Umbrellas, Incubators, Mothers and Killers:

Four typologies of relationship between cultural mega-events and small and micro events in Heritage-rich European cities

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Abstract

This paper explores the relationship and impact between cultural mega-events and the subsequent production of other small and micro events held within heritage spaces. As with other types of mega-events, cities often turn to cultural mega-events for their perceived positive externalities and with a desired legacy that leaves a long-term impact on the city. These events generally build up and establish a strong reputation for associated network of actors that, in most cases, keep promoting smaller-scale events in subsequent years. In other cases, larger events crowd out small ones. Yet how do these cultural mega-events and all of their 'infrastructure' relate to and impact newly created or existing local smaller events? Additionally, what are the key impacts of continuous festivalization of heritage spaces in cities?

This paper presents and analyzes four found typologies of this interaction between mega-events and small localized existing or newly created events: "*Umbrellas*," "*Incubators*," "*Mothers*" and "*Killers*." We will consider in depth the European Capital of Culture program – since it has become an important cultural policy implemented across Europe for more than 30 years. "*Umbrella*" events encompass and include many pre-existing smaller events within the cultural mega-event. "*Incubator*" events also utilize pre-existing micro events, but come to enhance and grow them through the increased cultural capital, means and knowledge the mega-event brings. "*Mother*" events lead to the creation of new small and micro events in the city that did not previously exist, while "*Killer*" events have a negative impact on previously existing small and micro events. Finally, the paper theorizes on the mechanisms responsible for these typologies and their significance for urban heritage.

Cultural mega-events and the ongoing festivalization of cities

Cultural mega-events have become an increasingly popular choice for cities to host in the last several decades with the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) being one of the largest and most recognizable (Jones, 2017). For over 30 years more than 50 cities have hosted the event promoting a range of various themes and European identities (Ponzini & Jones, 2015). This and other cultural mega-events have grown in popularity for a number of reasons, but largely due to their reduced costs and lower impact on the built environment in terms of new venues required as it largely utilizes the existing facilities and cultural spaces of cities. In this way cultural mega-events are far more accessible to small and medium sized cities compared to Olympics, Expo or World Cups that have been rejected by many local citizens and city decision makers alike for their ballooning costs and perceived adverse effects (Jones & Ponzini, 2018). This decreasing trend has led to record numbers of candidate cities cancel their bids in recent years, a trend yet to occur in cultural mega-events. The popularity of the ECoC program has also spawned a number of similar spinoff programs that take place at global regional scales as well as within single nations.

One of the earliest spinoff programs was the Ibero-American Capital of Culture first hosted by Bogota in 1991 and has since been hosted by one of the members of the Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities (UCCI, 2019) . The privately run American Capital of Culture initiative began in 1998 and has been hosted by one city a year since 2000 across the Americas (Capital Americana de la Cultura, 2019). The program is supported by The International Bureau of Cultural Capitals which is also responsible for the sub-regional Capital of Catalan Culture which began in 2004 in the small Catalonian city of Banyoles. Other regional titles include the Arab Capital of Culture that started in 1996, the Cultural Capital of the Turkic World in 2012, the Finno-Ugric Capital of Culture in 2014 and the Cultural City of East Asia hosted by cities in Japan, China and South Korea which was inaugurated in 2014 (Christensen-Redzepovic, 2018). At the national level, City/Capital of Culture events can be found in the UK, Italy, Lithuania, Belarus, Slovakia and Russia. While many of these events are much smaller than the ECoC and are not equivalent in terms of funding or planning, they reveal the mass interest in hosting cultural events to boost the profiles of cities in order to attract investment, tourists and new residents.

Due to the nature of these cultural mega-events, considerations of their legacy can vary quite significantly from other mega-events. Sporting mega-events like the Olympics or World Cup tend to leave behind a very strong physical memory of the event due to the plethora of new stadiums, infrastructure and other built structures created specifically for the event. Meanwhile, much of the legacy of cultural mega-events tends to be more intangible. While there are examples of new cultural containers built as part of ECoCs or quite notably in the 2004 Universal Forum of Cultures in Barcelona, the desired changes or improvements relate to the perceived image of the city, management/governance structures or a new cultural sector that may introduce new uses into previously under used or abandoned areas of the city. One form that these processes can take place is through the ongoing festivalization of cities after they host a mega-event.

