

## Article

# Glocal Tourism and Resilient Cities: The Case of Matera “European Capital of Culture 2019”

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**Abstract:** This research paper presents the key elements of the strategic project “European Capital of Culture 2019” initiated by the city of Matera in 2014. Through the “big event”, defined by the combination “diluted time/diffuse space”, the “Città dei Sassi”, UNESCO World Heritage since 1993, is innovating the symbolic, material, and organizational levels of all the Basilicata municipalities whose tourist resources were almost unknown both at national and international levels, thus showing high resiliency, i.e., flexibility, inclusiveness, integration, and initiative. Through a self-centered and sustainable model of tourist accommodation that minimizes the infrastructure fixed capital investment aiming, at the same time, to increase collective empowerment processes, it is planned to accommodate about 700,000 “temporary citizens” who, by adopting an active and participative approach, wish to live a unique and unrepeatable identity experience in the Lucanian community instead of being mere spectators. Special attention is paid to “virtual” communication by using the world wide web not only as a showcase to promote the bottom-up identification and enhancement process of the heritage, but also as a tool to manage contacts with potential visitors in order to avoid any adverse impact of the event on the environmental and cultural components of the city and of the regional planning.

**Keywords:** “big events”; experiential tourism; Matera “European Capital of Culture 2019”

## 1. Introduction

If the search for “useful things” and “things to see” [1] (p. 169), together with the increasing commoditization of the “front regions” [2,3], could be regarded as distinct features of tourism demand in the 20th century, in the new millennium such demand is unquestionably based on a kaleidoscope of reasons, often difficult to figure out, which lead an increasing number of visitors to choose not mere “places to visit”, but real “destinations to be experienced” [4] where, by adopting a proactive and participative approach, they can get in touch with customs and traditions, food and wine, handicraft activities, routes to travel and workshops to experience, getting on the same wavelength with communities and sharing original and inclusive emotions and experiences.

Thus, so-called “empirical” [5] (p. 50) or “experiential” [6,7] tourism has been developing from “the desire to see life as it is really lived, even to get in with the natives” [2] (p. 592). For many territorial systems, far from major circuits of attractions, this could become a significant external disruptive element, especially if combined with another specific category of exogenous inputs: the so-called “big events”, real “short-term and high-profile” [8] urban disasters meaningfully engaging self-organization capacities of host populations [9].

The term “big event”, which in the scientific field has many synonyms (mega-events, special events, hallmark events) [8,10] and lends itself to various classifications (based on the orders of magnitude of visitors, investment budget, media coverage) [11,12], was initially used mainly in reference to important

sporting competitions, such as Summer and Winter Olympics or World Expos [11,13]. Currently, it is used for events, shows and even for the implementation of major infrastructure projects [12] (p. 752) having in common “a sort of “hypnotic” power” [14] (p. 719): indeed, this power captures such a global attention that several and deep improvements to the location and to the performance are required in order to advertise the best image to the audience.

The experience gained by many urban systems during the 1990s and the literature on the topic showed how, after a fierce competition among many candidate cities, very often a big event “proposed and received as a manna from Heaven” [14] (p. 720) proves to be like “a demanding, whimsical and unsteady lover who, after a long engagement—the preparations—during which the city makes every effort to host it in the best possible way, abandons it” [14] (p. 720), leaving behind the so called “white elephants” [15] (p. 800), that are hugely expensive works which, furthermore, require maintenance costs higher than their actual return (mega-stadiums, oversized hotels, etc.). Therefore, the new preparation processes (the so-called “before”) for big events (especially for medium-sized urban spaces) should avoid the construction of huge buildings and futuristic infrastructures in the “city of stone” [16] aiming, instead, at the recovery of what already exists and at the involvement of a wider territorial area (suburban environmental resources, small rural centers, etc.) over which spread the pressure and the thrust effects of tourism demand. Thus the investment, rather than address the infrastructure fixed capital, should aim at increasing the collective empowerment processes [17] (p. 13), that is the width of the relational space [18] (p.124), through actions addressed to local players and designed to raise awareness of the value of resources, project capabilities, institutional expertise, and the disposition to act in synergy. Special attention has to be devoted to the creation of a “virtual” [19] communication subsystem in order to convey to the world wide web not only the event promotion but also the management of contacts with potential visitors, thus avoiding any adverse impact on the environmental and cultural components of the city.

