

UNeECC 2020 – Call for contributions

European Capitals of Culture: The Art of Reimagining

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Short biography

Graduated from the Politecnico di Bari with a thesis in urban planning entitled “*Re-Cycle Barcelona. New life cycles for Drosscapes. Conversion of a disused industrial area along Barcelona's waterfront*”, I decided to deepen the topic of urban regeneration by attending the post-graduate course in “*Temporary Reuse - Tools and strategies for the temporary reuse of abandoned spaces*” at the DASTU of the Politecnico di Milano.

So the interest in this topic has become part of the PhD in “*Cities and Landscapes: Architecture, Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, History and Resources*”, at the DiCEM of the University of Basilicata, with a thesis entitled “*Material and immaterial heritages in the post event evaluation in the city of Matera ECoC 2019. A research on the relationships among culture, food and use of space in Matera*”, with the tutor professor Mariavaleria Mininni.

The research work aims to elaborate the evaluation process of cultural heritage and the effects that a major event produces on a territory and its community, paying particular attention to what are defined as material components (hard factors) and intangible components (soft factors), interpreted through the categories of space and time. The study aims to understand how public policies, urban and cultural, have effects in the space of the city of Matera, involved in the year of European Capital of Culture 2019; to observe change in the city, to look at what is happening, to study the transformations in progress and to understand with what skills and means the city uses and will be able to reuse processes, places, within new imagery, in a perspective of resilience and sustainability for the city in a post-event planning.

Abstract

From the data provided at the end of the extraordinary year, it is clear that Matera and the Basilicata region have established themselves as an international place of cultural production and co-creation¹ through new cultural models, launching the Lucanian creative scene on the European stage for its original productions.

The international dimension of the event has been matched with the regional one² and Matera has turned out to be the European Capital of Culture with the highest growth rate in tourism.

The safety limits imposed by the Covid crisis and the continuous containment measures have put the concept of globalization on standby and seriously hit the tourism sector, which accounts for 13% of GDP in Italy. Between January and February, tourist operators in Matera calculated a drop of 80-90%. The health emergency, in the first 6 months of 2020, has already caused damage to tourism in Basilicata for 100 million euros (-230.000 tourists) and a loss of more than 20% of the annual tourist movement, largely cancelling the “Matera effect”.

Social and economic limitations will discourage long-distance travel and promote local tourism, with a model of exploration that follows the standards of “slow tourism”, typical of the territory of Matera and Lucania.

This type of tourism is the main reference market for Basilicata, Puglia, Campania and Lazio and represents 47% of the tourist presence in the Lucanian area.

If, on the one hand, proximity tourism will only confirm the “touch-and-go” trend that has always characterized tourism in the city of Matera, even in 2019; on the other hand, it could favour the discovery of other small towns in Basilicata, usually hidden by the European Capital.

Full paper

Matera beyond the euphoria of 2019: economic and social scenarios of city's legacy and the Covid-19 impact.

Tourist dynamics on the territory of Matera and Lucania

¹ 82% of the cultural programme was built in Basilicata, with the involvement of about 268 Italian and 214 international artists.

² With 410 events out of 1228 that took place in the other municipalities of Basilicata, with the projects “Capitale per un Giorno” (130 municipalities), “Gardentopia” (28 municipalities) and “Altifest - Festival nelle case” (11 municipalities).

In order to contain the negative impacts of Covid-19 on tourism dynamics, several possible scenarios have been considered that still take into account the uncertainty about the severity and duration of the health crisis. In the forecast model before summer 2020, a positive scenario has been hypothesized related to the resumption of travel during the summer season, which is motivated by the psychological factor caused by the forced lockdown; to the construction of governance actions that encourage the seasonal adjustment of tourist flows, “shifting” summer tourism towards the early autumn months and favoring proximity tourism, with a mode of exploration that follows the principles of “slow tourism” (typical of the Lucanian region).

Tourism in Matera cannot be described by an absence of seasonality: although it is not a seaside town, the seasonality profile indicates that only the summer season (June-September) can be defined as high intensity, especially for the domestic tourist segment.

The high numbers of the summer season do not obscure the tourism index of the non-summer months (defined by ISTAT³ to indicate the total presences of the 8 non-summer months in relation to the population) which shows however a certain importance of the tourist presence in Matera in the non-summer months, compared to the average of the provincial (with low values motivated by the relevant data of the seaside tourism of the Metaponto area), regional and national data.

The non-seasonal component, moreover, has almost doubled when comparing 2016 and 2019 data. This component is strongly linked to the historical and cultural heritage (among all, that of the Sassi) which constitutes a structural tourist resource that the city can exploit all year round, guaranteeing tourist and spending flows throughout the year, even if with high peaks only during the summer period. This intrinsic advantage allows the city to maintain a certain constancy also in the employment levels of the tourism sector, with a positive reverberation on the local development of the territory.