There has been discussion of the festivalization of cities within literature from various points of view (Richards & Palmer, 2012). this paper specifically examines the role of cultural mega-events initiating and growing this process as well as the unintended adverse effects it may introduce. The festivalization of cities can be seen as a desirable way to continue and extend the effects of a cultural mega-event past its close. With cities often wanting to establish new founded images based on culture following the event, the ongoing promotion of events and festivals is one such strategy to do this. This approach can also take advantage of existing cultural knowledge learned through the bidding, planning and implementation phases of mega-events. While at a much reduced scale compared to the initial mega-event, this post festivilazation phase can easily utilize the newly generated expertise from the mega-event.

This new strategy can have a significant impact on the city, particularly for heritage spaces where a festivalization may introduce much needed new uses or add to the already high stresses from tourism. The paper proceeds by reviewing the existing discussion of the festivalization of cities through small and micro events in literature. It will then go further in-depth into the varying role that cultural mega-events play in these processes by presenting the four typologies: umbrellas, incubators, mothers and killers. These four typologies will be demonstrated through several cases followed by an analysis of the key influencing factors that determine how cultural mega-events can become one or more of these typologies. The implications of these typologies for heritage will then be discussed while the conclusions will identify some ways of working to verify these hypotheses and interpretations through more systematic analyzes.

International discussion on small and micro events

With the emergence of Leisure and Tourism Studies in the 1960s, the focus on events has become an important growing focus of study in more recent decades (Mair, 2012; Mair & Whitford, 2013). Foley et al. (2012) broadly outlined existing literature within the three strains of event management, event policy and event studies. Event management has long enjoyed a great wealth of instrumental studies intent on improving management approaches with a focus on event managers rather than local or national governance levels. Event policy posits events as part of strategies to improve cities and questions what makes events effective policies and what potential goals of these policies should be. Meanwhile event studies investigate broader socio-historic issues and relate to a number of diverse fields from the social sciences and share a link with leisure studies, which began in the 1960s. Getz (2008) defines the specific types of investigations into impacts on economic; social, cultural and political as well as environmental aspects. These overviews do not necessarily take account for the similarities or differences between literature on hallmark or mega-events and small to micro events.

For the most part, similar research has been conducted into small scale events as that of their larger counterparts. As noted by Getz (2008), a number of studies examine the economic benefits and impacts of small event and festivals, experimenting with a variety of methodologies to measure the spread impacts (Antonio Rivera et al., 2008; Baptista Alves et al., 2010; Bracalente et al., 2011; Egresi & Kara, 2014; Saayman & Saayman, 2004). Others have meanwhile focused specifically on small events' relationship with tourism and their ability to attract (or not) tourists (McHone & Rungeling, 2000; McKercher et al. 2006; Nurse, 2001). Meanwhile additional studies have been carried out on a range of social-cultural impacts (Robertson et al., 2009) as well as the sustainability of hosting small events (Small et al., 2005).

Of these studies with a wide range of research questions, one key point emerges in the study of small events: the importance of their local context. Several studies seem to confirm that small events in more rural areas or smaller towns have the potential to be more successful at attracting visitors and generating economic benefits than in larger cities. Studies conducted in global cities where additional significant heritage offers or other city attractions represent a much greater competition that smaller events have difficulty in remaining competitive (Egresi & Kara, 2014; McKercher et al., 2006). The reasons include the difficulty of advertising and attracting attention due to reduced finances, competition with other cultural offerings or their often clear focus on specific themes such as genres of food, music, film, etc. Studies focused on events taking place in smaller towns/cities found a higher rate of economic return and ability to attract visitors than larger global cities (De Bres & Davis, 2001; McHone & Rungeling, 2000). It should also be noted that the majority of visitors to small events/festivals tend to be more local or regional visitors with very few international visitors (in either small or large cities). Therefore, the impacts and attractiveness of these events should not be considered as being on par with those of mega-events. At the same time, small events and festivals tend to be

more sustainable than their mega-event counterparts due to the usual little investment required on the part of the hosting entity or city (Gibson et al., 2012). The differences in the impacts and effects of smaller events therefore also affects the planning, management and funding of smaller events and a direct transfer of approaches used for mega-events may not be useful or ultimately distracting in the organization of small and micro events (Kelly & Fairley, 2018).