Besides a long “before”, most of “big events” are characterized by a “during” (actual performance) that, as Dansero [20] (p. 863) reminds us by analogy with the physics notion of “point instant”, takes place in a limited space and in a rather short, if not fleeting, time. The case of the event “European Capital of Culture”, promoted by the EU, included by Guala [12] (p. 752) among the “special cultural events”, is different. The initiative, developed in 1895 with the name “European City of Culture”, offers to the awarded city 365 days to promote its environmental and cultural heritage; in 1999 the event took its current name and, since then, every year two cities located in different Member States have been selected to carry out coordinated territorial enhancement actions co-financed by the Creative Europe Framework Programme. In this type of event, inherently featuring a “diluted time” [17] (p. 6) type of “during”, the awarded cities, by using a “diffuse space” [17] (p. 5), that involves a territorial context wider than the merely urban area, can create beneficial synergies between such external drivers and the experiential tourist demand.

This seems to be the direction in which Matera is headed. In October 2014, together with Plovdiv (Bulgaria) it was awarded the title of “European Capital of Culture 2019”. The strategic project that allowed the Lucanian city to decidedly prevail over the other European cities, aims at offering an alternative and special accommodation to an estimated audience of about 700,000 “temporary citizens”, proposing to them the genuineness—a highly debated notion in the scientific field [2,3,21–28]—of an urban space that, after being doomed with the whole Basilicata regional system to a distressing isolation since the end of the Second World War, is now facing an intensive internal regeneration, opening up to global tourism competition showing high resiliency [29,30], that is inclusiveness, eco-friendliness and, above all, initiative, carrying out a bottom-up identification and enhancement process of the heritage that Cohen E. and Cohen S.A. [23] would define as a “hot authentication”, to offer a self-centred, sustainable and lasting management model for the environmental and cultural heritage.

The objectives of this preliminary research are: (i) to highlight the first steps towards a “virtual” territorial reconfiguration [31,32] initiated by the “Città dei Sassi”, UNESCO World Heritage since 1993; (ii) to understand whether the city, by focusing on the quality of social relations, landscape, protection

of identity, culture, traditions and history has started, through the Internet, a “renewal” and sustainable process of the symbolic, material and organizational levels of all the Basilicata municipalities, whose tourist resources were almost unknown in the past, both at national and international levels.

## 2. Matera, Resilient City

The urban structure of Matera originates from its particular position, it is located on the edge of a cliff and dominates the homonymous ravine or one of those deep gorges with steep walls, typical of the southern part of the Plateau of Murgia, created by rainwater over thousands of years. Actually, on the side of the ravines, the tuff erosion created two contiguous cavities whose ground goes down as in two large amphitheaters with a side opening towards the ravine. Its size was not always the same in the past, but it can certainly be said that man has been living in this part of the ravine since ancient times. At first, the caves were used as simple shelters, then, over time, were transformed into homes. Then, after realizing how easily similar cavities could be excavated in the tuff, the number of such dwellings increased, aligned in the softer layers of tuff and, though the artificial caves were as rough as the natural ones, man introduced some element designed to meet particular needs. Finally, going up the wall of the ravine and approaching the edge of the gorge, due to the less steep ground and, in some places, to the transition from the tufaceous to the clayey-sandy formation, man has built his successive dwellings above street level using the same tuff he dug in the area or in the immediate vicinity of the city centre [33].

Matera is often referred to as the “city of stone” precisely because the most striking feature of its dwellings is that they fit perfectly with the morphology of the relevant territory. Actually, the building of the first dwellings followed closely the lesson learned from nature, that is the excavation of the crumbly rock of which this side of the valley is made of.

For many decades the name Matera represented something negative. In 1937, child mortality among the population that inhabited the Sassi was 44.32%, due to diseases like malaria and tuberculosis; illiteracy was massive. The sanitary conditions of the cave-houses were unhealthy and unacceptable for inhabitants, farmers, laborers, workers, craftsmen, and shopkeepers, only relieved by the sense of solidarity among families.

Until the end of the 18th century, the Sassi ecosystem was kept sustainable thanks to principles that were state-of-the art at the time, such as the conservation of rainwater, waste storage and space reuse. The city expansion and the sudden and dramatic demographic increase, combined with the crisis of pastoralism, were some of the factors leading to a progressive disruption.

