitas* has also been described as a temporary sense of closeness (Turner, 1974) and is an important component of satisfaction with a festival (Morgan, 2008). However, *communitas* is always considered to be temporary, and therefore its links with any durable sense of community and social inclusion are likely to be somewhat fleeting.

The fact that the term community need not apply exclusively to those within a particular geographic space has important implications for both the study of the social impacts of festivals, which are often couched in terms of the local community and for social inclusion initiatives, which often appear to be geographically specific, both in terms of who pays for and drives the initiatives and the intended recipients of such initiatives. Clarke and Jepson (2011) identified the importance of understanding how event organizers themselves frame community, as this framing tends to be influential in terms of the accrual of benefits from the event. When assessing a festival’s inclusive or exclusive nature, it appears to be prudent to consider not just the local (geographically proximate) community but also the other communities of interest that may be affected. For the purpose of this study, the multidimensional nature of community is recognized and accepted. This article aims to examine attempts at social inclusion by organizers of festivals and assesses whether this is aimed at diverse examples of community or merely a narrow community of interest. Further, it raises the question as to whether those people who attend a music festival for liminal or hedonistic enjoyment can be considered a part of a community at all.

Methods

A qualitative study was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the ways in which music festival organizers may contribute to social inclusion goals, based on rich description (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). An interpretivist paradigm framed the study, whereby the data are collected from the perspective of the participant and the researcher aims to enter the participants’ social world (Miles & Huberman, 1994), in this case, a music festival, and allow their voices to be heard. Sufficient detail is to be provided when writing up findings, displaying an intimate knowledge of the subject, so that the reader feels a sense of being there (Neuman, 1997). This thick description is also “one of the most important means for achieving credibility in qualitative research” (Tracy, 2010, p. 843).

This study adopted a phenomenological approach, in order to explore the *lived experience* (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Szarycz, 2009), which was considered appropriate for examining festival organizers’ perspectives on the strategies they use to achieve social inclusion. In phenomenological studies “participants offer narratives or provide general accounts of events and situations from a particular perspective—namely, their own” (Szarycz, p. 49). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with six organizers of music festivals, together with site visits of the festival venues and locales, to understand the context within which the interviews were conducted. A sample of six participants is not unusual in this kind of study, in that “the number of people interviewed in phenomenological studies is usually small, and often case-specific” (Szarycz, p. 54).

Music festivals were chosen because of their general appeal, in that they typically include activities and diversions beyond the music itself, such as associated workshops in line with the theme of the festival (Bowen & Daniels, 2005). They also often have a wide range of acts covering different varieties and styles of music, which again potentially

reaches a broad audience. Many of these festivals are at the forefront of political activism (Mair & Laing, 2012; Sharpe, 2008). They are therefore also likely to be strongly concerned with social inclusion outcomes and to be leaders of this type of activity from an events industry perspective.

Three of these festivals took place in rural or regional Australia, one in metropolitan Australia, and two in large metropolitan centers in the United Kingdom. The Australian festivals were held outdoors while the urban festivals in the United Kingdom were held across a number of venues, both indoor and outdoor. These festivals were approached by email for participation in the study and each festival nominated one representative to speak to the researchers, who was generally the director or a senior member of the organising team of the festival, with responsibility for environmental matters. Table 1 provides an overview of these festivals.

All interviews were held face-to-face and were recorded using a portable recording device and transcribed. Most of the interviews lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. Interviews took place at the organizers' office or a local cafe, depending on the wishes of the organizer. This was aimed at making the participant feel comfortable and at ease, in a surrounding of their choice. This approach allowed for the collation of large amounts of data and multiple voices and opinions to emerge (Tracy, 2010) and provided the opportunity for thick description (Decrop, 2004). Figure 1 provides an outline of the prompts used by the researchers conducting the interviews.

