

Mega-events in Heritage-rich Cities: The HOMEE Research Project

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Mega-events in Heritage-rich Cities: The HOMEE Research Project¹

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Abstract

Recently, some organisers of mega-events, including the Olympics, have come to prefer using already existing facilities, revitalising them or adapting them for new purposes rather than investing in new infrastructures or venues. For historic and heritage-rich cities this change (triggered both by cuts in city budgets as well as by a slower pace of urban expansion) represents an opportunity for development but also poses a threat to their cultural heritage that until now has received little attention. This presentation concentrates on the ongoing HOMEE Research Project, a three-year European research project funded by the JPICH 2017 Heritage in Changing Environments Joint Call. It studies the relationship between mega-events and cultural heritage protection policy, as well as the impact of mega-events on heritage-rich cities. The objectives of the project are being achieved through a broad literature review and analyses of the case studies of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) programs of Genoa 2004, Wrocław 2016, Pafos 2017, Matera 2019 as well as the Milan Expo 2015 and Hull 2017 UK City of Culture. The article reviews the project's implementation and the key themes guiding the development of policy guidelines and recommendations that promote a more sensitive approach to heritage in organising initiatives and cultural mega-events.

Key Words: Heritage, Mega-events, cultural policy.

1. Exploring the link between cultural heritage and mega-events

Over the last 25 years, many European cities have aimed at restructuring their economic base following the decline of industry and increasing global competition, resulting in many cities turning to culture and heritage (Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993; Willems, 2014). Within these strategies, one longstanding approach has been the use of a mega-event to invest in and promote the city globally. Mega-events have been framed both in the literature and in practice as a means to boost

¹ This paper derives from part of the work we have been carrying out for the HOMEE Research Project, that deals specifically with the relationship between mega-events and cultural heritage in European cities. The HOMEE Research Project is a three-year European research project funded by the JPICH 2017 Heritage in Changing Environments Joint Call. Several ideas and sections have been previously published in Jones and Ponzini, 2019; Ponzini 2020; Ponzini and Jones 2020A; Ponzini and Jones 2020B and other works related to the research project. In particular, section 1 contains elements derived from the theoretical investigation jointly developed with the HOMEE research project members (Ponzini et al., 2019) and reformulated in Ponzini 2020; section 2 has drawn from the Jones and Ponzini 2019 paper while section 3 derives and includes substantial excerpts from Ponzini and Jones 2020A and a similar overview of the HOMEE Project has been presented in Ponzini and Jones 2020B.

infrastructural investments, ignite tourism and improve the image of the city. Successful iterations have been largely popularized and replicated elsewhere, to varying degrees of success. Mega-events, sporting mega-events in particular, have long been aimed towards growth and development and had limited interaction with the historic areas of cities.

Until recently, the emphasis has been placed by and large on the creation of new infrastructural components, new stadiums and other public facilities to host events. In many instances today, on the contrary, mega-event organizers have opted for the re-use of existing facilities, the conversion of inner-city areas and the regeneration of neighbourhoods. For heritage-rich European cities, this shift in paradigm represents both an opportunity and a threat. Recent research has been investigating these issues. The focus of this paper is to introduce the key issues being addressed in the research, the approach and methodologies implemented as well as a framework of the collective findings from the various cases studied.

The content of the article is inspired by previous publications of the project and in particular derive from three existing publications (Jones and Ponzini, 2019; Ponzini et al., 2019; Ponzini et al., 2020); they have been reformulated here to provide a more succinct presentation of the research and main issues and a similar overview of the HOMEE Project can also be found in Ponzini and Jones (2020B). The focus of this contribution is not on the specific details of the case studies, and which have been published elsewhere (see: Ponzini et al., 2020), but rather on the process of going about investigating and studying the heritage links with mega-events and the main findings which emerged.