During the 1930s the ancient communication routes underwent a complete change; in particular, two streams (called *grabiglioni*, partly natural partly dug by man, that collected spring water from the Castle’s hill and conveyed it in the river Gravina) that had always characterized the development of Sassi, were channeled and paved, thus creating two rather wide roads that joined, thus connecting the whole city. Further, sewers and a network of public fountains located in the centre of neighborhoods were created, thus allowing for an easier water supply for the population. The impact of the Second World War on Matera, as well as all over Italy, worsened a situation already near collapse: the population of the rural areas, exhausted by poverty and extremely harsh conditions, tried once more to take shelter in the cities. In a particular context such as Matera, this led a high number of displaced families to settle in caves and old cisterns not always suitable for residential use. Consequently, water available to the population that in the early 1900s reached 20,000 inhabitants, suddenly decreased.

In 1945, upon the publication of Carlo Levi’s “Cristo si è fermato a Eboli”, the whole country became aware of the Sassi matter, and the appalling living conditions of the population struck the country and its ruling class. Deputy Palmiro Togliatti was the first to travel to the Basilicata city in 1948 to see personally the unhealthy places where people and livestock lived together. He straight away defined the Sassi as a “national shame” and a symbol of backwardness that Italy, and above all workers, could not tolerate. Thus, many projects had commenced to be developed to solve this problem [34].

The commitment took the form of many research projects in the framework of the UNRRA-Casas initiative (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration that in 1946 set up in Italy the UNRRA-Casas, Comitato Amministrativo Soccorso ai Senzatetto, for the management and the construction of new districts) to create a rural village for the Sassi farmers and led to the setting up of the “Commissione per lo studio dell’agro e della città di Matera” (Commission for the study of the rural areas of the city of Matera) and the following construction of the rural villages of La Mantella and Venusio, nearby the lands owned by the farmers that lived in the Sassi. The Commission diligently recreated the same social cohesion of the ancient tuff districts and facilitated the opportunity to carry on the agricultural activity with less difficulties [35]. Finally, in 1952 the Government led by De Gasperi promulgated Law No. 619, of 17 May 1952, “Risanamento dei rioni dei “Sassi” nell’abitato del Comune di Matera” (Renovation of the “Sassi” districts in the municipality of Matera) that, nevertheless, did not involve the recovery, but a complete displacement of the population from unhealthier dwellings (about 17,000 people) to the new districts. In order to prevent the population or other people from occupying the dwellings, the neighborhoods and the empty buildings were walled and, regrettably, left to neglect.

The forced displacement went on for about 15 years, strongly opposed by inhabitants. The Sassi were essentially emptied and became a ghost town edging the new city (Figures 1 and 2). By assigning their old dwellings to the State Property Office, the inhabitants got new houses and the promise of a plot of land for farming, paying very low rent.

By Law No. 126, of 28 February 1967, “Provvedimenti per completare il risanamento dei rioni “Sassi” di Matera e per la loro tutela storico-artistica” (Measures for the completion of the renovation of the “Sassi” districts of Matera and for their historical and artistical protection) more than ITL 5 billion Italian Lire (approximately 53 million Euros) were allocated to complete the displacement of the remaining inhabitants and to proceed to the conservation works of the abandoned districts. Since then, the question was raised about what could be the use of the old districts and the result of their revaluation; to solve this problem, in 1973 an International Idea Contest for the renovation of the Sassi was launched. The initiative led to several cultural and political debates and rekindled the interest for the city with the publishing of studies on the evolution and urban development of Matera.

