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Revitalising rural Scotland

Clark, Julie; Rice, Gareth

Published in:

Journal of Place Management and Development

DOI:

[10.1108/JPMD-06-2019-0044](https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMD-06-2019-0044)

E-pub ahead of print: 26/09/2019

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication on the UWS Academic Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Clark, J., & Rice, G. (2019). Revitalising rural Scotland: Loch Fyne, branding and belonging. *Journal of Place Management and Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMD-06-2019-0044>

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Revitalising Rural Scotland: Loch Fyne, Branding and Belonging

Journal:	<i>Journal of Place Management and Development</i>
Manuscript ID	JPMD-06-2019-0044.R1
Manuscript Type:	Academic Paper
Keywords:	Place branding, Events, Community, Rural, Competitiveness

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Introduction

Much of the research in and around the geographies of events and branding have been dominated by cities, at the expense of more rural environments (Pike, 2009a, 2009b; Landry, 2006; Kavartzis and Dennis, 2018). Lauded, in particular, as a way forward for the post-industrial city, events have been theorised as mechanisms for overcoming neighbourhood stigma, supporting community cohesion, and improving health and wellbeing, amongst other benefits (Smith, 2012). By delivering positive experiences, place and perceptions of place can be changed. It is theorised that distinctiveness of place is achieved when experience there combines aesthetic, escapist, educational and entertainment dimensions, offering varied opportunities to be, to go, to learn and to enjoy (Pine and Gilmore, 2011). However, even within a regional economic development framework, urban centres are most often studied as the driving forces in innovation and growth, with surrounding rural areas cast in a passive and residual role (Ward and Brown, 2009). However, the urban policy preoccupations of depopulation, stigmatised environments and changing economic conditions also present a challenge for many rural areas. While the rural imaginary evokes natural beauty, community and social bonds (Tönnies, 1955), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has delineated the specific demand and supply challenges that rural regions face: persistent out-migration of the younger and most educated people, lower average labour productivity, lower levels of public service provision, and a lack of cutting-edge telecommunications and other infrastructure (OECD, 2006). This paper seeks to explore the potential of effective place branding and event management in a rural area by examining the Loch Fyne Food Fair in Scotland.

The following section of the paper offers an overview of the role of events and place management in rural areas. The next section outlines the methodological approach. After a brief introduction to the case study, the paper presents its core themes of branding and authenticity, community and the third space, and the experience economy. The paper closes by reflecting on lessons for effective event management.

Events and Place Management in Rural Areas.

There is a growing literature on the regeneration and sustainability of rural areas set within the fields of place management studies and festivalization research (Wilson, et al., 2017). A key focus has been on the contribution of events to destination revitalisation and competitiveness (Armenski et al, 2017; Armenski, et al, 2011; Kim and Dwyer, 2003). In what is considered a classic definition in the field, Ritchie and Crouch (2003: 2) suggested that destination competitiveness should be understood

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3 on the basis of “its ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract
4 visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences, and to do so
5 in a profitable way, while enhancing the wellbeing of destination residents and
6 preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations.” Since then,
7 the destination competitiveness literature, has become well established, but also shot
8 through with inconsistencies over its definition, measurement and its legitimacy as a
9 topic of research (Novias et al, 2018).
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15 Such inconsistencies have not prevented scholars from exploring the importance of
16 events to rural areas and to the communities who live there. A number of studies
17 have complimented the economic impacts with more of an emphasis on social
18 impacts. In their examination of the impacts of small tourism events on rural places,
19 Alves et al. (2010) focused on the Cherry Festival in Fundão, Portugal, to
20 demonstrate that perceived social impacts extend beyond the economic benefits.
21 Through a series of personal interviews and questionnaires (with suppliers,
22 organisers and local residents) the data highlighted the importance of community
23 image, community pride, recreational opportunities and the promotion of
24 organizations and businesses. This helped to improve the quality of local life. In
25 view of these benefits, Alves et al (2010) recommend that, event organisers should
26 consider social impacts as part of their overall assessment and place management
27 strategies.
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35 Although economic imperatives are a key driver in the deployment of events for
36 regeneration purposes (Smith, 2012), they are not always the primary concern in
37 event activity more broadly. In her exploration of Fête de la soupe, a grassroots
38 festival in Charroux, rural France, organised around the making and sharing of
39 soup, Ducros (2017) also shows that profit motives and economic outcomes are not
40 dominant. More important is how the festival constitutes a space of relational
41 building between place and people, between people themselves and an introspective
42 moment over the past and future of place as “rural”. A key aspect is the ways in
43 which place gets (re)made in a rural village through participation in the festival,
44 which, as it is rooted in vernacular food practices also regenerates sense of place and
45 attachment to place. Although the annual festival does yield economic benefits, it is
46 very much an opportunity for people to come together to promote their community
47 identity and the rural area with which it is most associated. As France urbanised,
48 soup retained its rural connections by remaining the basic dish of peasant
49 communities (Mennel, 1985). According to Ducros (2017:308): “Soup serves as a
50 cultural sign at different scales: national, territorial (*terroir*), local, rural,
51 familial...The revival of soup through soup festivals may be another way for urban
52 French to reconnect with a rurality that has been lost and for rural France to express
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3 their identity to an outside and reinforce place attachment." Loch Fyne produce also
4 has a strong rural identity, something which we discuss below.
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8 Events, and the spaces where they are hosted, have also been conceptualised as
9 "third places." (Waxman, 2006; Slater and Koo, 2010). Hawkins and Ryan (2013)
10 highlight how the Falls Music & Arts Festival (Australia) and Festival of Lights (New
11 Zealand), display the essence of third place. This included community spaces to
12 connect with others in the community, neutrality where people can just be
13 themselves with little or no demands and/or opportunities to build social
14 connections and networks that contribute to growing social capital. Even though
15 these festivals weren't exclusively linked to rural areas, they share many of the
16 characteristics of rural counterparts: Place branding and event management played a
17 key role in creating third places, which in turn promoted individual wellbeing, social
18 inclusion and a sense of community. Another aspect of the study, which hasn't
19 featured so explicitly in the work cited above is authenticity, something which
20 cannot transplanted from one event to another. As we go on to show, authenticity is
21 crucial to the success of place branding by which we mean Loch Fyne as an actual
22 place and as a brand.
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31 Place branding can also be considered in terms of its relationship to culture.
32 Scaramanga (2012) points to the advantages of using art(s) and culture-based
33 activities to promote a place. The argument is that culture plays a critical role as long
34 as "authentic cultural elements" are produced by local residents. This chimes with
35 previous work which suggests that, the single most dangerous aspect of cultural
36 investment is that it simply does not sit comfortably in the context for which it is
37 intended (see Jayne, 2004). In rural areas, culture is less about design and
38 architecture and more centered upon community identity, food and beverage, arts
39 and crafts, music and the beauty of the natural landscape. When made to work
40 together, these elements can lend an authenticity to place branding and how it meets
41 a number of needs as part of rural tourism. As Bessière (2002:1) notes, this is
42 particularly true for gastronomy: "Identity markers of a region and/or as a means of
43 promoting farm products, gastronomy meets the specific needs of consumers, local
44 producers and other actors in rural tourism." This trend where productive
45 relationships have been forged between rural tourism and culinary heritage. In cases
46 where these relationships work in and through events, rural communities are able to
47 involve and benefit from various place branding and management actors. Events can
48 also form part of a rural strategy to adapt to outside forces as a collective, cultural
49 and regional identity.
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59 **Methodology**