1.1 Cultural mega-events and their impact on heritage-rich cities

Mega-events have been interpreted as accelerators and amplifiers of urban processes of development, redevelopment or, more generally, transformation. In particular, the enhancement of infrastructure and the availability of greater funds for historic areas may help conserve and valorise heritage, inject new functions for underused or neglected facilities and areas. Mega-events may use heritage symbols and icons to build a stronger image for the city as well as to enhance public interest in heritage. Also, new management and governance networks fostered by mega-events could come to impact local heritage policy-making as well. At the same time, there is a current trend of cities rejecting the ‘bigger is better’ approach to hosting mega-events, seeking rather to use existing or temporary venues or instead turning away from events entirely (International Olympic Committee, 2014). Mega-events like the European Capital of Culture have long tended towards such an approach (European Commission, 2014). In a recent publication, Jones (2020) systematized these two emerging perspectives and discussed “cultural mega-events” as paradigmatic. We derive substantial inspiration from these findings, and we will mainly focus on the relationships between cultural mega-events and cities and places that are rich in terms of tangible and intangible heritage.

While the general approach largely deals with built heritage and considers the urban scale (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012 and 2015; Bianchini & Borchini, 2018),

the particular focus in each case depended on how heritage was defined or perceived by local experts, decision makers, event documents and existing planning or preservation policies. In this sense, planning mega-events in heritage-rich cities and historic areas imply potential threats, frictions and risks, such as physical alterations to the built environment, reinterpretations of heritage that might be functional to the mega-event but that obliterates the meanings and roles of local communities in it, or that more generally affect negatively how heritage is considered. The necessities of one mega-event may rule out the measures that other policy sectors would prioritize, including heritage preservation. More simply, mega-event planning imposes a short-term agenda for urban decision making, this contrasts the long-term vision and planning that heritage preservation typically requires. Mass tourism is a usual goal for cities hosting a mega-event, yet it may cause damage in sensitive areas because of excessive pressure as well as changes that commodify heritage and 'Disneyfy' the urban realm. One extreme manifestation of this may be seen in the spectacularization, standardization or instrumentalization of local culture and heritage (Beriatos and Gospodini, 2004). On the opposite end, it is true that heritage can constitute an important opportunity as well as a threat to mega-event planning and implementation. For example, the image and appeal of a city while bidding as the host of a mega event or as a tourist destination for mega-event attendance-cum-local/regional-visit may lever its cultural heritage, and its historic places and iconic buildings in particular.

1.2 Studying the range of threats and opportunities for cultural heritage

In theory, a clear trade-off exists between involving heritage assets, sites and urban areas in the planning, management and promotion of a mega-event and the risk of negatively affecting the city's, heritage (e.g., physical change, overuse of sites, incompatible uses between mass tourism and heritage appreciation, marketing of the city, etc.) (Ponzini and Jones, 2015). Balancing the appreciation of cultural heritage and the promotion of urban development through cultural, sport or other mega-events is a great challenge for heritage-rich European cities. Exploring how ECoCs and other cultural mega-events can show how cities and communities first detected and then creatively anticipated or responded to the challenges.

Consistent with this perspective, recent research on cultural mega-events (Jones, 2017; 2020) has studied the wide-ranging impacts and relationship between mega-events and built heritage. Events can physically impede the construction of new infrastructures or rehabilitation of unused structures and public spaces. Beyond physical transformations, these events also intervene in the management of heritage through new governance structures or facilitate public participation in decision making processes that inform the understandings, definitions and valuing of heritage. The impacts also derive from indirect secondary effects, such as motivating private investments in heritage, increasing real estate prices or processes of gentrification.

On a different level, we searched for innovative approaches and planning tools that fostered heritage-sensitive actions and projects in the context mega-event

planning, implementation and legacy. Within this framework and set of cultural policy issues, the main research questions that the project seeks to answer are:

What are the main blind spots in our current understanding of the relationship between cultural heritage and mega-event policies?

How do preservation and conservation policies deal with the threats and opportunities generated by mega-events in heritage-rich European cities?

Do key stakeholders in charge of mega-events and preservation policies have relevant operational knowledge and planning tools at their disposal? How to improve such tools and who should be involved in these decision-making processes?