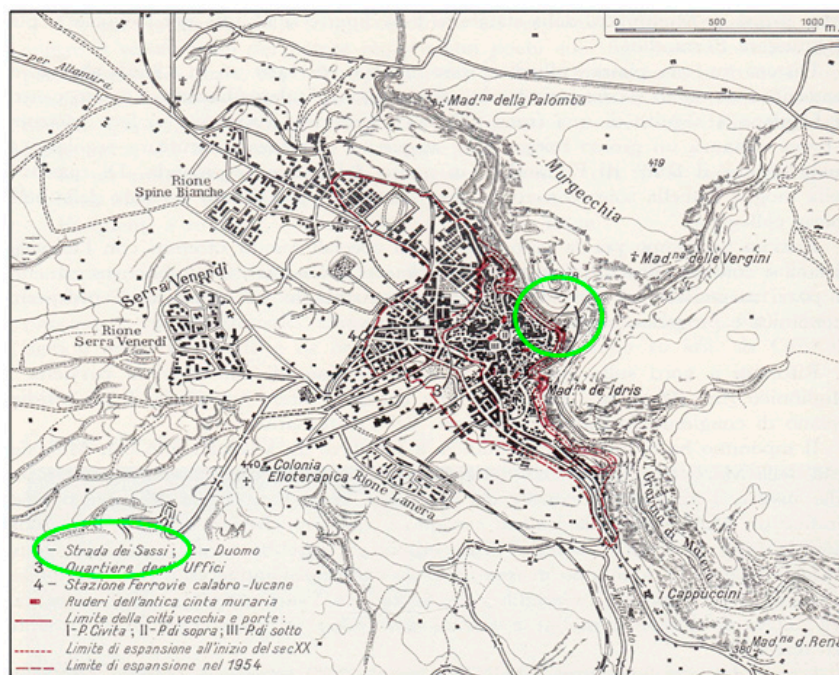


Figure 1. Topographical development of Matera in the 1960s [33] (p. 346).





**Figure 2.** View of the Sassi in the 1960s [33] (p. 351).

Several socio-economic studies on what the future role of Sassi could and should be were published between the 1970s and 1980s. Nevertheless, to talk again of life in the ancient heart of Matera we had to wait until the middle of the 1980s when Law No. 771, of 11 November 1986, “Conservazione e recupero dei rioni Sassi di Matera” (Conservation and recovery of Matera’s Sassi) reversed the population outflow from the Sassi, encouraging people to return through the leasing of buildings. Actually, Article 10 states that “The Municipality of Matera, after carrying out the actions under the biannual programme, leases the buildings to natural persons or legal entities who shall use them for their proper purpose”.

Thirty years after, Law No. 771, by stating the major national interest in the conservation and architectural, urban, environmental, and economic recovery of Matera’s Sassi and the protection of the overlooking Murgia plateau (Article 1), was the first step for the return of man into the Sassi habitat. The total funding for the site renovation and restoration amounted to 100 billion Italian Lire (granted over four years). The critical element for the resettlement of the Sassi was a grant to private individuals who wished to carry out a restoration of up to 50% of the total amount.

The big push that boosted the renovation and recovery of the Sassi area took place in 1993 when UNESCO included Matera’s Sassi on the World Heritage List. They were the first site in southern Italy to be included in the List and the first to be defined “Cultural Landscape” [36]. Since 2007 the definition has been enlarged to “The Sassi and the Park of the Rupestrian Churches of Matera”, deciding to also include the Park of the Rupestrian Churches area which represents for the province and for the city an additional evidence of their history.

In 2001 the shameful project of a tourist resort in the Sassi was stopped and the relaunch of the city as a filming location began. Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ” was almost entirely filmed in Matera in 1994. Anyway, the three Sassi, the Barisano in the North, the Caveoso in the South and the Civita in the middle, had already been used as natural locations by Lattuada (La lupa, 1953), Pasolini (Il Vangelo secondo Matteo, 1964), the Taviani brothers (Il sole anche di notte) and by many other directors.

In 2008, the Associazione Matera 2019 submitted the city’s candidacy to become European Capital of Culture 2019, obtaining the first reflections on the tangible (the Sassi and the rupestrian civilization) and intangible heritage, that is the renovation capacity widely proved by the city until then, in short

its resiliency [37]. The candidacy was formally structured through the submission, in 2013, of a first dossier to the MIBACT, Ministero Italiano per i Beni Culturali (Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism) for the pre-selection phase. The common thread was the slogan “Insieme, dal basso” (Together, from the bottom up) to emphasize the participation path of the population that allowed the preparation of the dossier, as well as its future role. Together with Cagliari, Lecce, Perugia-Assisi, Siena and Ravenna, Matera was shortlisted for the final selection. The Selection Panel, which met in Rome in November 2013, appreciated the candidacy which was marked by a strong “anthropological” dimension. It highlighted how, always, Matera and the Basilicata have been territories of passage, exchange and transformation, for *Magna Graecia* and Rome, Byzantium, Arabs and Swabia. Today, they host new and widespread forms of new immigration. The city, following the complete abandonment of the “Sassi” which took place after the Second World War, began, since 1986, one of the most important urban rehabilitation processes in the Mediterranean. In 1993, thanks to these efforts, the Sassi were repopulated and offered on the tourist market. The project is based on five pillars: ‘Ancient futures’, to build a future remembering the past; ‘Roots and Routes’, on the concept of mobility in the past, in the present and in the future; ‘Reflections and Connections’, aimed to link daily life to culture; ‘Continuity and Disruptions’, moving from the above abandonment of the Sassi; ‘Utopias and Dystopias’, that intends to give concrete solutions to current crisis, taking into account culture, economy, ethics. [38].