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5 The ethnographic methodological approach deployed was derived from the Chicago
6 School of Sociology and from visual methodologies (Rose, 2016). Participant
7 observation was conducted at the Loch Fyne Food Fair in Argyll & Bute in 2017. The
8 data consisted of purposeful conversations with event organisers and social
9 interactions with members of the local community and other event attendees,
10 alongside extensive field notes and photographs. In order to develop our
11 understanding of the Food Fair through the eyes of the local community, and others
12 who were in attendance, researchers established positive relationships throughout
13 the duration of the event, using methods which provided us with details suited to
14 fine grained analysis. The approach stemmed from the Chicago School of Sociology
15 and in particular William Foote Whyte (1943) which meant that as the researchers sat
16 and listened they learned the answers to questions that might not otherwise have
17 arisen. Following Rose (2012), analytic interpretations of the visual materials were
18 grounded in the specific context and social circumstances of the ethnography.
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27 Initial preparation involved studying the online program and mapping out what
28 events were on and when. To meet retain the focus and meet the main aim of this
29 paper, the researchers designed a schedule of participation all organised events.
30 Contra Baudrillard's (1998) "simulacrum", we make no distinction between the real
31 and the unreal; our photographs and the images used in promotional brochures are
32 a reminder of the extent to which the Food Fair is dependent upon (the real place
33 that is) Loch Fyne and its stunning imagery for authenticity. This chimes with a
34 previous observation from Pinney (2004:8), who suggests it is important to be
35 cognizant of 'not [just] how images "look", but what they can "do"'. For us this was
36 connected with *how* we looked at our photographs *qua* our overall analysis. To do
37 this we drew upon the work of Berger (1972:9) which suggests that, we never just
38 look at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and
39 ourselves."
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46 **Findings and Discussion**

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49 The Loch Fyne Food Fair is Scotland's oldest and most established food Fair,
50 happening each May in Argyll & Bute, the second largest administrative area of
51 any Scottish council.
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54 *Place Branding and Authenticity*

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57 In terms of both product and produce, the Fair can be considered extraordinarily
58 eclectic, reaching beyond what might be thought of as niche Scottish territory, while
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3 strongly signalling and managing to maintain a coherent regional identity. Outside
4 the tent, Scozzese Wood Fired Pizza include Stornoway black pudding as a pizza
5 topping; just inside, you can buy a sausage roll made with chorizo and Tamworth
6 pork. A sense of coherence is generated through the Loch Fyne brand, which
7 emphasises fresh, local and high-quality produce: the local, in this case, is an issue of
8 identified origination, from the Loch Fyne or another rural context. Brands and
9 branding are inherently entangled with ideas of place. Place branding can be
10 considered as a distinct activity from place marketing; the former is largely demand
11 led, with the needs and demands of customers as a starting point, alongside the
12 corollary expectation was that places should adjust themselves in search of a
13 “competitive identity” according to customer demand (Anholt, 2007; Pedersen,
14 2004). Insofar as place marketing and the more recent phenomenon of place
15 branding are attempts to improve the economies of given geographical locations,
16 they can be considered analogous. Proponents of both approaches accept that
17 obtaining an effective brand will put a region on the map and bestow it with a
18 positive identity and image. However, place branding takes as its point of departure
19 the *identity* of places. Locational assets or unique selling points are used to create and
20 sustain identity (Nilsson *et al.*, 2010).