In seeking to answer these questions, the main objectives of the research are:

1. *To provide better understanding of the relationships between mega-events and cultural heritage preservation policies through a study of past events in heritage-rich contexts;*
2. *To prepare cultural heritage and mega-event policymakers at local, national and supranational levels to make explicit the opportunities and threats derived from planning and implementing mega-events and to better deal with them in the context of historic cities;*
3. *To engage local stakeholders and ensure their inclusion in decision-making processes to connect local interests with global cultural values.*
4. *Generate innovative guidelines and planning tools for promoting more heritage-sensitive initiatives and projects in cooperation with mega-event policymakers working at different scales and at different levels.*

To improve our understanding of the changing context described above, this research addresses the gap existing within and between academic research and policymaking. The HOMEE Consortium comprises four research groups based at the Politecnico di Milano, University of Hull, Neapolis University Pafos and the International Cultural Centre in Krakow. The four research partners are responsible for developing five case cases (Genoa 2004 ECoC, Milan Expo 2015; Wrocław 2016 ECoC; Hull 2017 UK City of Culture; Pafos 2017 ECoC) in order to better understand the potential opportunities and threats for heritage when cities host cultural mega-events. The findings of these case studies will contribute to improving the planning, management and implementation of mega-events in historic contexts in the future. The research builds upon the excellent applied research track-record of our consortium (see for example Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993; Ponzini and Jones, 2015; Bianchini and Borchini, 2017; Jones and Ponzini 2018; Jones, 2017) and also studies Matera, Italy, with research occurring prior, during and following the city's year as European Capital of Culture during 2019. One of the key deliverables of the project will be the HOMEE Charter, a set of policy guidelines and recommendations written for local actors and decision-makers of future host cities, as well as mega-event organizers at the supranational level. Our network of Associate Partners encompasses key national and international cultural policy institutions and organizations, as well as local mega-event organizers in

charge of setting up and managing mega-events, including the Matera Basilicata 2019 Foundation. The network will ensure a wide dissemination of the project findings through the platforms of ENCATC and UNeECC. The Charter will directly inform event planners and other policy makers.

2. Methodological approach of the HOMEE Project

The HOMEE research mixed past cases and one ongoing case of events in a heritage-rich city. Our work is based on the five case studies of Genoa 2004 ECoC (Jones, 2020b), Milan Expo 2015 (Di Vita & Ponzini, 2020); Wrocław 2016 ECoC (Sanetra–Szeliga et al., 2020); Hull 2017 UK City of Culture (Tommarchi & Bianchini, 2020); Pafos 2017 ECoC (Dova et al., 2020) alongside an investigation of the Matera Basilicata 2019 Capital of Culture event as it unfolded. The original selection of the cases was made following quite practical reasons. Each case was selected individually, in part because the teams knew the process and substance well enough to judge its expected relevance in understanding the mega-event/heritage link by deepening its evidence. In some cases, besides this initial mixed scanning, substantial research work was done before the research started. In general, we wanted to have the widest variety possible, reaching situations that were of substantially different magnitude in terms of city size and population, event size and budget, type and relevance of heritage present before the start of the event, kind of planning and managing processes, etc. We knew that this would have not allowed simple and linear comparisons across the cases nor a one-on-one comparison. As we expect high-level policy makers to be able learn from examples and cases that show similarities, in connection to our interpretations and reflections (that are presented in the conclusions). For this reason, the more varied the cases the ampler the potential learning impact at the policy level.

The intention has been to identify new issues that are theoretically stimulating but, most of all, that are practically relevant in a complex policy field, or, better, in complex policy fields in different cities and countries of Europe. Our selection includes events that have a substantial cultural content (rather than sport), such as the European Capital of Culture, the UK city of Culture and the Universal Exposition. This choice allowed us to see more clearly cultural policy in action and more intensively concentrated in existing city areas rather than in self-standing platforms in per-urban areas (as more typical for sporting mega-events). There are, nonetheless, good reasons for allowing cross-referencing between different types of mega-events, largely due to the observable shifts in mega-event planning as discussed above (as argued by Jones, 2020a). The differing background work of the researchers involved in the HOMEE project forced us to jointly define and adopt a common method of analysis and reporting that places the cases in their context and understanding the due proportions among the cases. Once again, the urge to explore a new policy question rather than to generalize through clear-cut comparative methods drove the work. The different sources available in each case also forced us to use slightly differing labels and to consider different ways of measuring similar things.