The second dossier was submitted to the panel in 2014. The common thread of the second dossier was the slogan “Open Future”, it highlighted the possibility of combining scientific and technological expertise with the particularly creative streak that has always been a hallmark of the manual skill of the Italian people. Through the event Matera 2019, the authors of the dossier hoped for a future in which the city could combine its extraordinary traditions and the great architectural and cultural heritage with its new role as a meeting place for different populations, Italian and European.

The goals of the programme are to use culture as the propellant for conceiving of an open future; strengthen the breadth and diversity of citizens who actively participate in culture; increase Matera’s relationships; engage in a capacity-building programme for socio-cultural operators; build useful and sustainable cultural infrastructures; enhance the international visibility of the city and its tourist potential and consolidate its leadership in the world of open-data. They tried to make of Matera the most important open cultural system platform in Europe.

On 17 October 2014, with 7 preferences on 13, Matera was designated European Capital of Culture 2019 (together with Plovdiv in Bulgaria).

### 3. The Start of the “Virtual” Reconfiguration Path of Matera

Being invisible on the Internet “in the Google age is like not existing” [7] (p. 47): this belief guided since the beginning the Matera-Basilicata 2019 Foundation (whose purpose was the implementation of the lines of action as per the final Bid Book) which, in order to consolidate the position of the city and of Basilicata in the creative sector at the European level and set up a cultural platform for Southern Europe, focused on the creation of a “powerful” [39,40] tourist image of the “big event” “European Capital of Culture 2019”, by a clever and careful use of the world wide web, one of the more flexible and useful tools, in terms of comprehensiveness, update and reliability, to convey tourist information at all levels of the spatial scale and in real time, which allows for the ability to directly reach potential visitors and be reached by them [41].

The entire cultural program designed by the Foundation, to which the 70% of the operating budget (about 67 million Euros, of which 86% made of public funds) is allocated, will be placed in the commons and published under a Creative Commons license. It can be freely used and copied by visitors who, on the home page of the official website [www.matera-basilicata2019.it](http://www.matera-basilicata2019.it), are asked if they are ready to become “temporary citizens” by purchasing the “Matera 2019 Passport”. Each Euros 19 Passport allows for participation in all the scheduled events within the official programme and to live a complete 365-day experience. The background for the question addressed to the visitor is the

portrait of a “Time Traveller”, who goes through any spatial and temporal context and whose purpose is not being a mere observer, but to become an integral part of a community, to connect with it and get emotionally involved by it, this is why the event is defined as “a full-immersion experience at 360-degrees” [38]. The “Time Traveller”, wearing steampunk goggles whose glasses reflect a Lucanian landscape, and wondering “what the past would look like if the future had happened sooner is the central image of the event campaign and an important communication factor [38].

In general, the website provides specific information about the Foundation and the team in charge of organizing the event, useful contacts to request further information, and instructions to reach the city, as well as the reasons that led the international panel to designate Matera as European Capital of Culture 2019. The final Bid Book and the path leading to its preparation are also available on the website.

The cultural program offered to the “temporary citizens” revolves around five main themes. The first, “Ancient Future”, consists of 36 projects aimed at allowing for a careful reflection on the millennia-long relationship of humanity with space and the stars, and, at the same time, the possibilities of dialogue between man and nature. Thus, the city becomes a laboratory to reconsider the value of what we have lost over time, examining the endless possibilities of remote futures by organizing concerts and visits in evocative sites, such as the rupestrian churches or the Space Geodesy Centre, the main operating centre of the ASI (Agenzia Spaziale Italiana) one of the pillars of the global geodetic network.