The work by Kelly and Fairley marks an important consideration of the relationship between mega-events and smaller events. Their research focuses primarily on funding models and calls for further collaboration between event management and tourism strategies. However, existing research has not yet considered the cause and effect relationship between mega-events and a legacy of continuing smaller events. Despite the similar strains of research and methods of studying both mega and small events, they are primarily dealt with as separate phenomenon. The potential overlap or influence between one on the other is a gap that this research first identifies and secondly discusses within a specified point of view. This paper is therefore a first attempt to bridge existing studies between small and mega-events by considering the different ways that mega-events can encourage or hurt the continued proliferation of small events as part of its legacy and a consideration for its significance for urban heritage.

4 typologies and key influencing factors:

As noted above, cultural mega-events have become a growing phenomenon over the last several decades, coming to play an important role in the development of cultural policies and programming of cities. While notable for their singular, mass appeal, a key aspect that makes them appealing for cities to host is the potential to initiate long term improvements and changes. One aspect of this is the potential festivalization of the city through a continuation of small and micro events in the years following. The following four typologies have been identified as differing ways in which cultural mega-events can come to affect the ongoing generation of small events: *Umbrellas, Incubators, Mothers* and *Killers*. Table 1 illustrates these four typologies in their effect on the quantity and quality of small and micro events following the close of a cultural mega-event. *Mothers* or *Killers* focus on the quantity of events and could see either an increase or decrease in quality (however it may be assessed).
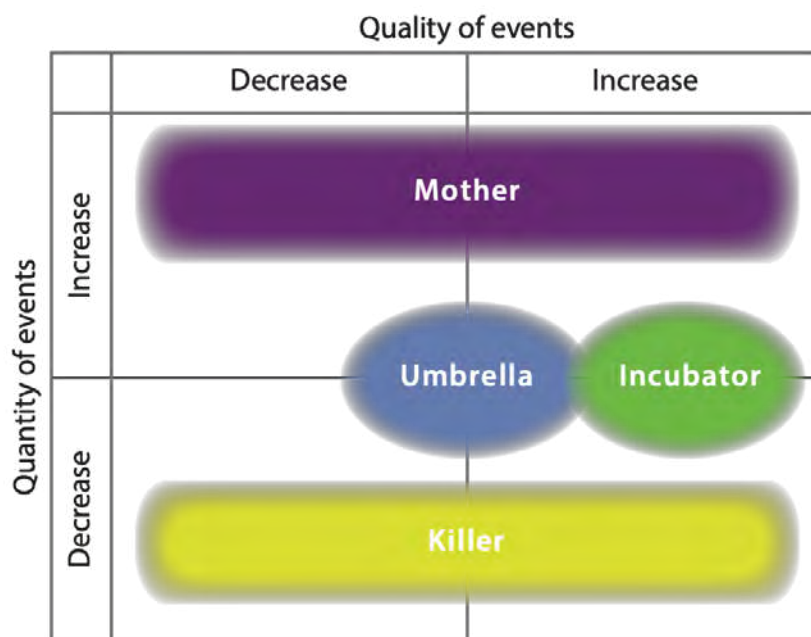
Tab 1. Mapping of the four typologies during the post mega-event period

Whereas *Umbrellas* see no significant change post-event in terms of either quality or quantity and *Incubator* types could be classified as a specific kind of *Umbrella* where a marked improvement in the quality of existing small and micro events can be observed.

Umbrella events are those that tend to encompass and include many pre-existing smaller events while hosting a cultural mega-event, but which does not leave a particular long-term impact on these events. The strategy of involving as many pre-existing events within the purview of the mega-event has been adopted by many cities hosting the ECoC and similar initiatives. The ECoC in no way requires the sole implementation of newly created cultural events as part of the year of celebration. In fact, cities are often awarded the ECoC specifically due to the fact that they are considered a 'cultural' city with existing cultural programs and events. Many of the cases that illustrate the other three typologies also implement a similar strategy during their host year in order to implement the greatest number of events during the year as possible. The defining feature of the *umbrella* type is that this grouping of pre-existing events fails to introduce any long-term impact or change. No specific learning is passed along or new networks created between various actors that foster collaboration or which benefit from a shared strategy. In this way the *umbrella* labels any and every event it can as being part of a year of culture, which may benefit the year, but which misses out on a potential long-term legacy. One example of an umbrella event is that of the Maribor ECoC 2012. The program for the year of celebration included various festivals that the city had already been hosting for a number of years and even decades in some cases. Examples include the Maribor Festival, Lent Festival, Old Wine Festival and the Maribor Theatre Festival, all of which have continued following the 2012 celebrations.

