MEGA EVENTS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE
SOME FRAMEWORKS FOR THE CITY OF ROME

Introduction

For an important international destination that attracts tourists simply because it is a one-of-a-kind location, such as the city of Rome, mega events are not really paramount. However, nowadays cities need to acquire visibility and compete at different levels, i.e. local, national, international and global, and thus have to develop and find new infrastructural and urban solutions in order to successfully face new challenges, be competitive and meet their stakeholders’ needs. Hosting a mega event puts extraordinary demands on an area but, as such, represents an opportunity to revitalize or improve the city space and its environs. But, most importantly, it is necessary to understand the real effects, both positive and negative, of a mega event and how long they will last in time. According to well-established literature on the subject, mega events also have consequences and impacts on tourism. This is certainly true, but there are cities that respond

Abbreviations: ACS = Archivio Centrale dello Stato.


better than others and cities that are less competitive and less successful in staging a mega event. Rome is the exception that proves the rule and this paper will argue that mega events do not add anything in terms of tourism to the city that cannot be achieved through a series of smaller, well-targeted and well-planned events (Table A describes types and size of Principal events in Rome).

This paper will explore the impact of mega events on Rome, a city that is already a major tourist destination. However, we first need a definition of a mega event. Valentino wrote that a mega event has no correlation with its intrinsic nature: “happenings that turn into mega events are of varying kinds and may belong to the field of culture (festivals, exhibitions and so on), religion (Jubilees, the proclamation of saints or special holy feasts such as the Holy Week in Seville), the life of a nation (events and celebrations of a common identity such as national independence, a particular figure in the history of a country, a discovery and so on), sports (the Olympics, America’s Cup, FIFA World Cup, etc.) or the economy (universal exhibitions). In some cases they may have a hybrid nature and be the result of a combination of the different fields mentioned above”⁴. In other words, the content of a mega event does not help us to define it.

### Table A - Types and size of events in Rome

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Media interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mega Event</td>
<td>Expo42, Olimp.‘60 World Cup ‘90, Jubilees</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Tv Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Event</td>
<td>Sanctification, European Swimming Championships, Tennis (sports in general), Rome Cinema Festival, Special Exhibitions</td>
<td>World/National</td>
<td>World/National Tv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallmark Event</td>
<td>Special Fairs, Fashion Shows, Exhibitions</td>
<td>National/Regional</td>
<td>National/Local Tv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Event</td>
<td>Rome Fair</td>
<td>National/Regional</td>
<td>Local Tv, Press</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mega events in Rome: From awarding to implementation**

Events with a major impact generally take place in cities and are the outcome of an international selection process where countries (cities) compete and win both on the merits of the project submitted, but perhaps mostly for the international alliances that a country has developed within the selection committee. This decision-making process concerns sports events, as already noted, and

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events of an economic (world and international fairs) and cultural (European capitals of culture) nature.

Rome has hosted a long series of mega events, starting from the Jubilees that have been taking place periodically since the 14th century to the Expo of 1942 (though only planned) and, lastly, to the Olympic Games of 1960 and the Football World Cup 1990 (see Table A with the types of mega events hosted).

Rome is still remembered for the Olympics of 1960, thanks to the great beauty of its urban setting and the city’s ability to manage one of the first events dominated by what at that time were the new media. Superbly designed facilities were built (Pier Luigi Nervi’s Palazzetto dello Sport, Stadio Flaminio and Cesare Ligini’s Velodrome, which was recently demolished and will be replaced by a residential complex) that are now considered monuments of modern architecture. As road transport was coming to the fore in the 1960s, thanks to the myth of the car and the influence of the national automobile industry, Rome built via Olimpica, which is still one of the city’s most important roads5. The Olympic village, which was designed by great architects including Adalberto Libera and Luigi Walter Moretti, was eventually used for family housing. In fact, after the Olympics, the houses were assigned to state employees and today the area is undergoing a gentrification process. The re-utilization of structural investments is quite common, though clearly after a change in the use of the premises. Olympic Villages are mainly used to meet the demand for housing, while they and other ad hoc spaces (except for sport complexes which are used to meet the urban demand for specific sport disciplines) are also used as office buildings and commercial facilities. Barcelona’s experience is particularly interesting from the point of view of re-use. The city managed the construction and sale of its Olympic Village through a municipal real-estate company. The project was centred in the area of Poble Nou, a totally public area after expropriation, and the housing was of medium-to-high quality, as planned. The quality of the buildings and the simultaneous transformation of the area into an urban park (near the sea) boosted house prices (mostly “hedonic” prices), thus creating strong profits. The Municipality used the consequent increase in ad valorem taxes to fund other projects.