While a detailed set of quantitative data was collected in order to deepen the city's and the event's facts and figures, such as city population, local GDP over time, we primarily adopted a largely qualitative approach. This allowed us to identify from the documentation, interviews and review of final outputs of the events how heritage came to be understood and involved (or not) in the mega-event planning and implementation processes. Our research teams analysed a comprehensive series of city and event documents, plans and strategies to understand what correlations existed between the event and larger long-term city strategies as well as what role is intended for heritage within these proposals and their actual implementation. The documentation regarding the mega-event typically included the bid books at different stages of the competition to get the title, the official event documents (such as calendars, programs, publications, etc.), the final event evaluations and impact reports where available as well as others. The analysis of the city planning context touched on documentation including official city plans (land-use or otherwise), strategic visions and spatial development plans. More specific heritage conservation/restoration plans and programs (including regulation and restrictions regarding the built environment) we considered in connection with UNESCO World Heritage documents (such as the applications, Site Management Plans, reports, etc.), national heritage policies, plans and listing, other policies and initiatives (including funds by EU or public and private entities). A more in-depth understanding of the narrative behind each mega-event and in particular regarding the relationship with heritage and the historic city drew on systematic press reviews that included newspaper articles, official websites and other media where available. On the quantitative side, in the snapshot and city/event initial descriptions as well as elsewhere, we have used different sources, preferring the ones that were more homogeneous and comparable (e.g., Eurostat, OECD, UNWTO etc.).

A final key component of the research was the involvement of stakeholders and decision makers in a set of specialized events aimed at garnering their feedback and input into the findings of the research. While the more than a hundred interviews conducted across the project gathered critical evidence, these additional collaborative meetings were critical for measuring and testing the findings. First, a Living Lab workshop was set up in Matera over two days to discuss that case with the experiences of the past case studies, focused on some of the key issues that stakeholders had identified as being of most interest. This meeting brought together the HOMEE researchers with a group of local academics and researchers and representatives from the 2019 Matera-Basilicata Foundation and local municipality. An expanded symposium was then held with invited stakeholders from the various case studies and other key organizations, such as DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture at the European Commission along with Europa Nostra, as well as leaders and managers of past and future European Capitals of Culture, administrators in cities that hosted large events and others. These experts and actors gave vital feedback on the project and findings of the work up until that point. Their involvement helped to confirm our observations and findings and their input was crucial to reformulating this work and informing the final *Charter for Mega-events in Heritage Rich Cities*.

3. Themes emerging from the 5 past case studies and the observation of one ongoing mega-event

The details and explanations of each of the five past cases can be found in the most recent HOMEE publications (Ponzini et al., 2020). Additional future publications will also present these cases in more depth, examining the main themes found in each.

This article focuses on providing an overview of the issues the HOMEE project has been investigating and the main overall themes emerging from the cases collectively. Therefore, this section will not explain the details of the cases individually, but rather reference some of the main themes traced across multiple cases. Through the research conducted for the HOMEE project along with the inclusion of experts and actors, the researchers have defined four areas in which to organize the final recommendations to be published in the *Charter for Mega-events in Heritage Rich Cities*:

- Context matters for mega-events in heritage-rich cities
- Long-term vision and spatial planning
- Governance, local capacity building and participation
- Heritage, identity and local communities

The purpose of this charter is to discuss a set of principles and recommendations for future host cities to follow as they prepare to either bid or host a mega-event. The following sections broadly present these four key themes that have emerged, and which make up the base of the charter and therefore will see further development within our ongoing research project. While the cases have not been presented in detail in this contribution, they are referenced here to demonstrate the ways that these four themes were observed through the cases.