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31 In the case of specifically Loch Fyne branded products, including ales, whiskey,
32 oysters, mussels, salmon and langoustines, the event can be considered as part of an
33 ambitious effort selling Argyll & Bute by using local resources to project and
34 strengthen regional identity. As Govers and Go (2009: 17) put it, “place branding is
35 about representing a place by building a positive internal (with those who deliver
36 the experience) and external (with visitors) image which leads to a brand satisfaction
37 and loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, and other favorable associations”.
38 As shown above, an authentic identity of place is critical to successful branding
39 approaches. Claims to authenticity within the Fair are made through image, produce
40 and language highlighting locally produced food, drink and crafts. Photographs of
41 the surrounding area used in marketing local produce make no attempt to portray
42 west Scotland bathed in sunshine. The evocation of a rural imaginary draws on what
43 might be considered as a more wild, romantic landscape, in black and white, or
44 using the grey and green tones that the visitor is likely to see. Within both the main
45 and craft tents, signage, packaging and conversation reiterate product origination,
46 often from around the Loch itself (Figure 1). The wood, from which one trader is
47 hand-carving spoons using a small axe, is indigenous to the region and sustainably
48 gathered and there is an emphasis on handcrafted, sustainable and recycled
49 materials. While much of the produce can be considered traditionally Scottish, its
50 treatment and presentation caters to cosmopolitan tastes referencing, for example,
51 the smoking methods used or that salmon is ‘double cured with beetroot.’ Alongside
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3 the epicurean register made familiar by restaurants and celebrity chefs, the branding
4 of the food Fair itself should be considered, Fyne being a homophone for 'fine', a
5 signifier of high quality. As well as recurring on Loch Fyne branded produce, the
6 Fair also advertises FyneFest later in the year, a beer, food and music festival, which
7 advertises local award winning produce and draws in craft beer makers from
8 Europe as well as across the UK.
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13 Figure 1: Branding and authenticity (Image credit: Julie Clark)
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18 *Community and Third Place* 19

20 As one of the largest events in Argyll and Bute, The Loch Fyne Food Fair is a crucial
21 event for providing a focal point bringing the relatively dispersed population
22 together, promoted as "A feast of West Coast food, drink and entertainment for all
23 ages." The event is the key site for showcasing an extensive regional culinary system
24 called "Food From Argyll", which includes salmon, oysters, cupcakes, Whiskies at
25 Inveraray, scotch eggs, Fyne Ales, brisket, truckle & loaf, coffee from Cardross, as
26 well as Shawararama and marinated meats.
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32 The event as a third place was the dominant social outcome for the Food Fair
33 (Oldenburg, 1999; Hawkins and Ryan, 2013). Mingled throughout the site there was
34 a "friendly and inclusive atmosphere", as everyone was "brought forth and
35 consumed in the 'warm circle' of experience" (Bauman, 2001: 65) from a slightly
36 different context. Many of the social interactions were random conversations
37 between strangers and members of the local community, who more than help to
38 answer questions and help everyone out:
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41 "Everyone seems to feel welcome and there is a real family atmosphere....it's very
42 safe. There are some non-Scottish accents, too....everyone is equal here"(fieldnotes).
43 In this regard, the Food Fair is a rubric under which differences between people are
44 concealed, or at least not made explicit. One participant described the Food Fair as
45 "...a place where no one really stands out, nor do they want to which is a good
46 thing, it makes you feel that everyone is on the same level and that everyone benefits
47 from what has been laid on. This was why the wife and I came back." This quote
48 supports a key observation from Dench (1986:182) which is that, the idea of
49 community is "to share benefits among their members, regardless of how talented or
50 important they are."
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57 Another aspect which made the Food Fair work as a third place was its community
58 feel and atmosphere. Organisers and community members told researchers that,
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3 although the field site would accommodate expansion, the modest size of the Fair
4 ensured its sustainability. Previous work by Alves et al (2010) demonstrates that, for
5 small events in rural areas, the social impacts can extend beyond the economic
6 benefits. This was also true of Loch Fyne as recognised by the organisers, who were
7 also keen to ensure that the Food Fair remained an important meeting place for the
8 local community rather than scale up in an attempt to increase profits.
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13 Hawkins and Ryan (2013:197) note, "a key characteristic of third place is the break
14 away from civil life"; however, third places cannot effectively function without
15 being appropriated by their surroundings. Rural landscape perception research
16 suggests that, the aesthetic contribution cannot be underestimated. The Food Fair's
17 physical location in a Cairndow field at the head of Loch Fyne was part of its appeal
18 (see Figure X), particularly for those who traveled from Glasgow and from other
19 cities and towns.
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26 Figure 2: View of landscape surrounding the location of the Loch Fyne Food Fair
27 (Image credit: Gareth Rice)
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31 As one of many visual representations which the researchers took during the field
32 work period Photo 1 captures the visual impact of the surrounding landscape and
33 enabled the researchers to a) 'see' the positive landscape features which give wider
34 context to the Food Fair as a third place and b) appreciate precisely what the
35 landscape offered the Food Fair attendees appreciate the absence of urbanisation,
36 lushness, openness, fresh air and high relief. Remoteness and memories were
37 particularly important to those from outside the local community. One participant
38 told the researchers that they "loved the isolated feeling of the place." Another
39 participant, who was originally from Glasgow but had moved to Edinburgh, said
40 that, "The drive to here is part of the experience...I really feel like I am going
41 somewhere and when I get here it's always worth it. This [Argyll & Bute] is where I
42 first experienced rural Scotland and this event gives me an excuse to revisit every
43 year. I bring my kids here now and they love it too".
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51 The landscape is most familiar to the local community and provides a key reference
52 point for Loch Fyne the brand. The place branding uses its geographical features as
53 part of a wider rural imaginary which taps into and exports the natural beauty of the
54 region. At the local level, these images connect the local community, with the Food
55 Fair and the surrounding landscape: the Arrochar Alps, Ardgool peninsula and
56 sweeping hillsides and mountain passes are used to demarcate the Food Fair.
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Loch Fyne and The Experience Economy

Of the four conceptual realms of the experience economy, the aesthetic environment and entertainment offer passive enjoyment, while the escapism of engaging with the Fair and educational opportunities bring the chance for active participation (Pine and Gilmore, 2011).

The Fair as an **aesthetic experience** begins prior to arrival: whether travelling by bus, coach, walking, cycling or private car, all approaches run alongside the eponymous loch, surrounded by imposing hills and the fast-changing cloud-scape that comes from being at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. For many, the strong evocation of the beauty of the area though Loch Fyne produce will give this experience added resonance: the area and event has been signalled to the visitor as a wild space, where fresh, natural produce is caught and sold. Although an annual event of four decades standing, the site of the Fair itself is also resolutely temporary in style, set in fields between the hills and the Old Military Road. Parking means being directed into fields at the back of the tent that houses the Fair, rather than any hard standing. More on tents if not elsewhere? While the associated Loch Fyne Oyster Bar and Restaurant, and the small Tree Shop Garden Centre are nearby, from the site of the Fair it is the landscape, not the nearby built environment, which dominates. This landscape is a key part of the experience and there are always people outside, taking in the view, looking at the land, the sky, and breathing the air, regardless of rain, wind or sunshine.