Rome’s Olympic Games were held between August 25 and September 11, 1960. It was more than a mere sporting event and was clear proof of Italy’s economic and social recovery after the Second World War6. In the 1950s the Italian

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5 A wide-ranging debate on this subject has developed. See I. Insolera, Roma moderna. Da Napoleone I al XXI secolo, a new extended edition in collaboration with Paolo Berdini, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, Torino, 2011, pp. 241-244 (see also A. Faiadino in this number).

6 Lo stato italiano e le olimpiadi di Roma, (The Italian State and Rome’s Olympics) Rome 1960.
State had been directly involved in providing special funding for Rome with the Pella law of 19537 and other measures and had stimulated infrastructural investments. In fact, as reported by Vidotto, Rome spent the considerable sum of approximately sixty-four billion Italian lira of the time on Fiumicino airport (about thirty-one billion Italian lira, 48%), the Olympic village (about six billion Italian lira, 9%), the reclaiming of shantytowns (seven billion lira, 11%), the city’s road system (four billion lira, 4%), the city’s external road system (nine billion, 14%) and road links south of Rome (five billion lira, 8%)8. It comes as no surprise that between 1957 and 1960 hotel accommodation in Rome increased overall by 21%, especially with new hotels located outside the city centre which accounted for 17% of the total, compared with 7% in 19459. In this respect, the Hilton hotel project was very important because it was built only during the Olympic Games in 1960. Among many other controversies, it not only cost Salvatore Rebecchini his job as mayor, but also had a very negative environmental impact, perhaps even worse than had been feared, on the Monte Mario hill10.

Italy had been chosen as the host country for a universal exhibition in 1942 in Rome. However, this exhibition never took place because of the outbreak of war and, as such, it turned out to be the mega event that never was. The preparation for the universal exhibition involved an upgrading not only of the city, but also of the rest of the country from a political and economic point of view. As far as tourism was concerned, measures were introduced to modernize the entire hospitality system in Italy. In particular, fascism wanted Rome to be “the nodal point of the country’s fascist development”, making it a showcase for internal and

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7 Law of 28 February 1953 no. 103 “Measures in favour of the City of Rome”.
8 ACS, AAI Presidenza, b. 84. V. VIDOTTO, Roma contemporanea, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2001, p. 292.
external propaganda based on a “theory of the social and political functions” that Rome should fulfil. In 1931 it was said that “Tourism in Rome, in terms of hospitality, is a great public service which is entrusted with the decorum and reputation of the capital of Fascist Italy and the Catholic City, one of the world’s most fascinating metropolises”. This function, together with the hopes expressed by the political rhetoric of the fascist period, became more urgent and was in keeping with the decision to hold a universal exhibition in Rome in 1942 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the advent of fascism.

In view of the E42, as the event came to be known, it was feared that the masses of visitors would put an unbearable strain on the existing accommodation facilities, with negative repercussions for the success of the event and the consequent failure of the efforts widely advertised by the fascist propaganda machine. This major challenge for the Roman and Italian hospitality sector provided the opportunity to take a quantum leap in the field of tourism, with a greater involvement on the part of the State through new instruments and on an unprecedented scale.