In a similar way to that of *umbrellas,* "*Incubator*" events also utilize pre-existing micro events, but come to enhance and grow them through the increased cultural capital, means and knowledge that the mega-event generates. *Incubator* events also bring together and take advantage of pre-existing small events, in some cases occurring for years prior to the mega-event, but which have been improved in some way through the experience and grown as a result in the years following. This learning may take place through a more strategic approach or introduction of cultural policy that was previously lacking. It could also happen through the continuation of the leading agency/foundation following the event. One example of an incubator event is that of the Milan 2015 Expo. While the main program occurred at the expo site located beyond the main urban fabric, a number of events were organized within the city center to coincide with the expo. This program was entitled Expoincittà, which the city of Milan continued to fund following the close of expo. In the four years since, it has gone on to create a database of event venues and sites for small and micro events throughout the city and periphery and now regularly organizes events throughout the year, including themed weeks that celebrate various topics including art, design, architecture, photography, food and many others. Milan previously had a strong tradition of events occurring throughout the year including the Fuorisalone Design Week, Artiginale Craft Fair, Piano Week and others. Expoincittà has been rebranded as YesMilano and has learned from the experience of organizing many events during the expo year, continuing and expanding in the subsequent years. The growth of leisure tourism is an evident ingredient that interested groups are exploiting, which can be seen through the festivilization and disneyfication of central places. Thanks to the institutional system and of information management strengthened through the organization of spread events during the year of Expo, the city has continued to support many small and micro events and increasingly spreading them throughout the territory. This appetite for big and small events and the strength of political constituency can also be seen in Milan's (along with the city of Cortina) candidature to host the 2026 Winter Olympics.

Unlike the first two types that are defined by the strong presence and use of pre-existing cultural events, *Mother* events are those that lead to the creation of new small and micro events in the city that did not previously exist. This is not to say that in *mother* events there were no cultural events existing prior to the mega-event but rather that at least some new

events created as part of the mega-event have gone on with some regularity. A clear example of this can be seen with the Liverpool 2008 ECoC and the success of the Giant Puppets event. The first event took place as part of the ECoC year in 2008 with a series of massive puppets parading through the streets of Liverpool, becoming one of the most iconic and memorable events of the year. It was so successful that the city brought the puppets back to the city in 2012, 2014 and 2018 along with other new cultural offerings. Other examples include the cases of the UK City of Culture Hull 2017 and the Mons ECoC 2015, both of which created organizations that have continued beyond the original event, guaranteeing new offers and long-term cultural events to which industry and tourist lobbies are interested. The continuation of the agency/foundation managing the cultural mega-event past the close of the event is not necessarily a requirement for *mother* events, but it is one of the key factors to be considered and which can make a significant difference.

The final typology to note are "*Killer*" events, which would be those that ultimately have a negative impact on previously existing small and micro events. There can be varying factors that explain such adverse long-term effects resulting from a mega-event. One key issue that can be observed in not just a few specific cases but in nearly all examples of cultural mega-events is the cliff drop phenomenon following their close. Due to the concentration of funding that focuses an extreme amount of resources for a short period of time, once the year of celebration is finished, there typically follows a period of greatly reduced budgets for continued events and cultural programming in the following years. This cliff-drop effect can have a quite severe impact on local inhabitants that go from an extreme period of festivalization to the other extreme of a non-festival atmosphere. Due to the year-long duration of most cultural mega-events, compared to other types of mega-events that last just a couple of weeks, the ECoC program can lead to a rather sudden change in the perception of cultural activity in the city. This effect may be particularly noticeable in smaller cities as compared to larger ones where there may be a stronger presence of pre-existing cultural institutions. This phenomenon can also result from a burnout effect where there is no longer a sustained interest in cultural events, on the part of organizers and audiences alike, following an intense year of activities leading to a loss of expertise (as managers leave to look for other opportunities, again particularly in smaller cities). Typically there is usually a slight reduction in tourism in the first year or two following a large cultural event. However, in recent years it has become more common for cities hosting a mega-event to have a legacy budget for the 2-5 years following the event in order to avoid the collapse effect of the cultural offer and to exploit the innovations introduced during the mega-event. While these legacy budgets do exist and can help in avoiding the drastic cliff drop off effect, these budgets are not always fully implemented as originally programmed as they require a clear legacy program to be already in place and cities are not always willing to continue their commitment to funding such efforts.