Both arrivals and tourist presences are distributed, although not constantly, throughout the year, with a peak of presences in the summer months, Matera shows a fairly widespread distribution of arrivals and tourist presences throughout the year; for the Italian presences there is also a peak in the summer months: in August 2019, there were 642,346 presences which, in the same month of 2016, were even higher (660,175).

The difference in trend between the curve of arrivals and presences, which is more accentuated in the summer months, can be motivated by a congress tourism that is almost totally absent in the summer months, which does not contribute to feed the curve of presences, being a tourism typically characterized by short stays in the city; but also by forms of “micro-seasonality” (e.g. weekends, holidays, etc.), with high frequencies during the year but of short duration.

Looking at the data by origin of tourists, a particularly high profile of seasonality is recognizable for Italian tourism, with a peak in August; while the monthly curve of the foreign segment indicates a more constant inflow, with a greater presence in September.

This difference in behavior can also be traced back to travel habits: Italian tourists prefer to travel during the summer months, which usually correspond to periods of vacation from work, and organize the trip more autonomously, while foreigners rely more on travel agencies or tour operators who point to the low season, to avoid the less hot months and save money.

From the data, it can be deduced that it is important to further strengthen policies of attraction to increase foreign tourism flows, compared to Italian ones, and to aim at seasonally adjusted tourism, using the event of Matera 2019 as a flywheel of attraction for international tourism also in the following years, especially for emerging tourist markets.

Moreover, despite the proclamation as European Capital of Culture, it is clear that Matera, in recent years and in particular with the extraordinary year 2019, has not driven enough the other sub-regional areas, excluding territories that already host natural cultural products (Vulture) or “great attractors” (Metaponto, Maratea). There is a clear room for improvement as regards the offer of inland Basilicata, the one where the landscape-nature product is strongest, associated with the authenticity of the villages and the widespread cultural heritage.

³ The National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) is an Italian public research body that deals with general censuses of population, services and industry, and agriculture, sample surveys on households and general economic surveys at national level.

To undertake seasonal adjustment policies and tourism marketing strategies, it is useful:

- develop a complete tourist destination, with investment strategies shared by both the public and private sectors, to create a unified project that brings a more or less constant flow of tourists in the area, proposing a cultural, food and wine and recreational offer, assisted by the presence of services to help tourists;
- invest to differentiate a tourist product that reflects the desires and expectations of the different targets that travel in low season and promote these offers through a good web marketing strategy (websites, advertising, social media) since most tourists who travel in low season organize their trip autonomously, without the help of travel agencies;
- rethink a more varied program that responds to a latent demand of tourists who increasingly require an experiential and emotional tourism that involves the entire territory. This demand is even more evident during the low season, when beach tourism is now over and tourists travel with more complex cultural demands, implementing the so-called "heritage tourism".

Basilicata post Covid-19: scenarios of change for the Lucanian tourist system

Despite the negative forecasts estimated for the entire Italian territory, from the first data (August 2020) on the summer tourist movement in Basilicata, it emerges that in the Region the drop in demand has been more contained compared to the rest of the national territory.

The «tourist Basilicata is going to sell out in these weeks of August (...) the infopoint of Matera, only in the first half of August, registered almost 2000 visitors, with 15% of foreigners, and from our sample survey the tourist accommodation activities of all the Lucanian resorts are registering numbers close to sold out» with these words, Antonio Nicoletti, General Manager of APT Basilicata, describes the tourist situation in Basilicata in the summer months, just after the lockdown period.

Basilicata has become one of the 10 tourist destinations where Italians (but also foreigners) had more confidence in terms of security to spend their summer 2020 vacations in the post Covid-19 phase.

The first results of the post-lockdown promotion campaign carried out in Basilicata (especially Matera, Maratea and the two Appennino Lucano-Val d'Agri and Pollino National Parks) disseminated at the end of August by the APT are encouraging and repay the efforts made by the region to promote recovery, both from national tourism and from foreign arrivals.

Analyzing the factors intended to guide the choices of tourists in the situation determined by the Covid-19 (physical distance, open places, proximity destinations), the design action of the APT has focused on tourist proposals and brands able to enhance the identity values of the landscape of Basilicata, i.e. widespread beauty, cultural, natural, human resources, villages and genius loci.

The fact that emerges clearly is that the landscape of Basilicata (and the related tourist offer) responds perfectly to the needs of post-Covid tourism inviting an integrated planning able to really transform this great crisis into a formidable opportunity for growth and development for the entire tourism sector of the region.