The landscape also contributes to the **escapist** realm of the Loch Fyne Food Fair experience. For the visitor or tourist, immersion in the landscape also offers a means of getting away from day-to-day urban life. The environment of the Fair, the produce, and the workshop activities on offer foster a sense of acquiring membership of a quasi-rural community for the weekend. Many of the goods on offer are premium quality and relatively high end: oysters rest on a bed of ice beside heavy bottles; chalk writing on the board against the wall of the tent confirms that this is champagne, available alongside prosecco and more humble offerings. However, anyone can come in. There is no entry charge, no ticket requirement and a resultant sense of escapism in the village atmosphere generated by the interchange and discussion over produce and crafts.

Figure 3: Workshops

Speaking to the educational realm of experience, the active dimension of the Fair is further extended by the opportunity to participate in workshops. These events are

run throughout the day, in a smaller, annexed tent. There is no charge for any of the workshops; all that is required is to sign up in advance. The workshops are food and drink-based, with a strong, interactive component, whether consuming (e.g handling hops and tasting with the local Loch Fyne Ales company) or doing and creating (as in learning how to shuck oysters, make Scotch eggs or decorate cupcakes). Absorption and enjoyment are evident, as workshop participants make introductions over mutual interest and support with unusual activities. Quirky and distinctive experiences like these are a signature feature of the experience economy (Figure 3). With some workshops suitable for children, as well as adults, the small group environment (mostly around fifteen participants), also fosters social interaction within and beyond the workshops, allowing participants to build a network of acquaintance at the Fair.

Figure 3: Workshops (Image credit: Julie Clark)

The entertainment realm is represented at the Fair by a programme of live music at one end of the tent, showcasing both local talent, such as the band Heron Valley and music more associated with Scotland as a whole. Outdoors, a mix of different traditional Scottish bands offered entertainment, often incorporating a mix of adults and younger people playing bagpipes and drums. As conceived by Pine and Gimour (2011) entertainment primarily functioning as a passive experience, in effect, the *consumption* of dance, music or some other spectacle. While there is plenty of opportunity for this kind of experience, this underplays the role of entertainment at the Fair. Visitors participate in ceilidh dancing, as well as watching, many of the acts are local, with friends and family present and highly engaged, and the music itself offers further currency for social exchange. The festival atmosphere outside is further energised by the presence of children playing on fairground style attractions, getting their faces painted or running around as adults eat and drink or just sit and chat on picnic benches outside. In this sense, the entertainment itself offers a sense of participation, being part of the community and the festivalscape.

Conclusions

Competition and standardisation in global markets have reduced uniqueness and stimulated demands for authenticity and provenance. This has created a demand for authenticity, which events in rural regions are well positioned to meet. The Loch Fyne Food Fair in Argyll and Bute highlights a manifold disjuncture between place marketing and place branding, which in turn reflects the different approaches to how cities and rural areas seek to remain competitive. Cities often adopt the same strategies including the couching of global retail capital, securing the services of

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3 'starchitects' to build signature buildings and regenerating old industrial areas to
4 bring rivers back into vogue. These initiatives are most associated with place
5 marketing. In rural areas by contrast, the emphasis is more on distinctiveness,
6 authenticity and keeping events smaller in scale when compared with cities. This
7 ethnography of the has generated three interrelated findings, all of which may be of
8 value to event managers. First, the authenticity of the brand is critical. The evidence
9 suggests a need for inter-professional thinking, combined with sensitivity to place
10 branding in rural areas, in order to avoid the reproduction of borrowed cultural
11 elements and practices, such as 'the Guggenheim effect' (Miles, 2007) or 'Doing a
12 Glasgow' (Mooney, 2004) which have been synonymous with cities. Second, the
13 long-term success and sustainability of the event was supported by the third place
14 characteristics of the Food Fair, in that social impacts featured prominently
15 alongside any economic benefits to organisers, the region and participants. The Fair
16 was designed to provide an inclusive third space for community formation.
17 Residents, visitors and tourists came together with local and visiting entrepreneurs,
18 forming a quasi-rural community as well as supporting community cohesion around
19 Loch Fyne over the longer term. Third, as a mature and well attended event, the Fair
20 encapsulated all realms of the experience economy in one location. The aesthetic,
21 escapist, educational and entertainment experiences on offer should not be
22 considered in isolation from one another *qua* event management. The
23 interdependence between these elements underpins place branding and a sense of
24 belonging, securing the long term commitment of both visitors and locals alike.
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39 Note

40 [1] The Times, 16.04.2018. "Scots will lose out on broadband deal, claims minister."
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Figure 1: Branding and authenticity



Figure 2: View of landscape surrounding the location of the Loch Fyne Food Fair (Image Credit: Gareth Rice)



Figure 3: Food Fair Workshops (Image credit: Julie Clark)

Introduction

Much of the research in and around the geographies of events and branding have been dominated by cities, at the expense of more rural environments (Pike, 2009a, 2009b; Landry, 2006; Kavaratzis and Dennis, 2018). Lauded, in particular, as a way forward for the post-industrial city, events have been theorised as mechanisms for overcoming neighbourhood stigma, supporting community cohesion, and improving health and wellbeing, amongst other benefits (Landry, 2008, Smith, 2012, Shone and Parry, 2013). By delivering positive experiences, place and perceptions of place can be changed. It is theorised that distinctiveness of place is achieved when experience there combines aesthetic, escapist, educational and entertainment dimensions, offering varied opportunities to be, to go, to learn and to enjoy (Pine and Gilmore, 2011). However, even within a regional economic development framework, urban centres are most often studied as the driving forces in innovation and growth, with surrounding rural areas cast in a passive and residual role (Ward and Brown, 2009). However, the urban policy preoccupations of depopulation, stigmatised environments and changing economic conditions also present a challenge for many rural areas. While the rural imaginary evokes natural beauty, community and social bonds (Tönnies, 1955), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has delineated the specific demand and supply challenges that rural regions face: persistent out-migration of the younger and most educated people, lower average labour productivity, lower levels of public service provision, and a lack of cutting-edge telecommunications and other infrastructure (OECD, 2006).