By the second Section of the program, “Continuity and Disruptions”, Matera, after experimenting with deep and traumatic changes, proposes itself as a place to reflect upon its possible redemption and rebirth after being considered a “national shame” (see Section 2) and, in general, to face the multiple “shames” of the contemporary society (social inequality, racism, migrations): 24 scheduled micro-events aim at highlighting the extraordinary resiliency of the city and rediscovering, through its history, the chance of reinventing itself, to be born again and make its way toward a sustainable future.

The third theme “Reflections and Connections” draws on the Latin motto “Festina lente” (Make haste slowly), believing it to be necessary re-start from the re-discover of the value of time, slowness, darkness, and silence, going back to the fundamental values, giving importance to art, science and the widespread practice of cultural citizenship as catalyzing elements of an unprecedented and innovative model of community rooted in the “practice of daily life”. This Section includes 37 cultural projects mainly based on storytelling, oral histories, and cinematic narratives (short films, anthology films, and medium-length films).

The fourth theme “Utopias and Dystopias”, starting from the troubled history of Matera (see Section 2), intends to show, through 16 events (urban games, underground explorations, garden nurturing), the possible testing of new innovating schemes that represent a challenge to preconceptions, and oblige us to look at the world through the eyes of a child, making us rediscover the wonder and importance of play in our daily lives, and allowing us to find possible alternatives to the realities that we take for granted.

The fifth theme “Roots and Routes” focuses on the mobility culture that plays an important role for Basilicata, traditionally a place of meeting and convergence. After being a land of emigration for a long time, Matera is now seeing the return of young people attracted by traditional values. This Section, with its 38 projects, aims at revealing the extraordinary opportunities offered by the travel, showing how the nomadic spirit can approach Matera to Europe.

The “big event” “European Capital of Culture 2019” started on 19 January 2019, with an opening ceremony whose undisputed protagonists were the marching bands of 20 Lucanian municipalities that, together with those of the previous European Capitals of Culture, for a total of 2019 musicians (equaling the number of the current year), made their music resound in the streets of the city from early in the morning. At 7.00 p.m. began the “Matera 2019. Open Future” night, broadcasted live in Eurovision and on Rai1 in Italy, which showed in all its splendor the San Pietro Caveoso square crowded with people. The night ended with the long-awaited speech of the President of the Republic,



Sergio Mattarella, who recalled that “being Europeans” is, today, “an unavoidable part of our national identities” and that “culture is the connective tissue of the European civilization”.

The intense programme of events, described in detail on the website, started on 20 January. In particular, an in-depth reading of the fiches of each of the 151 projects organized (that will be carried out more than once during the year), highlighted that they will take place over 48 weeks, as already mentioned, and above all their distribution in the whole regional territorial context: indeed, besides Matera, all the 130 municipalities of Basilicata take part at least in one of the projects developed and 76 are active protagonists as “Capital for a day” by organizing events, shows, concerts, and performances according to the themes and the values of the Bid Book. Further, many of those municipalities decided to create a real enlarged network to build a relation between insider and outsider, stroking the keys of “nostalgia, sense of belonging, identification and search for identity” [24] (p. 51), by offering experiential tourists the opportunity to: 1) taste food and wine, resulting from a valuable tradition with ancient roots [42]; 2) explore the history of places by an active enjoyment of a tangible and intangible heritage layered in the territory; 3) live customs and traditions, handicraft activities, routes to travel and workshops to experience, sharing original and inclusive emotions and experiences.

It is clearly a shared itinerary based not only on the value of the “capital for a day” but also on the material and immaterial asset left to the community, translated in the symbolic and pedagogic value [43].

The calendar of events is very rich and varied: lectures on global concerns (migration, illegal immigration, racism, violence against women, identity, sustainability, pollution, diversity, barriers) with the participation of local and European experts, exhibits, photo exhibitions, craft workshops to teach ancient skills, hiking, games, sport activities, films, graffiti, historical re-enactments, costume parades and, above all, plays, concerts, and dance performances.

“People Places Purposes” (in the third theme “Reflections and Connections”) is a really interesting project, an exploration of the tangible and intangible heritage of the city that allows for an understanding on how to become a “Materano” for one day, simply stopping being a tourist to transform into “temporary citizens”, becoming an integral part of Matera daily life, an unusual way to live in the city thanks to the new and unprecedented participation of the people who live in it every day. This project involves weekly events during which the permanent citizens will tell a different “City of Sassi”, through five original routes, each of them dedicated to one of the themes of the event, thus diversifying the narrations and perceptions of Matera and Basilicata, exchanging views and opinions in order to create a strong relation among its permanent citizens and those who hardly know it, offering the latter the opportunity to seize the essence of the European Capital of Culture 2019.