The researchers were aware that in phenomenological research "truth is an interpretive construct, and involves assessing the trustworthiness or credibility of the researcher's interpretation of the participant's experience (as described by the participant)" (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010, p. 1068). This was done through spending adequate time on fieldwork to delve below the surface, the use of thick description, and multiple researchers to both collect and analyze the data (Tracy, 2010). The data were first analyzed using open coding, which involves the researcher breaking down the data into its parts and looking for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). All data were coded according to themes derived both from the literature (mainly using the work of Johnson et al., 2011) and from the emergent data (Higham & Hinch, 2002). Line-by-line coding resulted in a close and scrupulous analysis (Charmaz, 1995). This was followed by a stage of focused coding, involving the examination of recurring codes in the data and grouping them into larger overarching categories or themes (Saldaña, 2013). For example, a number of codes relating to the organizers' aim of helping attendees to learn new skills or be educated in some way were grouped under the broader theme of Consumption. Each researcher carried out the first stage of analysis separately (line-by-line coding and focused coding) and then compared the results. The themes that emerged were essentially the same, with synonyms sometimes used for the same theme. Convergence on the same conclusion is another hallmark of quality in qualitative research according to Tracy (2010). These categories formed the basis of a theoretically informed analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which subsequently evolved into the key themes discussed in this article. This stage of the analysis was carried out by the researchers together, looking at the coded data and making notes as broader patterns and themes were discerned. A summary of the findings was later sent to each participant, to allow for member reflections (Tracy, 2010). None of the participants came back with additional comments or queried any of the findings.

Findings and Discussion

Social inclusion can be considered to refer to participation in the *key areas of society* (Burchardt et al., 2002). The data findings are categorized using four themes, all of which

TABLE 1 Festival Details

Festival	Year Started	Location	Average Attendance	Festival Type	Venue Type
Festival 1	1989	Australia	87,500 (over 5 days)	Blues and Roots Music	Dedicated green field site
Festival 2	2004	Australia	24,000 (over 3 days)	Sustainable Arts and Music	Leased green field site
Festival 3	2007	United Kingdom	231,450 (over 18 days)	International Arts Festival	25 city centre venues
Festival 4	1993	Australia	32,000 (over 3 days)	Music and Arts Festival	Dedicated green field site
Festival 5	1992	Australia	80,000 (over 4 days)	World Music and Dance festival	City Centre parkland
Festival 6	1962	United Kingdom	Approx. 200,000 (over 3 weeks)	Music and Arts Festival	City Centre venues

1. What were the reasons for holding the event?
2. Discussion of the aims and objectives of the event.
3. Motivations for incorporating greening into their event organization.
4. Intentions towards event attendees?
5. Any barriers or constraints that were encountered with respect to this intention?
6. Is there a marketing advantage?
7. Have you been influenced by other stakeholders in terms of organizing this event?
8. Do you personally hold green values or beliefs and have you organized the event in accordance with those values or beliefs?
9. Plans for the future of the event (expansion, changes in focus etc.).
10. Anything else you would like to say?

FIGURE 1 Interview prompts.

emerged from the interviews that were conducted and relate to these key areas of society in which an individual should be able to partake (see Johnson et al., 2011).

Consumption

The consumption of a festival (in this case a music festival) relies heavily on the ability of an individual to access it. Many of the organizers interviewed noted that they were involved in a number of initiatives to make this *easier*, including free events, discounted tickets for those with financial barriers, and free tickets to paid events for members of disadvantaged communities. Festival 3's organizer took pride in how the festival reaches out to the broader community in this way:

We ran a program where we worked with cultural regeneration officers and the city council and some other partners across the city to offer tickets at a discounted rate of 3 pounds across all of the festival shows to people who had a barrier in attending that event for whatever reason that was. We also deliberately made one third of the program free so that more people could attend elements of the festival. We also did a live relay of some of our events so that people who couldn't attend could still take part.

Not all organizers, however, widely publicized the availability of free tickets to local residents, which suggests that the pressures of budgets and financial sustainability overcame some of their desire to make their festivals more inclusive. As Festival 2's organizer noted:

We have sort of encouragement measures for the locals to come. Don't tell anyone this but then there's half price tickets for the immediate locals. It's very sort of loosely applied so if you were tell everyone and they were to turn up, there would be issues for us . . .

Most of the organizers felt that they played a role in encouraging people to use facilities that they otherwise might not be able to access, or feel they have the ability to access, as illustrated by this quote by the organizer of Festival 6:

For us it's also about opening up beautiful spaces – we don't use purpose built venues, but rather use historic halls that are 600 years old that the general public can't usually access . . . it's about bringing people in, showing them the diversity, the history and the architecture as much as it is about the artistic works we put in the program.

Thus, access also involved breaking down the barriers, perceived or otherwise, that might prevent some people from entering spaces which were part of the heritage of the city, due to feelings of intimidation or because of the high cost that entry to these places normally attracts.

Interestingly, none of the festival organizers interviewed specifically mentioned the importance of facilitating accessibility of their site for the disabled through specific policies or practices. While they may indeed do so, they did not appear to think of this as a tool for *social inclusion*. The focus of their discussion in the interviews conducted in this study was centred on alleviating disadvantage due to poverty or overcoming barriers resulting from different cultural backgrounds. This aspect of their festival management approach requires further exploration. It may be so ingrained in their management strategies that they do not perceive this as a social inclusion outcome.