This paper seeks to explore the potential of effective place branding and event management in a rural area by examining the Loch Fyne Food Fair in Scotland. The food and drink industry is a core focus of Scotland's economic development strategy, benefiting communities by making a significant contribution to the nation's economy through a £1bn visitor spend and as the lead international export (Scottish Government, 2015; 2018). Publicity campaigns and policy support have seen the industry transform in Scotland, from having a generally poor reputation prior to the first Taste of Scotland campaign in the 1970s, to supporting a range of attractions broadly classified as food tourism including food festivals, food trails, cooking holidays and farmers markets (Everett, 2012). Attracting a couple of hundred visitors each year, the Loch Fyne Food Fair is Scotland's longest running outdoor food festival, established in 1990. Held each spring in Argyll and Bute, the second largest administrative area of any Scottish council, the Fair contributes to the region's successful marketing campaign aimed at attracting visitors. In the first half of 2017, the region received over 1.3 million visitors, an increase of 13.1% on 2016. In the same period, visitor numbers to Argyll and Bute attractions across Scotland increased by nearly 7%, at a rate 2.4% greater than across Scotland as a whole (Argyll and Bute Council, 2018).

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3 The following section of the paper offers an overview of the role of events and place
4 management in rural areas. The next section outlines the methodological approach.
5 After a brief introduction to the case study, the paper presents its core themes of
6 branding and authenticity, community and the third space, and the experience
7 economy. The paper closes by reflecting on lessons for effective event management.
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11 **Events and Place Management in Rural Areas.**

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14 There is a growing literature on the regeneration and sustainability of rural areas set
15 within the fields of place management studies and festivalization research (Wilson, et
16 al., 2017). A key focus has been on the contribution of events to destination
17 revitalisation and competitiveness (Armenski et al, 2017; Armenski, et al, 2011; Kim
18 and Dwyer, 2003). In what is considered a classic definition in the field, Ritchie and
19 Crouch (2003: 2) suggested that destination competitiveness should be understood on
20 the basis of "its ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors
21 while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences, and to do so in a
22 profitable way, while enhancing the wellbeing of destination residents and preserving
23 the natural capital of the destination for future generations." Since then, destination
24 competitiveness literature has become well established, although challenged over
25 inconsistencies. Novias *et al*, (2018) classify these as: ability of a destination to provide
26 a high standard of living for the residents of that destination; the ability of a
27 destination to increasingly attract and satisfy potential tourists and; sustainability as
28 it applies to the environmental and social aspects of the destination.
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37 Such inconsistencies have not prevented scholars from exploring the importance of
38 events to rural areas and to the communities who live there. A number of studies have
39 complimented the economic impacts with more of an emphasis on social impacts. In
40 their examination of the impacts of small tourism events on rural places, Alves et al.
41 (2010) focused on the Cherry Festival in Fundão, Portugal, to demonstrate that
42 perceived social impacts extend beyond the economic benefits. Through a series of
43 personal interviews and questionnaires (with suppliers, organisers and local
44 residents) the data highlighted the importance of community image, community
45 pride, recreational opportunities and the promotion of organizations and businesses.
46 This helped to improve the quality of local life. In view of these benefits, Alves et al
47 (2010) recommend that, event organisers should consider social impacts as part of
48 their overall assessment and place management strategies.
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56 Although economic imperatives are a key driver in the deployment of events for
57 regeneration purposes (Smith, 2012), they are not always the primary concern in event
58 activity more broadly. In her exploration of Fête de la soupe, a grassroot festival in
59 Charroux, rural France, organised around the making and sharing of soup, Ducros
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(2017) also shows that profit motives and economic outcomes are not dominant. More important is how the festival constitutes a space of relational building between place and people, between people themselves and an introspective moment over the past and future of place as “rural”. A key aspect is the ways in which place gets (re)made in a rural village through participation in the festival, which, as it is rooted in vernacular food practices also regenerates sense of place and attachment to place. Although the annual festival does yield economic benefits, it is very much an opportunity for people to come together to promote their community identity and the rural area with which it is most associated. As France urbanised, soup retained its rural connections by remaining the basic dish of peasant communities (Mennel, 1985). According to Ducros (2017:308): “Soup serves as a cultural sign at different scales: national, territorial (*terroir*), local, rural, familial...The revival of soup through soup festivals may be another way for urban French to reconnect with a rurality that has been lost and for rural France to express their identity to an outside and reinforce place attachment.” Loch Fyne produce also has a strong rural identity, something which we discuss below.

Events, and the spaces where they are hosted, have also been conceptualised as “third places.” (Waxman, 2006; Slater and Koo, 2010). Hawkins and Ryan (2013) highlight how the Falls Music & Arts Festival (Australia) and Festival of Lights (New Zealand), display the essence of third place. This included community spaces to connect with others in the community, neutrality where people can just be themselves with little or no demands and/or opportunities to build social connections and networks that contribute to growing social capital (Rodriguez-Giron and Vanneste, 2019). Even though these festivals weren’t exclusively linked to rural areas, they share many of the characteristics of rural counterparts: Place branding and event management played a key role in creating third places, which in turn promoted individual wellbeing, social inclusion and a sense of community. Another aspect of the study, which hasn’t featured so explicitly in the work cited above is authenticity, something which cannot transplanted from one event to another. As we go on to show, authenticity is crucial to the success of place branding by which we mean Loch Fyne as an actual place and as a brand.