Giuseppe Bottai, as governor of Rome, was the first to propose the exhibition project to Mussolini in June 1935. But it was the Duce himself who decided to

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have the event coincide with the twenty-year celebration of the March on Rome and established the length of the event from 21 April to 28 October 1942 by Royal Decree 1033 of 4 June 1938.

The Italian application was accepted by the Bureau International des Expositions in June 1936. At the end of the same year the independent body for the Roman Universal Exhibition (EUR - Ente autonomo per l’esposizione universale romana) was set up and its directors were appointed, as can be seen in Law 2174 of 26 December 1936 and the Royal decree of 31 December 1936, which are kept in the Central State Archives in Rome, together with all the papers concerning the E42 and the dreams – fulfilled and unfulfilled – of those who had conceived the “new city”.

The Central Archives in EUR is itself located in a building that is the result of planning stratification: in fact, De Renzi’s, Figini’s and Pollini’s plans are totally different from the building that can be seen today. However, this stratification still maintains a certain architectural fascination, partly because of the use that was made of it in the 1950s as the Institute where the ‘historical memory’ of the Italian State was kept and honoured, “in other words, state symbolism at its best, thus fulfilling Piacentini’s initial vision”14. The tender for the design of the three buildings and the square was published in November 1937. The judging commission decided not to award the contract and launched another contest for those who had submitted the best plans, namely the architects De Renzi, Marconi, Paniconi-Pediconi, Pollini-Figini and Vaccaro. The joint winners were De Renzi and Pollini-Figini and they were entrusted with the task of drawing up the final plans. The building, which was originally intended as the venue for the Exhibition of the Armed Forces, was to be used instead as the official venue for the Exhibition on the autarchy of corporatism and social security and it was to house the Academy of Fine Arts after the exhibition. Construction work in the exhibition area began a year later, but was suspended in 1941 because of the war. The buildings were partly completed after the war, a monumental testimony to the overall project15.

The World Football Cup in 1990 was the first large-scale event to be held after the Olympics, thirty years earlier. Unfortunately, the building program for the World Cup amounted to a series of works without any coordinated strategic planning. For example, three new railway stations were built. Vigna Clara and


Farneto were intended to allow better access to the Olympic Stadium, whilst the new terminal at the Ostiense station, where trains from Fiumicino Airport were to arrive, was built on the other side to the original railway building that has access to Piazza dei Partigiani. The first two stations were closed immediately after the end of the World Cup, while the third closed on September 26, 1993, for a total cost of 53 billion lire. These works demonstrate that each project was an end in itself and was not intended to be an integrated part of the transport system, and thus lacking any strategic objective\textsuperscript{16}.

The good organization of the Jubilee in 2000 had a very positive effect and gave the country a newly-found and improved external image, as recognized by the international media and observers\textsuperscript{17}. Unfortunately, however, neither Italy nor Rome was able to take advantage of the credibility gained at an international level, which represented one of the Jubilee’s most important externalities.

Jubilees had always acted as key turning points in urban transformation processes, thanks to the greater economic resources they generated for the Church through offerings by the faithful to buy indulgences and through the increase in “gabelle” related to greater consumer expenditure\textsuperscript{18}. It is said that the Jubilee of 1450 was one of the most important, with what can be considered a massive inflow of pilgrims by the standards of the day. The economic success was so big that the Banco dei Medici, which managed papal finances, took one hundred thousand gold florins in deposits\textsuperscript{19}.