An example of a *Killer* event other than through the cliff effect of the event ending can be seen in the case of the 2009 Vilnius ECoC. While an exceptional case due to it coalescing with the start of the international financial crisis, the event underwent significant modifications due to a reduced budget and conflicts with management. In particular, the 'People Programme' portion of the event, which specifically highlighted local artists and cultural groups was essentially cut from the year of celebration (McCoshan, et al. 2010). Meanwhile, the more international and larger projects that had already been planned and financed were for the most part kept. In this instance, the local cultural scene was greatly affected, negatively, through the hosting of the event. While the event may not have been solely responsible as it related to much larger socio-economic challenges, it does demonstrate how in certain instances such mega-events can ultimately have a negative impact on the smaller cultural events.

Significance of ongoing small and micro events for heritage

The relationship between built heritage and mega-events has only recently become a field of investigation (Jones, 2017; Jones & Ponzini, 2018), the research into small and micro events

tends to deal specifically with heritage themed events and festivals taking place at festival sights (Coupland et al. 2005; Light, 1996). While there is an important connection between events celebrating local intangible heritage at or in local built heritage, this paper broadens the discussion to small and micro events of a wide ranging nature, heritage related or not. The first question this phenomenon raises relates to questions of authenticity and whether or not such events reduce the authenticity of such places and their connection with intangible heritage. Reducing heritage spaces to mere backdrops for any number of events could risk minimizing their value to that of any other public space in the city. However, on the other hand, from a HUL (Historic Urban Landscape) perspective, such a range of diverse uses and meanings introduced to these spaces through small events could serve as relevant tools to help connect and integrate them with the rest of the urban fabric of the city. Though not explicitly stated as a potential HUL resource (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012), ongoing small and micro events could present one possible approach to revitalizing and connecting heritage spaces by bringing people to use and interact with them in new ways rather than being seen merely as places of tourism.

Regarding tourism, ongoing strategies of small and micro events likewise present potential threats or opportunities. For cities where heritage sites are already inundated by tourism, their ongoing promotion through these events may only increase tourism and the subsequent threats they bring in terms of overcrowding, loss of authenticity and use, gentrification, etc. Yet events also represent a potential strategy to help reduce pressure on heritage spaces by spreading them to other areas, potentially drawing tourists to less visited parts of cities. This approach could be combined with secondary or lesser known heritage sites as well, as has become common with former industrial structures, to encourage new uses as well as meanings and values for these places. While these issues are likely not the only possible impacts, they highlight the potential importance they pose for urban heritage as they can either become part of strategies to help ease the pressures put on these places while potentially also providing new meanings and uses or risk contributing to problems of over tourism. For these reasons it is valuable to note and better understand these phenomena and anticipate them as one of the possible legacies for cities choosing to host cultural mega-events and to incorporate plans for such events with heritage goals (Jones & Ponzini, 2018).

Conclusions and research perspectives

This article is a first step in exploring an issue that should be further expanded and better understood. We do not exclude the fact that there may be additional types and categories that would be useful to discuss the relationship between mega-events and small events. We are convinced that some issues clearly emerge from this typology of ours and that it is necessary to deepen the empirical analysis with more in-depth case studies and systematic data collection of various dimensions. As defined here, these four typologies focus on the post-event period, but a further expansion would consider the relationship with the pre-event phase as well. The political dimension in particular seems to be an important aspect given that the planning and management of mega-events can strengthen some groups and constituencies as well as create agencies and new actors that influence the following phases both in terms of governance and more generally in defining the political agenda of the city. Even the structure of cultural governance often evolves based on the demands of the mega-event and the years following. Further research could help in pin pointing more precisely the reasons why some cities continue to pursue event strategies following a mega-event while others do not. Such research would provide a clearer understanding of the roles that financing, political changes as well as potential cultural fatigue play in determining how and why local decision makers and stakeholders decide on particular event strategies for their cities.

The localization in space of new cultural life and attractors can have a significant impact on the regeneration of some areas and on their functional and social characterization; these aspects have sometimes been studied in relation to the mega-event and only to a lesser extent

with respect to minor events. An important aspect is once again the political. Considering in a more complex way the evolution of cultural policies and the development of a city downstream of a mega-event, the effects of gentrification and the festivalization of some areas, a question that remains to be asked is who benefits and who pays not only for the mega and small events in the medium term but also for the modification of the city and of the functional and social organization in space connected to the effects of major events. This paper raises these important questions, but calls for continued research and analysis to help answer them.

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