Another journey to the soul of places is proposed by “The Atlas of the City’s Emotions” (from the fourth theme “Continuity and Disruptions”), a project conceived and co-produced by the Teatro dei Sassi and the Foundation Matera Basilicata 2019. Here too, the purpose is an unprecedented way of visiting the city, using an Emotional Map created through a collection of stories and memories of its inhabitants and, little by little, of the visitors/“temporary citizens” themselves. About 400 of Matera’s inhabitants have already been involved as emotional mappers: they have created their own emotional maps including the most important places of their lives. After a selection and literary and artistic “translation” (thanks to the collaboration of Alessandro Baricco, of the Holden School of Turin, the visual artist Stefano Faravelli and the choreographer Heike Henning), an “Emotional Master Map” will be defined, made up by 15 places throughout Matera. Between March and July 2019, visitors can begin their journey through “La segretissima camera de lo core”, a multisensory installation (created by Faravelli himself together with Paolo Baroni, artisan of light and designer of theatre machines) which will tell the soul of places through the memories of their inhabitants. But that it is not all: once back home, the traveler will have the opportunity to share with other visitors his/her own experience of “temporary citizen” through the Atlas website ([www.playatlas.com](http://www.playatlas.com)). Further, starting from 2020, every tourist will be given a pocket Emotional Master Map to explore Matera through the emotions of its



inhabitants in a detailed and evocative journey animated by moments that draw on theatre, music, cinema, and visual and performing arts.

The organization of such a wide and significant range of events is undoubtedly allowed by the active participation of hundreds of people to the candidacy process, mostly volunteers, along with cultural, social, and religious associations, as well as private operators and all the municipalities of the region. A key role was played by the web team, a group of people who, on a wholly voluntary basis, organized and managed the Matera 2019 candidacy webspace: shared projects, entirely implemented by citizens, were proposed through the web community “Matera 2019”. Thus, an active community was created in order to start a bottom up innovation process to set up an important exchange network with Italian and European communities. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that 45 out of 151 events scheduled are co-produced by local associations as well as national realities (Radio 3, Teatro Stabile di Napoli) with a total of 150 national and international project partners.

The Lucanian municipalities seem to have seized the opportunity offered by “Matera 2019 European Capital of Culture”, a valuable one since most of these territorial realities, due to their small size or their organizational weakness, could not, up to this moment, start a significant tourist enhancement [42] (p. 21). Therefore, the “big event” is able to involve many different parties of the local community “around which grows an awareness that could pave the way” [44] (p. 30) allowing the creation of collaborative networks, encouraging aggregation and involvement, enabling them to regain confidence in their potential and to understand that the future increasingly depends on the capacity of the community members to act strategically and effectively, using each cultural event of Matera 2019 as an introduction to a wider project of enhancement and relaunch for the whole region.

#### 4. Discussion

In mid-2019, while the calendar of initiatives is reaching the period of greatest intensity expected for the month of August, it seems premature to attempt an evaluation of the multiplier effects of “Matera 2019 European Capital of Culture”; they will be the subject of subsequent research, which we will carry out after the conclusion of the event, and in which we will estimate the economic and social impacts through field research (interviews with tourists and residents, pivot actors, etc). To date, however, through the reading of studies on the experiences of previous European Capitals of Culture [45–51], it is already possible to identify a series of good practices, also adopted by Matera, leading to a positive evaluation of the current strategy. In our opinion, there are strong similarities between the governance plan adopted by the “City of Stones” with the 130 other Lucanian municipalities and that of Essen (Germany, 2010); together with the entire metropolitan area of the Rhur, it has been transformed from a mining and steel district to an area dedicated to culture and leisure involving 53 urban centers in the area of the organization and implementation of a joint project while strengthening, at the same time, its identity and visibility. Since the beginning of the new millennium, Bruges (Belgium, 2002) had focused on a close collaboration with the surrounding region (decision also taken by Guimarães—Portugal, 2012), distributing the events throughout the year, as did also Graz the following year (Austria, 2003). The involvement of the entire citizenship in the event was implemented for the first time by Lille (France, 2004) where more than 17,000 volunteers played the role of “ambassadors” creating an information system managed from below, which will be proposed again in Cork (Ireland, 2005) and Sibiu (Romania, 2007); the French city, moreover, renounced, like Matera, the construction of great symbolic buildings promoting creativity and cultural experiences. The case of Tallin (Estonia, 2011), which placed guests at the center of its cultural project, can be considered the precursor of the idea of “temporary citizen” that guides Matera, to whom we wish the same fate of Stavanger (Norway, 2008), which has been able to transform the network of collaboration between the 26 municipalities involved in the event in a solid and lasting partnership.