Jubilees were also important occasions for setting in motion an organizational

\textsuperscript{17} 2000 Jubilee Report.
\textsuperscript{18} The gabelle was a tax levied on goods, but also a useful source of information about the movement of goods, consumption and Roman economic life in general. A key point of reference in this area is S. MALATESTA, Statuti delle gabelle di Roma, parte 1, Roma, Tipografia della pace di Filippo Cugliani, 1886.
\textsuperscript{19} Vespasiano da Bisticci in his Commentary on the life of Pope Nicola, G. Simoncelli, Roma. Le trasformazioni urbane nel Quattrocento, vol. I, Topografia e urbanistica da Bonifacio VIII ad Alessandro VI, Firenze, Leo S. Olschki editore, 2004, p. 100. On Jubilees see also Vittorelli (1625). From the end of the Schism, in the period of the reconstruction of the Chamber finances, the financial structure of the Apostolic Chamber, the highest central body of the State of the Church, relied increasingly on private bankers, such as the Medici family. The Medici, like other prominent families, especially Tuscan ones, were bankers/entrepreneurs with different correspondents in the main business centres of Western Europe, capable of transferring funds rapidly to where they were most needed by popes, D. STRANGIO, La finanza pubblica nella Roma del primo rinascimento. I registri introitus et exitus della Camera Apostolica nei primi anni di pontificato di Eugenio IV (1431-1444), in D. Strangio (ed.), Studi in onore di Ciro Manca, Padova, Cedam, 2000, pp. 522-553; for the figure of the deposit-taker, see also L. PALERMO, La finanza pontificia e il banchiere «depositario» nel primo Quattrocento, in ibidem, pp. 349-378.
machine that was to become increasingly sophisticated in time, as attested by
the number of registered attendees and meals, though these indicators were not
always reliable. Registrations took place with specific reference to individuals
or households engaged in the hospitality business in order to exert greater con-
trol and regulation over the masses, but also to enhance unity and integrate the
networks of solidarity and accommodation facilities, such as the confraternities
and pious institutions involved in pilgrim hospitality. The spill over in terms of
employment and currency circulation in Holy Years and the involvement and
participation of those who were recruited by pious institutions to provide services
can be seen in all the activities involved with the presence of pilgrims\(^{20}\).

However, the immediate attraction of significant visitor flows does not always
translate into an increase in the number of arrivals and tourists. The Rome ex-
perience of the 2000 Jubilee is a case in point. During that year the estimated
number of visitors/pilgrims who actually came to Rome was about 25 million,
a figure markedly lower than forecast, but still sizable\(^{21}\). Yet, attention focused
not on the size of the inflows, but on their management. Given the catastrophic
forecasts of most observers, the good management of the event was a real victory
for the city and, given the global nature of the Jubilee, it played a key role in
strengthening not only Rome’s, but also Italy’s credibility in the eyes of the entire
world. However, the city’s enhanced visibility, reputation and credibility did not
have an immediate effect on tourism, especially on that with a greater propensity
to spend.

An analysis of hotel occupancy in Rome reveals that in the year of the Jubi-
lee, and in those immediately following, tourism in Rome was in line with the
national average, though it was less intense (see Table B). Rome outperformed
the national average four years after the event, which suggests that the Jubilee
had little or no effect on this phenomenon. “More generally, it would seem that
during the Jubilee a sort of Gresham law for tourism was at work, in that poorer
tourists drove out wealthier ones. This phenomenon is not only associated with
the Jubilee, but with all events that attract a large number of visitors. The conges-
tion created by these flows is such that, in areas of strong tourism attraction, the
more typical visitors tend to postpone their visit. This is also one of the reasons


\(^{21}\) It was estimated that the added value activated by visitor expenditure in Rome was €26,200 billion, a €3,959 billion increase on 1999. G. Bogliani, *Giubileo: un successo anche nei numeri*, «La Rivista del turismo», 1, 2001, pp. 8-17.
why the impact of mega events is generally stronger in the areas that are not already well-known tourist destinations. Indeed, some writers believe that for areas that are already on the tourist map sets of mini events have a greater impact than mega events”.

