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978-1-108-92810-6 — The Frankfurt Book Fair and Bestseller Business
Beth Driscoll , Claire Squires
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Cambridge Elements

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THE FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR AND BESTSELLER BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT: The Frankfurt Book Fair is the leading global industry venue for rights sales, facilitating business-to-business deals and international networks. In this Element, we pursue an Ullapoolist approach to excavate beneath the production of bestsellers at the Fair. Our investigation involved three consecutive years of fieldwork (2017-2019) including interviews and autoethnographic, arts-informed interventions. The Element argues that buzz at the Fair exists in two states: as market-ready media reports and partial, lived experiences linked to mood. The physical structures and absences of the Fair enact its power relations and direct the flow of books and buzz. Further, the Fair is not only a site for commercial exchange but a carnival of sorts, marked by disruptive historical events and problematic socio-political dynamics. Key themes emerging from the Element are the presence of excess, the pseudo(neo)liberal self-satisfaction of book culture, and the interplay of optimism and pessimism in contemporary publishing.

KEYWORDS: Frankfurt Book Fair, publishing, bestsellers, marketing, buzz, book cultures, Ullapoolism

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