Festival organizers were also keen to stress that what festival attendees “consume” is more than just the music or art. Learning new skills and access to education were seen as important. Most of the festivals incorporated educational workshops on social justice themes; and comments by organizers such as “we are involved in community upskilling” (Festival 4 organizer) and “empowering our community is an incredibly important part of what we do” (Festival 2 organizer) are examples of this trend. Festival 6 has an outreach program that targets the local community, particularly children, with the aim of upskilling people, and giving them opportunities to showcase their work, as its organizer explained: “We do jewellery making projects, sculptures, all kind of dance . . . we work with community groups and schools as well as older adults.” Festival 4 goes even further with its aims for attendee education and empowerment, according to the organizer interviewed:

The function of the festival is wholly educational . . . throughout the festival there's workshops that are fully attended . . . there's a big chunk of people that have gained significantly more knowledge and how to apply it to their lives than they had before . . . certainly there is a big up-skilling.

The references here to the community and increasing community capacity appear to be directed at attendees, rather than local residents. Whether these strategies have a broader impact is unknown, and future research might usefully examine this further, by interviewing attendees, residents and any virtual communities connected to these festivals. That way, multiple communities may be considered, rather than merely a narrow community of interest (Simonson, 1996).

According to the organizer of Festival 1, spreading an educational message to attendees is about understanding how the festival might reflect and be received by our changing, multicultural communities:

One needs to be able to look at an event in a much wider way than just what is our recycling level. What is this event really all about? How does it represent to people from different cultures what you are doing? And how does it represent itself in a country where 22.5% of our nation were not even born here! And a huge amount of those do not come from an English speaking background. So what are you trying to do in modern day Australia to represent yourselves as being reflective of our community and our aspirations too?

It is important to note that Festival 1's organizer was less concerned with how the festival was received by the local geographic community. They pointed out that some residents felt that a music festival did not set the right tone for their community: "There are some people . . . vocal minorities . . . they want their house to be worth \$5 million, but they still want the town to be like it was in 1974 . . . but they can't have their cake and eat it too." Festival 5's organizer similarly referred to resident protests connected to the festival: "We're always having car parking issues," and "Yes, sometimes we do get complaints about noise." Failure to develop strategies to address these concerns might have an impact on social inclusion goals. Residents may feel excluded or marginalized in preference to the community of interest, being the temporary community of people who have come together to attend the festival (Simonson, 1996). Further research is needed to explore this issue further.

Production

Festival organizers interviewed highlighted various ways in which they felt they were producing inclusive events, such as the use of local suppliers, the generation of public-private partnerships with community-based organizations, using locals as volunteers, and working with local authorities to regenerate deprived areas. Marketing strategies used to reach perceived marginalized groups included the use of a community box office, providing discounted or free tickets, and live broadcasts. The festivals were also used as a showcase for local talent by commissioning local artists, or discovering and presenting new local musicians. According to the organizer of Festival 1: "We started by presenting blues music – that's the music of oppressed people! And we've extended what we do into having [. . .] indigenous Australia and Pacific Rim music." They felt it was important to champion ethnic diversity and multiculturalism by including local and indigenous artists in their programming and reflecting the cultural mix of the wider Australian society. Festival 6's organizer also emphasized their work with migrant and refugee groups in order "to bring ethnic communities into our artistic programming."

The almost ubiquitous use of volunteers is another example of how festival organizers can involve the local community in the production of the event, creating a social support network, which is an indication or outcome of social inclusion (Johnson et al., 2011). For example, Festival 3's organizer mentioned that their volunteer program involves around 330 volunteers who are part of the local community. They explained that several of these volunteers have gone on to find full time careers as a result of the opportunities they had while volunteering. Finkel (2010) argued that volunteering programs can cross social strata, ethnic backgrounds, and gender divides. This also has a bearing on another aspect of inclusion (*social interaction* or *communitas*), discussed later in this article.

Festival 3's organizer provided an example of employment policies which may have social inclusion outcomes, observing that they worked with local art producers and offered internships to allow professional development: "They [the local art producers] work with our professionals over 6 months and deliver a fabulous performance as part of our festival . . . this really gave them a new profile." Another festival organizer (Festival 1) pointed to the festival's fair working practices and preference for employing local people, which they felt had a positive effect on the community.