3.1 Context matters for mega-events in heritage-rich cities

The different planning systems and institutional settings that the HOMEE project studied conformed significant aspects, specifically in terms of what could be done or even envisioned and what could not, in other words the actual opportunities of intervention for mega-events. For the same reason, the interaction between mega-event planning activities and heritage policies also substantially differed across the cases. In some cases, the city used its heritage strengths for building its image and visibility, in others it downplayed some problematic aspects of it (Hull 2017, Wrocław 2016). In some cases, heritage was the core of projects explicitly promoted by the event (Genoa 2004, Pafos 2017). In others, it had to be searched at the margins, as collateral aspects that have emerged ex-post (ExpoinCittà for Milan 2015). Perhaps due to the size and economic relevance in their respective city, each process related to mega-event planning, delivering and legacy has clearly different features from the other cases. In addition to the definition presented in section 1 of this article, in all cases the event was “mega”, at least in terms of its effects in the evolution of the city as it constituted a clear turning point, sometimes for spatial planning beyond the mega-event interventions, in all cases in terms of the

transformation of the urban environment, its heritage and perception. The precise labelling and classification of such a varied set of cases is an issue that could be discussed further, yet this relative effect makes the celebration of the event important and worth studying even when in absolute terms we may be dealing with events of a smaller size (Jones and Ponzini, 2020). Pafos, though a quite small city compared to the others and a relatively contained event in terms of attendance, is a case in point: the city has changed its vision, the role of heritage, and significant elements in its planning and transformation in relationship to the ECoC event.

In all the cases, the mega-event worked as an indisputable accelerator and amplifier of various urban processes. In some cases, policy makers and stakeholders had pre-existing objectives and target areas for the city to develop, redevelop, reuse or transform, with the event allowing them to signify, promote and infuse areas with new meaning and image. In some cases, the chances to do so emerged only as the planning for the event unfolded or even the post-event management approached. Similar mega-events end up being quite adaptable in their target areas, spatial arrangements and distribution of benefits, as the early and grand plans inevitably have to adapt to the real political and planning arena. Mega-events are formidable umbrellas that embrace pre-existing policies, harness their consensus and speed their implementation. Stressing underused or neglected facilities and areas as well as pouring more pressure on the historic city centre or places inevitably intersected with heritage policy, which typically has a slower pace and, in all cases, brought more reflectiveness regarding the values of the built environment (on some occasions, about the intangible cultural assets and the city image as well) in the process.

3.2 Long-term vision and spatial planning

The presence of heritage and the typical ways in which European experts and policy makers deal with it suggest envisioning the planning of mega-events in heritage-rich cities within a long-term time frame. The case studies in this report made clear a less obvious consideration, that the intersection with spatial plans and development strategies of the hosting city are also crucial inasmuch as they involve heritage places and cultural policy. Despite the grand plans and statements, successful mega-events are rooted in the locale and inevitably leverage the trends and transformation already under way. Recently, there has been a call for more cautious approach to mega-event planning for the sake of event legacy and sustainability of the facilities and places over time. The lack of a clear vision can lead to planning disasters. Large facilities needed for only a few months of celebration can easily become a heavy burden for the city to manage in subsequent years, both from the financial and urban points of view. The difficulties that Milan has encountered with the reuse of the Expo site could have been easily anticipated, simply based on what past and even recent experiences with Expos and the Olympics showed (Lisbon 1998 Expo, Athens 2004 Olympics, and many others; Thessaloniki 1997 is worth mentioning among the European Capitals of Culture). The exceptions made to land-use regulation and planning procedures in order to build the facilities and infrastructures

on time for the event can be seen as problematic, because they bypass institutional veto points and restrictions that are conceived for plans and project to be enriched with multiple political stakes a longer-term rationality. This aspect is key to heritage matters, both in terms of presenting opportunities as well as threats.

A clear vision and steady political commitment can bring new energies and opportunities to previously unrecognized heritage spaces, beyond the historic city centre, and allow synergies and transformative effects that sustain the post-event programming. On the contrary, the plans for the Hull 2017 UKCoC favoured the central areas and their heritage at the expenses of the outskirts. This was originally due to the selection of most valuable assets as well as to the easiest choice for building a more appealing image for a stigmatized city (Tommarchi & Bianchini, 2020). More generally, without the due attention and connection to city and regional planning, even positive additions to the cultural and leisure offering of a city can induce congestion, trickle-down neighbourhood effects and can generate unwanted consequences at multiple scales.