Place branding can also be considered in terms of its relationship to culture. Scaramanga (2012) points to the advantages of using art(s) and culture-based activities to promote a place. The argument is that culture plays a critical role as long as “authentic cultural elements” are produced by local residents. This chimes with previous work which suggests that, the single most dangerous aspect of cultural investment is that it simply does not sit comfortably in the context for which it is intended (see Jayne, 2004). In rural areas, culture is less about design and architecture

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3 and more centered upon community identity, food and beverage, arts and crafts,
4 music and the beauty of the natural landscape. When made to work together, these
5 elements can lend an authenticity to place branding and how it meets a number of
6 needs as part of rural tourism (See Torres, 2002; Cohen, 2007; Sims, 2009). As Bessière
7 (2002:1) notes, this is particularly true for gastronomy: "Identity markers of a region
8 and/or as a means of promoting farm products, gastronomy meets the specific needs
9 of consumers, local producers and other actors in rural tourism." This trend where
10 productive relationships have been forged between rural tourism and culinary
11 heritage. In cases where these relationships work in and through events, rural
12 communities are able to involve and benefit from various place branding and
13 management actors. Events can also form part of a rural strategy to adapt to outside
14 forces as a collective, cultural and regional identity.
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22 **Methodology**

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25 The ethnographic methodological approach deployed was derived from the Chicago
26 School of Sociology and from visual methodologies (Rose, 2016). Participant
27 observation was conducted at the Loch Fyne Food Fair over two days in Argyll and
28 Bute in 2017. The rigour of our approach was demonstrated by our using different
29 types of data and our data analysis procedure. This afforded greater modes of
30 interaction and cognition between the data and increased the opportunity for
31 interpretative insight leading to a more rigorous analysis process. During the analysis
32 process, annotations and memos were created to record our developing
33 interpretations of the data. The data consisted of purposeful conversations with event
34 organisers and social interactions with members of the local community and other
35 event attendees, alongside extensive field notes and photographs. In order to develop
36 our understanding of the Food Fair through the eyes of the local community, and
37 others who were in attendance, researchers established positive relationships
38 throughout the duration of the event, using methods which provided us with details
39 suited to fine grained analysis. The approach stemmed from the Chicago School of
40 Sociology and in particular William Foote Whyte (1943) which meant that as the
41 researchers sat and listened they learned the answers to questions that might not
42 otherwise have arisen. To devise the themes outlined below we treated our
43 ethnography and photographs as one body of data. Following Rose (2016; see also
44 Rose, 2012), our coding analysis included the status of the photographs as inventories
45 of the event and representations of Loch Fyne used in place branding.
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56 Initial preparation involved studying the online program and mapping out what
57 events were on and when. The researchers designed a schedule of participation
58 organised events. This link between the event and the place is part of the wider
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3 demand for more “authentic” tourist experiences (see Sims, 2009). By authentic, we
4 don’t just mean the Food Fair itself, but the multiple meanings that the tourists and
5 visitors bring to it (see Cohen, 2007).
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8 9 **Findings and Discussion**

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11 The following section explores key themes emergent from the data.
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13 14 *Place Branding and Authenticity*

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17 Brands and branding are inherently entangled with ideas of place. Place branding can
18 be considered as a distinct activity from place marketing; the former is largely demand
19 led, with the needs and demands of customers as a starting point, alongside the
20 corollary expectation was that places should adjust themselves in search of a
21 “competitive identity” according to customer demand (Anholt, 2007; Pedersen, 2004).
22 Insofar as place marketing and the more recent phenomenon of place branding are
23 attempts to improve the economies of given geographical locations, they can be
24 considered analogous. Proponents of both approaches accept that obtaining an
25 effective brand will put a region on the map and bestow it with a positive identity and
26 image. However, place branding takes as its point of departure the *identity* of places.
27 Locational assets or unique selling points are used to create and sustain identity
28 (Nilsson *et al.*, 2010).
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36 In the case of specifically Loch Fyne branded products, including ales, whiskey,
37 oysters, mussels, salmon and langoustines, the event can be considered as part of an
38 ambitious effort selling Argyll and Bute by using local resources to project and
39 strengthen regional identity. As Govers and Go (2009: 17) put it, “place branding is
40 about representing a place by building a positive internal (with those who deliver the
41 experience) and external (with visitors) image which leads to a brand satisfaction and
42 loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, and other favorable associations”. As
43 noted above, the link between authenticity and place is critical to successful branding
44 approaches. Claims to authenticity within the Fair are made through image, produce
45 and language highlighting locally produced food, drink and crafts. Photographs of
46 the surrounding area used in marketing local produce make no attempt to portray the
47 west Scotland as bathed in sunshine. The evocation of a rural imaginary draws on
48 what might be considered as a more wild, romantic landscape, in black and white, or
49 using the grey and green tones that the visitor is likely to see. Within both the main
50 and craft tents, signage, packaging and conversation reiterate product origination,
51 often from around the Loch itself (Figure 1). The wood, from which one trader is
52 hand-carving spoons using a small axe, is indigenous to the region and sustainably
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3 gathered and there is an emphasis on handcrafted, sustainable and recycled materials.
4 While much of the produce can be considered traditionally Scottish, its treatment and
5 presentation caters to cosmopolitan tastes referencing, for example, the smoking
6 methods used or that salmon is 'double cured with beetroot.' Alongside the epicurean
7 register made familiar by restaurants and celebrity chefs, the branding of the food Fair
8 itself should be considered, Fyne being a homophone for 'fine', a signifier of high
9 quality. As well as recurring attention to Loch Fyne branded produce, the Fair also
10 advertises FyneFest later in the year, a beer, food and music festival, which advertises
11 local award winning produce and draws in craft beer makers from Europe as well as
12 across the UK.
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19 However, in terms of both product and produce, the Fair can be considered
20 extraordinarily eclectic, reaching beyond what might be thought of as niche Scottish
21 territory, while strongly signalling and managing to maintain a coherent regional
22 identity. Outside the tent, Scozzese Wood Fired Pizza include Stornoway black
23 pudding as a pizza topping; just inside, sausage rolls made with chorizo and
24 Tamworth pork are for sale. A sense of coherence is generated through the Loch Fyne
25 brand, which emphasises fresh, local and high-quality produce: the local, in this case,
26 is an issue of identified origination, from the Loch Fyne or another rural context.
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32 Figure 1: Branding and authenticity (Image credit: Julie Clark)
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36 *Community and Third Place* 37 38