Table B - City of Rome: arrivals, attendance and average stay of Italian and foreign tourists in hotels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Italian Arrivals</th>
<th>Italian Attendance</th>
<th>Average Stay</th>
<th>Foreign Arrivals</th>
<th>Foreign Attendance</th>
<th>Average Stay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>2.025.051</td>
<td>3.975.124</td>
<td>n.d</td>
<td>3.120.140</td>
<td>8.072.222</td>
<td>n.d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2.065.185</td>
<td>3.982.288</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>3.368.465</td>
<td>8.845.656</td>
<td>9.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2.127.344</td>
<td>4.116.625</td>
<td>-0.83</td>
<td>3.644.155</td>
<td>9.359.580</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2.182.277</td>
<td>4.156.008</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>3.816.230</td>
<td>9.915.342</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2.323.899</td>
<td>4.571.149</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.761.702</td>
<td>10.084.798</td>
<td>-5.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2.691.359</td>
<td>5.319.647</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>4.098.391</td>
<td>11.261.958</td>
<td>10.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2.866.935</td>
<td>5.673.568</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>4.605.051</td>
<td>12.588.771</td>
<td>11.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Roma e provincia in cifre - Ente Bilaterale per il Turismo di Roma e del Lazio, several years.

In early 2001, at the conclusion of the Catholic Jubilee, an evaluation was made of how Rome had managed and withstood the enormous flow of pilgrims. The work was conducted under the careful direction of the Holy See and the final report confirmed the scheduled arrivals, while there was a decline in non-religious tourism flows which was disappointing for those who expected substantial revenue from this mega-event. The positive results had been achieved thanks to the efficiency of the administration of the city and the good organization of the Jubilee allowed the orderly unfolding of the events in a crowded religious calendar simultaneously with everyday life in the city of Rome. In view of the Ju-

22 P.A. Valentino, I grandi eventi, cit., p. 323.
bilee numerous buildings, facades, main streets and squares were renovated. The city undoubtedly benefitted from this urban ‘face-lift’, becoming much more attractive and pleasant to the eye. This type of work in the past was usually done every twenty-five years on the occasion of the Jubilee. The intense use of city centres, the negative effects of air pollution on historic buildings, the modern concept of sustainable cities and the need to avoid the wasting of buildings today make more frequent interventions and adequate economic and financial instruments absolutely essential. New infrastructure was built to improve mobility in the city, although not as much as expected because of strong public opposition and controversy. From the very beginning it was clear that the plans lacked in design, making their execution very difficult. So, for example, an underpass, which would have decongested the entire area in front of St. Peter’s, was only partially built because it would have endangered the existence of Castel Sant’Angelo. At the same time a new exhibition was held in the Palazzo del Quirinale, an exceptional event, which beat all national records for the number of visitors.

A mega event is the result of planning. Interestingly there has recently been an attempt to create a mega event for 2013 by the FG Group by bringing the Formula 1 circuit to the city of Rome. The designated location was the EUR area, not only because its structure could have been adapted to allow the Formula 1 car to race on its wide roads, but also because it was part of a broader project to turn around and upgrade the area. Even though the exhibition for which EUR had been constructed never materialized, the area had been developed in 1953 for five specific purposes, namely as a residential neighbourhood, a city of ministries, a city of sport, an office park and an exhibition centre. These original purposes are being revived through the upgrading of its roads and a new congress centre, FUKAS’s Cloud, which covers an area of 27,000 m². It will house a suspended auditorium with 1842 seats, 2 modular meeting rooms to accommodate 480 and 500 people and a hotel with 439 rooms will be built nearby. The modernised museums in the area, which cover 71,750 m², will be incorporated into an integrated system and a series of side events will complete the project. It should have culminated, in fact, with the Formula 1 Grand Prix of the city of Rome.