However, not all of the organizers agreed that their festivals are making the most of this opportunity to promote social inclusion. One festival organizer (Festival 1) argued that by focusing too much on environmental sustainability, they may be detracting from their ability or desire to champion social justice and diversity:

I know events that get sustainability awards who don't pay their lower artists. Well, if they're putting their money into recycling and they're not paying their artists, well I don't think that's a fair trade off. I mean, I think you then look at issues of exploitation, social justice, and you have to look at issues of free trade. Because issues of free trade come down to, 'Am I prepared to sell products that exploit?' And then at the same time go, 'Hey, you know, I'm a great sustainable event!' You can't just do one without looking at the big picture of it.

Finally, one of the organizers of Festival 4 noted that they attend community meetings, to keep the community members up to date and to listen to (and address) any festival-related complaints. This festival also maintains a community fund where "a dollar from every ticket sold goes into our fund, and then local community groups can submit a project for funding . . . it goes through a local community voting process (we don't decide) and then the money is allocated." Such examples suggest that these festival directors and organizers are making serious efforts to maintain a connection with their geographic local community and develop the festival in line with community wishes.

Political Engagement

According to Johnson et al. (2011), political engagement is an important part of social inclusion, which may involve an individual becoming more aware of political issues and finding a voice to express those issues. The participants in this study felt that advocating for social justice and social change were key elements of their role. This comment: "We have an incredible opportunity to leverage the 'hipness' of a music festival to achieve sustainable capacity building within our communities" (Festival 2 organizer) demonstrates the depth of feeling among festival organizers of their role in educating and encouraging community awareness. Another organizer (Festival 5) commented: "We always include social justice groups—Amnesty, UNICEF etc., and we allow not-for-profits to [publicize] their campaigns free of charge." However, these festival organizers stressed that they are providing an opportunity for the organizations to help the communities rather than lecture to them: "It's not Greenpeace bashing on the door . . . it's Greenpeace doing some workshops, talking about key campaign issues, and helping the community develop its ability to lobby" (Festival 2 organizer). Festival 2's organizer observed that the nature of festivals helps this process of raising awareness: "It's about empowering our community—arts and music do this in a special way . . . they talk to the heart."

Merely having these organizations publicize their ethos and values to festival attendees does not mean that they specifically mention social inclusion goals, nor is this really the

point. Rather it provides the opportunity for attendees to become more engaged with and educated about social justice issues, which may empower them in their everyday lives.

Social Interaction and Communitas

Socialization or social interaction is the main way that festival organizers see themselves contributing to social inclusion, given their general philosophy that “music and events are just an incredible way to bring people together” (Festival 2 organizer). For example, according to the organizer of Festival 5: “Festivals have a major place within Australian entertainment, society and culture,” and “there is a real sense of bringing people together—camaraderie between performers and audiences.” For some festival organizers, the key is to provide an atmosphere that allows inclusivity and tolerance. The organizer of Festival 2 described “a world village approach” and “bringing together as many different cultures and communities as we can [to] build something where people can come together and enjoy with each other in a really inclusive environment.” Such an approach may therefore promote feelings of *communitas* (Turner, 1974), “a sense of camaraderie that occurs when individuals from various walks of life share a common bond of [special] experience” (Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993, p. 12).

Organizers specifically referred to the celebratory or hedonistic aspects of their festivals. For the organizer of Festival 5, “at the end of the day, it’s about entertaining and providing an enjoyable experience,” while the organizer of Festival 2 referred to “getting people together to have a big party” and the festival being a place “where environmentally aware people can come and have a really good time.” However not every attendee is experiencing the festival at that purely hedonic level. The presence of children at some of these festivals made for a less frenetic atmosphere than might otherwise be the case, according to the organizers of Festivals 2 and 5. There were also attendees who were more attuned to their natural surroundings, particularly where the festival was held in a picturesque setting, and thus had a meaningful experience connected to nature and potentially to *place*. As the organizer interviewed with respect to Festival 4 observed:

There’s always going to be an element of people that attend music festivals as a kind of social escapism kind of thing. They just want to get away from life and bills, from traffic, from everything and have a few drinks, watch the bands and party, whatever. And that’s totally fine but I think there is a very large portion of the audience of this event, in particular because of our surroundings, that you can’t walk anywhere on this site without being struck by the beauty of the site, by the fact that you are out, you know, in amongst it. It’s not in a car park, in a, you know anywhere, it’s out in nature.