39 The Loch Fyne Food Fair is a crucial event for providing a focal point bringing the
40 relatively dispersed population together, promoted as "A feast of West Coast food,
41 drink and entertainment for all ages." The event is the key site for showcasing an
42 extensive regional culinary system called "Food From Argyll", which includes
43 salmon, oysters, cupcakes, Whiskies at Inveraray, scotch eggs, Fyne Ales, brisket,
44 truckle & loaf, coffee from Cardross, as well as Shawararama and marinated meats.
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49 The event as a third place was the dominant social outcome for the Food Fair
50 (Oldenburg, 1999; Hawkins and Ryan, 2013). Mingled throughout the site there was a
51 "friendly and inclusive atmosphere", as everyone was "brought forth and consumed
52 in the 'warm circle' of experience" (Bauman, 2001: 65) from a slightly different context.
53 Many of the social interactions were random conversations between strangers and
54 members of the local community, who more than help to answer questions and help
55 everyone out:
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3 “Everyone seems to feel welcome and there is a real family atmosphere....it’s very
4 safe. There are some non-Scottish accents, too....everyone is equal here”(fieldnotes).
5 In this regard, the Food Fair is a rubric under which differences between people are
6 concealed, or at least not made explicit. One participant described the Food Fair as
7 “...a place where no one really stands out, nor do they want to which is a good thing,
8 it makes you feel that everyone is on the same level and that everyone benefits from
9 what has been laid on. This was why the wife and I came back.” This quote supports
10 a key observation from Dench (1986:182) which is that, the idea of community is “to
11 share benefits among their members, regardless of how talented or important they
12 are.”
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19 Another aspect which made the Food Fair work as a third place was its community
20 feel and atmosphere. Organisers and community members told researchers that,
21 although the field site would accommodate expansion, the modest size of the Fair
22 ensured its sustainability. This is not to suggest that the concept of community should
23 be treated uncritically. Previous work by Anderson (1983), Cohen (1985), Bauman
24 (2001) and Delanty (2003) has analyzed the changing nature of communities. A
25 common thread running through this work is the enduring nostalgia for the idea of
26 community as a source of security, identity and belonging. This is partly due to
27 Bauman’s (2001) notion of ‘liquid modernity’ and its associated nomadism and
28 competitiveness. Our data supports previous work about the ability of food and
29 drinks (and the branding of them) to create a quasi-rural community by linking
30 people, place and community. As noted by Sims (2009:328), this is because, “foods and
31 drinks engage all the senses and have stronger connections with place because we
32 have personal, sensory memories of consuming them in that setting.”
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40 Hawkins and Ryan (2013:197) note, “a key characteristic of third place is the break
41 away from civil life”; however, third places cannot effectively function without being
42 appropriated by their surroundings. Rural landscape perception research suggests
43 that, the aesthetic contribution cannot be underestimated. The Food Fair’s physical
44 location in a Cairndow field at the head of Loch Fyne was part of its appeal (see Figure
45 2), particularly for those who traveled from Glasgow and from other cities and towns.
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52 Figure 2: View of landscape surrounding the location of the Loch Fyne Food Fair
53 (Image credit: Gareth Rice)
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56 As one of many visual representations which the researchers took during the field
57 work period Photo 1 captures the visual impact of the surrounding landscape and
58 enabled the researchers to a) ‘see’ the positive landscape features which give wider
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3 context to the Food Fair as a third place and b) appreciate precisely what the landscape
4 offered the Food Fair attendees appreciate the absence of urbanisation, lushness,
5 openness, fresh air and high relief. Remoteness and memories were particularly
6 important to those from outside the local community. One participant told the
7 researchers that they “loved the isolated feeling of the place.” Another participant,
8 who was originally from Glasgow but had moved to Edinburgh, said that, “The drive
9 to here is part of the experience...I really feel like I am going somewhere and when I
10 get here it’s always worth it. This [Argyll and Bute] is where I first experienced rural
11 Scotland and this event gives me an excuse to revisit every year. I bring my kids here
12 now and they love it too”.

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19 The landscape is most familiar to the local community and provides a key reference
20 point for Loch Fyne the brand. The place branding uses its geographical features as
21 part of a wider rural imaginary which taps into and exports the natural beauty of the
22 region. At the local level, these images connect the local community, with the Food
23 Fair and the surrounding landscape: the Arrochar Alps, Ardgool peninsula and
24 sweeping hillsides and mountain passes are used to demarcate the Food Fair.

25 26 27 28 29 *Loch Fyne and The Experience Economy*

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32 Of the four conceptual realms of the experience economy, the aesthetic environment
33 and entertainment offer passive enjoyment, while the escapism of engaging with the
34 Fair and educational opportunities bring the chance for active participation (Pine and
35 Gilmore, 2011).