However, the Formula 1 event will not take place because, even though accurate economic research has shown positive externalities, emphasis on the negative externalities, mainly of an environmental and political nature, have prevailed. Environmental externalities include the environmental and sustainability consequences of such an enterprise, considering that 7-10 days before the event (in a

best-case scenario) the entire neighbourhood would have to become a pedestrian zone to allow for the preparation of the circuit resulting in much inconvenience, and not just for residents. The political externalities are related to the strong competition from the Monza Grand Prix, which has become a mainstay of the circuit, following the closing of the Imola racetrack. All this was a recipe for further national political controversy, which would have undermined the success of the event, making it impossible to meet internationally the requests of Bernie Ecclestone, the chief of the entire Formula 1 circuit.

This review of the different types of mega events in Rome shows that this city is an emblematic case. The brief analysis of an aborted mega event, such as the Formula 1, shows that Rome is in any case the real heart of the region of Lazio, which, in spite of its significant economic growth over the past few years, appears like a set of “limbs” at the service of the head. Rather than mega events, there should be small, contiguous and connected events joined together to create an important network. For example, in recent years a major attraction for the city has been the ‘Night of the Museums’, which has been running for five years with an average of 150,000 visitors, and a peak of 250,000 visitors in 2012. The Rome International Film Festival has also seen an increase both in the number of visitors to the festival sites and the total number of tickets issued in the course of the seven editions held so far24.

Mega events in Rome can be useful to project a new and more dynamic and globalized image vis-à-vis the traditional one. However, it is important to stress the importance of the planning and design of an event, as shown by the 2000 Jubilee, where the positive effects materialized ex post precisely because of the care with which the event had been planned. What is still missing, and it is a limit, is the lack of serious models to calculate the effective costs and benefits from the end of the event and in the years immediately after the spotlight has been turned off, as stressed in recent literature25.

Rome is “one of the top city brands on a planetary level”, as it ranks fourth

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among the world’s sixty most important cities, according to the *Anholt City Brands Index 2007*. It is definitely a tourism-oriented city, as this industry creates at least one-fifth of the city’s gross income.

Since February 2008 Rome has been witnessing less-than-negligible signs of a decline in the number of tourists visiting it, amounting to -5% and -5,52% (see Table C). This should be interpreted not so much as a loss of cachet, as the city still exercises a strong appeal on tourists, but rather as an overall change in the concept of holidays. In fact, holidays are now shorter to keep costs down and to save money due to the general fall in household purchasing power as a result of the effects of the global crisis and they also tend to aim at destinations that can be enjoyed by the entire family. Table C also shows there was a slight recovery, as in the rest of Italy, in arrivals and overnight stays in tourist accommodation (such as hotels, apartments, bed and breakfasts, holiday homes, campsites and hostels) in 2010. This positive trend (as seen in the data from the EBTL annual reports of “tourism figures”) is also visible in subsequent years until January 2013. Visitors to Italy and also to Rome and its hinterland have recorded growth rates which are often higher than those of other major European and world destinations (in spite of the crisis, in particular because of the effect of the recent election of the new pope).

**Table C - Arrivals and attendance in the hotel businesses and complementary (2006-2013)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>years</th>
<th>arrivals</th>
<th>attendance</th>
<th>variations %</th>
<th>Rome var. %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>italian</td>
<td>foreign</td>
<td>amount</td>
<td>italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>5,125,426</td>
<td>6,033,021</td>
<td>11,158,447</td>
<td>12,212,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>5,606,193</td>
<td>6,775,230</td>
<td>12,381,423</td>
<td>13,104,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>5,499,236</td>
<td>6,459,318</td>
<td>11,958,554</td>
<td>12,784,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>5,463,301</td>
<td>6,344,287</td>
<td>11,808,488</td>
<td>12,639,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5,882,179</td>
<td>6,967,908</td>
<td>12,850,087</td>
<td>13,454,482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>6,312,465</td>
<td>7,614,408</td>
<td>13,926,873</td>
<td>14,262,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>4,785,826</td>
<td>6,927,304</td>
<td>11,713,130</td>
<td>9,120,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013*</td>
<td>329,601</td>
<td>303,330</td>
<td>632,931</td>
<td>620,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013**</td>
<td>362,374</td>
<td>380,492</td>
<td>742,866</td>
<td>650,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013***</td>
<td>422,139</td>
<td>548,008</td>
<td>970,147</td>
<td>783,986</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** My data processing from EBTL, several years - * january; ** february; *** march.