Extrapolating social inclusion objectives from a strategy that appears to aim purely at encouraging socialization or hedonistic enjoyment might appear problematic. It could, however, be argued that the promotion of a festival space as a space for communion performs an important social role in bringing people together and giving them the opportunity to let off steam and build connections, potentially breaking down social barriers. This might create its own community and be a fruitful area for future research with respect to festivals and festival organization. It might also be useful to explore different ways that organizers can stimulate *communitas* through activities and management strategies, including programming and festival design.

Conclusion

This article has considered social inclusion using interview data from music festival organizers in Australia and the United Kingdom by focusing on the strategies employed by organizers to achieve this goal, and their intentions with respect to achieving social inclusion outcomes. This is an acknowledged limitation of the research, in that the results may not be generalizable across a wider population. However, it is argued that this article points the way towards the need for and the value of further research on the links between festivals and social inclusion.

This article also makes the case for a more *nuanced* understanding of communities, rather than limiting this to geographical boundaries. Organizers may be focusing their efforts on the portable community (Gardner, 2004), those people in attendance, rather than those living nearby, particularly with respect to programming or messages delivered at the festival. This has important implications for festival organizers. Developing strategies for social inclusion that aim to benefit the community in a broader sense may have a greater impact on these outcomes than current efforts, which appear to be largely directed at festival attendees. Future research on festivals as leisure spaces may also benefit from examining the different communities that exist, rather than ignoring or playing down the complex and multifaceted nature of community in contemporary society.

As discussed in the literature, festivals are often staged for broad social goals, including engaging the community, breaking down entry barriers, and increasing tolerance and acceptance of diversity. Findings of this study suggest that all the festival organizers interviewed were aware of such social goals and had implemented strategies to achieve these goals. Examples include the provision of free or discounted tickets for local residents or those from disadvantaged communities, the large volunteer programs associated with the events, and the inclusion of multicultural and ethnically diverse programming of both local and international performers. No mention was made of strategies to address the needs of the disabled, which organizers do not appear to see as a tool for achieving social inclusion. A follow-up study to consider this aspect of festival organization might be valuable, as well as interviewing attendees and potential attendees about this aspect.

The literature also suggests that festivals may aim to develop skills and networks within their local communities which may increase future employment opportunities. Most of the festival organizers interviewed for this study ran workshops during the festival aimed at “upskilling” attendees in terms of social justice issues, but few considered whether this would have any effect on local residents. However, at least one festival offered internships to local art producers which allowed professional development and was likely to lead to positive employment outcomes. This was therefore an example of a strategy aimed at achieving social inclusion within the broader community.

The development of political engagement within a community can be considered to be an important measure of social inclusion. Festivals in this study were generally making a positive contribution to this based on the interviews conducted with organizers. Most festivals included talks, workshops or stalls manned by social justice organizations such as Amnesty or UNICEF. Organizers spoke of “empowering” and “capacity building” and felt that they were in a position of influence with regard to political and social justice engagement. Further research might explore this from the stakeholders’ perspective, particularly the community in all its various guises.

The final area where festivals may be able to influence social inclusion is in regard to facilitating social interaction or *communitas*. Organizers felt that their festivals occupied an almost unique place in society, given their ability to create connections and networks and provide attendees with a hedonic and celebratory experience. The role of festival organizers

in promoting *communitas* needs to be unpacked further, given that it appears to be part of the strategies employed by organizers to attain social inclusion goals. The most effective ways to achieve this also require further attention. The organizers were certain that attendees and volunteers were mixing and engaging with each other during the festival. However, the question of whether these festivals are contributing to interaction between attendees or between attendees and the host community is outside the scope of this study and would also appear to be another important area for future research.

Unlike the example of the Up Helly Aa festival (Finkel, 2010), there appears to be no intentional “closed shop” mentality at any of the festivals included in this research, based on the interviews conducted. Nonetheless, the extent to which these festivals are inclusive of the local community in contrast to the public rhetoric of these organizers remains to be seen. Indeed, they may even alienate some local residents—parking issues, traffic congestion, and increased noise were all mentioned by participants as potential negative impacts of festivals. Again, this is deserving of further research, to explore how inclusive these festivals really are.

Only one festival organizer interviewed regularly attended local community meetings. This appears to be lost opportunity to build bridges with local residents and might be a useful option for organizers of music festivals, to discuss any negative impacts and provide greater access to their social messages. This may also potentially inspire more local community members to attend and share in the benefits of social inclusion outcomes. Similarly, while free and discounted tickets for local residents are available at most of the music festivals considered in this study, some organizers admitted that these were not widely publicized. This should be addressed by organizers as it is vital that festivals encourage greater attendance from the local community if they wish to be the socially inclusive events they aim to be.

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