

The cultivation of local literary heritage and global networking in the UNESCO City of
Literature Network

In this paper, I aim to trace the complex links between local literary heritage, cultural policy and global networking by analysing Edinburgh's status as UNESCO City of Literature.

In my field research on the Edinburgh International Book Festival over the last two years, I have come across a staggering amount of material manifestations of literary culture inscribed into the material space of the city: projections of quotations onto the outer wall of Edinburgh Castle, poetry stanzas carved into granite blocks on the façade of the Scottish Parliament, and the two-hundred-foot tall Scott Monument commemorating Sir Walter Scott, to name a few. Research on the UNESCO City of Literature designation reveals that such literary manifestations are both regarded as key characteristics a city should have in order to apply for the title and also as projects that can be replicated by other network members – as for example literary quotations set in stone and wood on the streets of Iowa City.

Drawing on examples from Edinburgh's cityscape as the founder of the UNESCO City of Literature network, I argue that the cross-sector cultural policies guiding the long-term City of Literature project directly impact Edinburgh's literary landscape, ranging from which events take place to how the city of Edinburgh is written about in poetry and fiction, for example in the anthology *Umbrellas of Edinburgh – Poetry and Prose Inspired by Scotland's Capital City* (2016).

I will contextualize the continuous expansion of the UNESCO network within the framework of the *creative city* established by Richard Florida in the United States and Charles Landry in the United Kingdom. I will highlight both the embeddedness of literature as part of the cultural sector in the political advocacy of attracting 'creative industries' to individual urban locations, as well as the specifics of the interconnections of social actors and artistic practices in the literary field which, following Andreas Reckwitz, cannot be fully instrumentalized in the form of top-down governmentality (162).

Works Cited:

Jones, Russell, and Claire Askew, editors. *Umbrellas of Edinburgh: Poetry and prose inspired by Scotland's capital*. Freight Books, 2016.

Reckwitz, Andreas. *Kreativität und soziale Praxis: Studien zur Sozial- und Gesellschaftstheorie*. Transcript, 2016.

Bio:

Laura McAleese is a research assistant and PhD candidate in the research program “Schreibszene Frankfurt” at Goethe University of Frankfurt. She studied Anglistics with Art, Music and Theatre Studies at LMU Munich and went on to pursue a Master’s degree in Modern and Contemporary Literature at the University of Edinburgh. In her studies she concentrated on modernist writing, postmodern aesthetics and contemporary literary styles, gaining a BA and MSc with theses on Virginia Woolf’s aesthetics of writing. She is currently working on a PhD dissertation on use of space, cultural marketing and eventisation at the Edinburgh International Book Festival and StAnza Poetry Festival in St Andrews, supervised by Prof. Dr. Julika Griem and Prof. Dr. Sibylle Frank. She also works as a freelance translator and editor.