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39 The Fair as an **aesthetic experience** begins prior to arrival: whether travelling by bus,
40 coach, walking, cycling or private car, all approaches run alongside the eponymous
41 loch, surrounded by imposing hills and the fast-changing cloud-scape that comes
42 from being at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. For many, the strong evocation of the
43 beauty of the area though Loch Fyne produce will give this experience added
44 resonance: the area and event has been signalled to the visitor as a wild space, where
45 fresh, natural produce is caught and sold. Although an annual event of four decades
46 standing, the site of the Fair itself is also resolutely temporary in style, set in fields
47 between the hills and the Old Military Road. Parking means being directed into fields
48 at the back of the tent that houses the Fair, rather than any hard standing. More on
49 tents if not elsewhere? While the associated Loch Fyne Oyster Bar and Restaurant, and
50 the small Tree Shop Garden Centre are nearby, from the site of the Fair it is the
51 landscape, not the nearby built environment, which dominates. This landscape is a
52 key part of the experience and there are always people outside, taking in the view,
53 looking at the land, the sky, and breathing the air, regardless of rain, wind or sunshine.
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5 The landscape also contributes to the **escapist** realm of the Loch Fyne Food Fair
6 experience. For the visitor or tourist, immersion in the landscape also offers a means
7 of getting away from day-to-day urban life. The environment of the Fair, the produce,
8 and the workshop activities on offer foster a sense of acquiring membership of a quasi-
9 rural community for the weekend. Many of the goods on offer are premium quality
10 and relatively high end: oysters rest on a bed of ice beside heavy bottles; chalk writing
11 on the board against the wall of the tent confirms that this is champagne, available
12 alongside prosecco and more humble offerings. However, anyone can come in. There
13 is no entry charge, no ticket requirement and a resultant sense of escapism in the
14 village atmosphere generated by the interchange and discussion over produce and
15 crafts.
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23 Speaking to the educational realm of experience, the active dimension of the Fair is
24 further extended by the opportunity to participate in workshops. These events are run
25 throughout the day, in a smaller, annexed tent. There is no charge for any of the
26 workshops; all that is required is to sign up in advance. The workshops are food and
27 drink-based, with a strong, interactive component, whether consuming (e.g handling
28 hops and tasting with the local Loch Fyne Ales company) or doing and creating (as in
29 learning how to shuck oysters, make Scotch eggs or decorate cupcakes). Absorption
30 and enjoyment are evident, as workshop participants make introductions through their
31 mutual interest and support for one another, participating in unusual activities.
32 Quirky and distinctive experiences like these are a signature feature of the experience
33 economy (Figure 3). With some workshops suitable for children, as well as adults, the
34 small group environment (mostly around fifteen participants), also fosters social
35 interaction within and beyond the workshops, allowing participants to build a
36 network of acquaintance at the Fair.
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45 Figure 3: Workshops (Image credit: Julie Clark)
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48 The entertainment realm is represented at the Fair by a programme of live music at
49 one end of the tent, showcasing both local talent, such as the band Heron Valley and
50 music more associated with Scotland as a whole. Outdoors, a mix of different
51 traditional Scottish bands offered entertainment, often incorporating a mix of adults
52 and younger people playing bagpipes and drums. As conceived by Pine and Gilmour
53 (2011) entertainment primarily functioning as a passive experience, in effect, the
54 *consumption* of dance, music or some other spectacle. While there is plenty of
55 opportunity for this kind of experience, this underplays the role of entertainment at
56 the Fair. Sensory experience and creative engagement are integral parts of the Loch
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3 Fyne brand. Visitors participate in *ceilidh dancing* as well as watching, many of the
4 acts are local, with friends and family present and highly engaged, and the music itself
5 offers further currency for social exchange. The festival atmosphere outside is further
6 energised by the presence of children playing on fairground style attractions, getting
7 their faces painted or running around as adults eat and drink or just sit and chat on
8 picnic benches outside. In this sense, the entertainment itself offers a sense of
9 participation, being part of the community and the festivalscape.
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15 **Conclusions**

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18 Competition and standardisation in global markets have reduced uniqueness and
19 stimulated demands for authenticity and provenance. This has created a demand for
20 authenticity, which events in rural regions are well positioned to meet (Cohen, 2007;
21 Sims, 2009). The Loch Fyne Food Fair in Argyll and Bute highlights a manifold
22 disjuncture between place marketing and place branding, which in turn reflects the
23 different approaches to how cities and rural areas seek to remain competitive. Cities
24 often adopt the same strategies including the couching of global retail capital, securing
25 the services of 'starchitects' to build signature buildings and regenerating old
26 industrial areas to bring rivers back into vogue. *These initiatives are most associated*
27 *with culture and place marketing* (see Miles, 2007). In rural areas by contrast, the
28 emphasis is more on distinctiveness, authenticity and keeping events smaller in scale
29 when compared with cities (Cohen, 2007; Sims, 2009). Our ethnography has generated
30 three interrelated findings, all of which may be of value to event managers. First, the
31 authenticity of the brand is critical. The evidence suggests a need for inter-professional
32 thinking, combined with sensitivity to place branding in rural areas, in order to avoid
33 the reproduction of borrowed cultural elements and practices, such as 'the
34 Guggenheim effect' (Miles, 2007) or 'Doing a Glasgow' (Mooney, 2004) which have
35 been synonymous with cities. Second, the long-term success and sustainability of the
36 event was supported by the third place characteristics of the Food Fair, in that social
37 impacts featured prominently alongside any economic benefits to organisers, the
38 region and participants. The Fair was designed to provide an inclusive third space for
39 community formation. Residents, visitors and tourists came together with local and
40 visiting entrepreneurs, forming a quasi-rural community as well as supporting
41 community cohesion around Loch Fyne over the longer term (cf. Delanty, 2003). Third,
42 as a mature and well attended event, the Fair encapsulated all realms of the experience
43 economy in one location. The aesthetic, escapist, educational and entertainment
44 experiences on offer should not be considered in isolation from one another *qua* event
45 management. The interdependence between these elements underpins place branding
46 and a sense of belonging, securing the long term commitment of both visitors and
47 locals alike.
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Note

[1] The Times, 16.04.2018. "Scots will lose out on broadband deal, claims minister."

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