One of the most publicly narrated but practically overlooked item in mega-events planning is the legacy. Legacy does not only mean the infrastructure and facilities that have been built for the occasion of the mega-event, or simply the programmes and initiatives that have been started for it. In the case of Milan, the organization that took control of the important real estate asset of the Expo site and the vast public investment that it required began with an uncertain trajectory that led to substantial delays in decision making. At the same time, the organization of the ExpoinCittà programme, embedded within the city municipality, readily continued and even expanded its efforts in the years following 2015, rebranding as YES Milano and continuing to host events regularly throughout the city while the main Expo site remains closed. On the opposite end in terms of size, the organization managing the legacy of the Pafos event became problematic because of the uncertain status of the administrative agency that was in charge of following up with ongoing cultural programming. Such uncertainties can present ongoing threats to heritage as spaces that were either renewed or given new uses for the event are not continued over the long term.

3.3 Governance, local capacity building and participation

In Western countries, where powers are shared and sometimes scattered among different public, non-profit and private actors, governance issues must be taken seriously. Mega-events are not implemented based on off-the-shelf plans, nor can they be simply enacted in heritage-rich cities where the relevant aspects of places are multiple and governed by several actors. In particular, heritage-related actors and agencies may have veto powers that can slow or even stop plans and projects. In recent years local population perception and positive inclination towards hosting a mega-event have become more and more important, in some cases even for the awarding of the event itself (with survey and assessments done by the central bodies). In actual policy terms, the involvement of a broad political consensus and

the mobilization from the bottom up seems important both for mega-event planning/implementation and for its connection with heritage preservation.

The dynamics of mobilization and participation often imply a surge at the earlier stages and sometimes a dramatic drop when operative decisions must be taken to keep the pace and deliver key elements for the mega-event. The 2019 Matera ECoC is a relevant example that demonstrates the strengths of inviting local actors into the processes of planning and developing the event through public participation. Yet it also highlights the challenges that can emerge when local actors come to feel excluded at certain phases during the process, ultimately reducing support for and reception of the event. Participation was not used evenly throughout the process but varied overtime, characterized by a strong start and systematic decline throughout. For example, there was a reduced direct involvement of cultural organizations during the implementation of the events during 2019 according to the experience of certain groups. The lower degree of involvement of local actors and the limited participation in the implementation phase, in part due to broader political frictions, meant that some local artists and cultural organizations lost their trust in the Foundation responsible for organising the ECoC and kept working almost as if the event was not taking place.

In Pafos, the small-scale and close-knit community of the city core made it easier to mobilize citizens since the earliest phases. This greatly contributed to building a consensus about the bid, the event and to sustain some of the positive effects on the city. The integration of public participation processes into the bidding and planning stage for ECoC 2017 managed to spread the ECoC ideas widely, provided a platform for discussion, mobilized various groups within the city and established co-operation. Subsequent stages had far lower involvement and this can be seen in the limits of the volunteering programme. The Wrocław case is an interesting instance in experimenting with the use of small and micro grants. The mobilization of small organizations and individuals towards the goals of the ECoC was very effective. Involving neighbourhood organizations and the grassroots allowed the city to enhance the meaning and uses of places with cultural, civic and social relevance, activate and even regenerate them in connection with the event and its expected legacy (Sanetra–Szeliga et al., 2020). While Genoa also had a public call for projects through its ‘open door’ policy, quite an innovative approach at that time, neither was it able to continue such practices following the event.

3.4 Heritage, identity and local communities

In most cases, mega-events are focal moments in the life of local communities and sometimes can mark a change in the image and identity of one city. Policy makers should be aware of this, well beyond the instrumentalization of these political and cultural processes for the purpose of competition and growth. In several of the cases studied, the mega-event and its implementation were starting points for enhancing cultural heritage and its visibility in the host city. For Genoa, the 2004 ECoC and the more general strategy surrounding it triumphed in the award of the UNESCO Word Heritage Site in 2006.