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Rome has a strong and deep-seated appeal linked mainly to its historical and cultural tradition which makes it unique, a city for a multi-faceted type of tourism. The presence of the Pope makes it an important destination for Italian and foreign pilgrims, with approximately 7 million visitors and, furthermore, religious tourism generates new market niches.

Generally urban tourism, which has exploded over the past decade, is underpinned by the development of the ‘form’ of a city and its communicative relationships. A “city” is considered a complex and comprehensive space that goes beyond the traditional relationship between centre and periphery and involves agglomerates that extend well beyond the established administrative limits. Within this space urban areas, other than the traditional ones concentrated within the historical 19th century boundaries and linked to values of a more or less distant past, become increasingly significant, as for example, the archaeological areas outside Rome or the new locations linked to modern “cultural” functions, such as the new trade fair areas in Rome.

**Closing remarks**

We have argued that a mega event makes sense only if it is part of a more complex strategy that is intended to revitalize the economy of a city and its surrounding areas or to make it more competitive. If the goal is ambitious, i.e. changing the development model of the area, the planned event must be capable of significantly modifying the territorial structure, creating the conditions to increase agglomeration economies and, more than anything else, communicating them to the outside world. With this in mind, tourism is only one of the impacts that can be associated with the event; the economic and social success of an event also depends on its ability to stimulate new investments. Objectives can be more easily pursued if the planning and implementation process involves local communities in an active and cooperative manner. Given its high cost, a project has to be highly focused and accurately planned, employing more time in the planning stage than is usually the case in Italy today. “This is another reason in favour of participation and collaboration in processes and bottom-up planning which helps to achieve complex objectives through effective governance systems”.

There are different types of mega events, with different impacts and consequences on the areas in which they take place. Not all mega events can be hosted everywhere. In order to plan a mega event well, consideration should be given to a series of factors, including the objectives and the possible impacts and problems that can emerge with the effective use and profitability of the facilities and infrastructures built to host mega events.

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All this is useful in view of creating a new role for a city, so that it can reposition itself in the geographical competition that has emerged after the crisis of the Fordist model and the globalization processes that have generated what the urban sociologist Saskia Sassen has defined as global cities. In this globalized context, due consideration should be given to the problems that mega events entail, especially when they are hosted by emerging countries, because demand for services in these countries is not sufficiently developed and only a few segments of the population can actually benefit from the higher standards attained with a mega event.

In general, however, as far as the other aspect of this paper is concerned, Rome, regardless of events, is a fascinating city because it has been shaped by history and time, by its people’s daily habits and their aspirations, by the past and the future, the dimensions and reconstructions that have slowly formed it, by expansion and the spontaneous settlements that have modified it, changes in the functionality of its buildings and the added decorative elements that constantly enhance its image.

Rome should, in actual fact, be able to capture or plan strategically specific events at more or less regular intervals so that experience, facilities to host events and infrastructures to support the urban fabric can gradually be accumulated. This would be a “portfolio event approach”, which works like any customer or investment portfolio, by which events in a city might take place on different scales and have different motivations and territorial impacts and consequences.

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28 S. Sassen, Le città nell’economia globale, Bologna, il Mulino, 1997. See also E. Rullani, Lo sviluppo del territorio: l’evoluzione dei distretti industriali e il nuovo ruolo delle reti in città, «Economia italiana», 2, 2009, pp. 427-472. In M. Taccolini, Il turismo bresciano tra passato e futuro, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2002, it is interesting to note how environmental and artistic resources are distributed over a territory that gravitates around a capital that has gradually changed its image from a Calvinist city, devoted to the religion of labour, to a city of art. Furthermore, there are strong connections between environmental tourism and development.