Alongside these contact points with the winning strategies of previous European capitals, there are significant signs of growth in the city’s tourism supply and demand. Between 2014 (year of designation) and 2016, in fact, the number of arrivals rose from 153,005 to 250,093 (+63.5%) and the

number of visitors from 244,847 to 409,421 (+67.2%). At the same time, the city's accommodation capacity has been expanded: in fact, while in 2009 (the year of the start of the bid) the hotels were 22 (1437 beds) and non-hotel structures were 75 (661 beds), in 2016 they were respectively 26 (1597 beds) and 456 (mainly bed & breakfast for a total of 1930 beds) [52].

As a weakness, we find that the average stay index remains unchanged at 1.6, showing that Matera is considered by most tourists to be a simple transit destination. Moreover, the tourism movement is dominated by the Italian market, from which 73% of tourists come (182,568 in 2016) [53]. In our opinion, the systemic idea of the heritage of material and immaterial sediments offered by the official website (see Section 3) can contribute to overcoming this criticality, creating a brand "Basilicata" able to extend the period of stay and the number of foreign tourists, who can enjoy the content translated entirely into English.

## 5. Conclusions

After presenting the troubled history of the resilient city from the 1930s to its designation as European Capital of Culture (Section 2), we tried to highlight the start of its process of territorial reconfiguration through the world wide web (Section 3). Reading the contents of the official website led us to formulate a series of reflections on the key elements of the event, such as its bottom-up and participatory nature, the choice to focus on experiential tourism through the dissemination in time and space of various projects (designed for temporary citizens by an inclusive network of local and non-local actors); these projects are intended as integrated products able to spread the image of a structured and concrete proposal.

In our opinion, this strategy is still in progress and has positive values, which are reflected in the good practices already implemented by other European Capitals of Culture, in the encouraging signals coming from the accommodation sector (Section 4) and in the forecasts for 2019, according to which the organizers believe they can accommodate about 700,000 "temporary citizens" to whom they can offer a visible and attractive "product area".

Based on the above, we can say that "Matera 2019 European Capital of Culture", a "special cultural event" to be certainly included in the "diffuse space/diluted time" type [17] (pp. 5–6), represents an opportunity to defend and promote the Lucanian tourist space, protect its cultural values, and maximize the local milieu.

Last but not least, it should be underlined that the ongoing process of territorial reconfiguration focuses on the theme of sustainability and minimization of all forms of environmental impact.

Actually, 82.5% of the total investment for the candidacy (amounting to 649.85 million Euros from a Framework Programme between the Basilicata Regional Authority and the Municipality of Matera) refers to infrastructure (railway, road, port) on the whole Lucanian territory, severely lacking [45] (p. 17), while capital investments carried out in the Matera urban space (113.4 million Euros, or 15.5%) are almost totally referred to regeneration aiming at the recovery of the rural village "La Martella", the tufa quarry system in the north-east of Matera and the ancient trails, and the building/conversion of the few premises really needed (such as the I-DEA Museum, the Open Design School and the Arca di Prometeo Theatre) [53] (pp. 94–110): actually, Matera's candidacy is underpinned by an ethic of "reduce, recycle, reuse".

Therefore, there is good reason to believe that such a "big event", that has not entered yet the more intense implementation phase scheduled in the quarter July-September, will not leave a "poor, if not cumbersome and useless legacy" [14] (p. 720), but rather a valuable endowment of key intangible skills, such as "creating the local society" [54] (p. 80) and "nurturing the *amor loci*" [55], both necessary conditions to start a sustainable and shared "contextualized capitalization" [56] (p. 316), capable of inspiring the future European Capitals of Culture.

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