Modifying the balance and the consolidated uses and meanings attached to heritage may generate frictions and even spark conflicts among different groups benefiting or losing ground with reference to certain heritage pieces, historic places or the cultural practices and intangible values attached to it. This conflict can be anticipated and dealt through cultural activities, events and the arts, that can creatively generate new platforms for dialogue. Hull is an important example for this practice. Intercultural initiatives were envisioned since the start, given the relevant presence of migrant workers and their weak recognition within official cultural policy making. In addition, the use of arts and playful events for mobilizing heritage building and activating historic places for building a new and more attractive narrative of the city and community proved to be successful. In Wrocław, the collective processing of a difficult cultural identity and social history was stimulated through recognizing specific heritage buildings and places pertaining to multiple communities of the past and of the present. This was a way not only done to valorise heritage for tourists, but also to input social learning and cultural innovation. All the cases showed that promoting social dialogue about and through heritage is much cheaper and less time consuming than managing conflicts that may derive from a different or more intense use of heritage and historic places. While a majority of events occurred in the UNESCO recognized city centre of Matera in 2019, the ECoC also served as an opportunity to recognize and promote other aspects of the city's less recognized heritage. Several pathways were developed to highlight the modernist neighbourhoods of the city and the unused quarry, Cava del Sole, was converted into an event space with performances taking place throughout the year and utilizing past industrial and landscape heritage spaces in new ways.

Communication regarding mega-events typically requires one single strong narrative or image for the city and program. This may clash with the multiple interests and perspectives of actors and stakeholders on the transformation of the city in general and it may limit the rich interpretations of heritage and places in particular. In the case of Hull, despite the difficulties and painful memories attached to it, rediscovering the maritime heritage of the city became a great opportunity for planning long-term interventions, as well as for mobilizing different strata and groups of the local and regional population. In this sense, expanding the cultural ownership and the possible narratives for the mega-events and the involved heritage can become strategic also for inclusivity. Clearly, the case of Pafos had to face the heritage of the Turkish Cypriot population, to make sense of the places that historically hosted that community and that became deserted after the 1974 conflict which divided the island's territory. This was part of the core narrative (despite the overarching motto of the event: "Linking Continents-Bridging Cultures") but resurfaced in multiple concrete projects as the revitalization of the Mouttalos Turkish-Cypriots neighbourhood that was partially abandoned.

4. From the specificities of case studies to heritage-conscious mega-event policies

The propositions presented in this article are based on the in-depth study of the five cases and real-time observation of the Matera-Basilicata 2019 ECoC. Given the

availability of dozens of other experiences in places and under conditions that are different, we do not expect these to be exhaustive. The intention is to spark debates with experts and policy makers towards the definition of more accurate and useful principles and guidelines for mega-events in heritage rich cities in Europe and beyond. Likewise, we do not expect all the issues discussed here to be limited solely to 'heritage-rich' cities or historic spaces. The four key areas of focus presented above are important aspects for any city hosting a mega-event to take into consideration and plan for. This article intends to summarize the particular effects such mega-events have on heritage spaces, as well as how the presence of heritage comes to impact the planning and locating of events, the trajectories of the urban transformation processes that may derive.

The mission of the HOMEE project has been to first initiate this process of research and discussion; the following steps will be to formalize these initial findings in a charter that assists policy and decision makers to appropriately consider and include heritage from the early stages of bidding for a mega-event to its legacy. These issues at stake are important for European cities and communities and, without doubt, worth trying as the lessons learned, we are fully convinced, can benefit future cities hosting mega-events in Europe and beyond. In our view, the relevance of the HOMEE project goes beyond just cultural mega-events as upcoming Olympic host cities are organizing very different kind of games. The Paris 2024 Summer Olympics proposes to host 95% of events in existing or temporary venues, including several prominent historic sites. These include the Grand Palais, the Palace of Versailles and around the base of the Eiffel Tower. Meanwhile, the Milan Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics will use sites like the central Duomo square in Milan, the ancient Roman Theatre in Verona as well as impact the landscape heritage values of the Dolomiti area as settings. Though encompassing a wider range of heritage concerns beyond just the urban, it will be vital for organizers to take heritage issues into consideration. In this way we see a wide audience for this research work which has not been previously dealt with in the past and which seems poised to become increasingly important in the coming years.

Finally, the impending new approaches to implementing mega-events are not the only new force affecting the planning and delivery of mega events as the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has already delayed the two largest mega events in 2020, the Olympic Games and the Universal Expo. While the future of large events remain uncertain, new public health restrictions will surely change the delivery and experience of events along with the ways they interact with and impact the heritage of host cities. Further research will need to study such issues to continue preparing cities for the potential range of impacts that mega events of all types can have.

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