The proposal developed by APT to respond effectively to post-Covid tourist demand is "Basilicata en plein air", a project that aims to identify and strengthen the outdoor offer both for sports and active tourism enthusiasts and for lovers of outdoor cultural and landscape experiences. Starting from the fact that Basilicata is the least contagious region in Italy, the initiative is aimed at communicating a healthy and safe tourist destination, with a diversified offer, with the identification of a new specific product for fans of recreational and sports activities and with the protection of the customer / tourist, able to choose between quality facilities that guarantee certain standards of service.

A project that aims to deseasonalize tourist flows and attract both cultural tourism targets and those attracted by the beauty of the natural landscape. Trends that result in strong growth in the international tourism scene and that in the context determined by the Covid-19 emergency can only have a further increase since they favor balanced tourist experiences in terms of social distancing.

Covid-19 impact on Matera's associative world: the case of Casa Natural

In order to allow tourism businesses, hospitality businesses and catering services to recover economically once the emergency is over, it will be necessary to take rapid and effective actions, in a broader strategy useful to preserve the productive and entrepreneurial areas.

The city of Matera, to restart, can certainly take advantage of the legacy of the extraordinary year that has seen it as a leading international player, and move towards a vision of investment in the attractiveness of the territory, both cultural and tourist, that does not leave out sustainable strategies on the health security front.

The main scenarios estimate that a total recovery of the tourist movement will be possible in 2022 and that, until then, the objectives that Matera will have to pursue in order to remain one of the great attractive centers of the national territory will concern the tourist deseasonalization, the increase of the levels of services offered and the promotion of an integrated tourism, able to tie all the major tourist resources in the territory.

With the arrival of the pandemic, the Third Sector⁴ was one of the most affected and many of the activities stopped, with negative repercussions on social and community life. The blockade and the uncertain re-programming of cultural events of different kinds has had and continues to have repercussions on the world's ability to move. For a social recovery of the country, it is necessary the help of other sectors related to culture, such as tourism and hospitality, strongly linked to each other.

The post Covid recovery will have to pass through the associative realities and cultural organizations that, in recent years, have represented for Matera a lever for raising awareness of the community towards social and cultural initiatives, even within the events of 2019 and through new projects to make Matera a point of reference for the experimentation of new information technologies⁵, not remain exclusively linked to the tourism sector to create new opportunities for development and work for young professionals.

In the context of Matera 2019, the institutions of the Third Sector have been particularly involved in initiatives related to the event, designed and programmed to increase the sensitivity of the local community towards the world of culture and Italian and foreign tourists to the Matera area, through practical and sensory experiences in the places and spaces of the city.

Among the main operators in the area and project leaders who have successfully participated in the initiatives of Matera 2019, there is the association Casa Netural, which now continues to carry on its planning, while having to deal with new organizational dynamics due to Covid-19.

Casa Netural is a house, born in 2012 in Matera, founded by Andrea Paoletti, Italian architect and community developer, with Mariella Stella, with the aim of creating entrepreneurial, innovative projects, generated by the meeting between local people and innovators from all over the world, because innovation must be sought outside the large urban centers, putting all the peripheral and rural areas in a position to make innovation. It hosts a space for co-working, co-living and an incubator for cultural and creative enterprises.

One of the projects co-produced with the Matera Basilicata Foundation 2019 for the extraordinary year, in collaboration with Idlab and John Thackara, is "Mammamiaaaa" a project that celebrates food and the relationships between the people who produce and consume it, which includes the organization of dinners in

⁴ The definition of third sector can be found in the delegated Law 106/2016 (art. 1, paragraph 1):

"Third sector" means all private entities established for the pursuit, without profit, of civic, solidarity and social utility purposes and which, in implementation of the principle of subsidiarity and in accordance with their respective statutes or constitutive acts, promote and carry out activities of general interest through forms of voluntary and free action or mutuality or production and exchange of goods and services.

According to the provisions of article 4 of Legislative Decree no. 177/2017, the following non-profit entities may be considered third sector entities:

- voluntary organizations;
- associations of social promotion;
- philanthropic bodies;
- social enterprises, including social cooperatives, associative networks, mutual aid societies, associations, recognized or not recognized, foundations and other private entities other than companies established for the pursuit, without profit, of civic, solidarity and social utility purposes.

⁵ Transforming rural neighborhoods into digital neighborhoods is a priority objective: in recent months, the work of the Strategic Steering Committee of the Ministry of Economic Development has continued for the construction of the House of Emerging Technologies, within the digital hub of San Rocco, to candidate Matera to become a technological hub of reference for the South, able to attract investment and create employment and development in the field of innovation. A project that sees in partnership the National Research Council, the Polytechnic University of Bari and the University of Basilicata, together with the Municipality of Matera, and which includes the creation of several innovation laboratories that embrace the audiovisual sector, that of extended reality and technologies for 3D shooting; a sector dedicated to blockchain and one that will deal with quantum key distribution; there will also be an advanced robotics laboratory for the development of tools and systems based on the Internet of Things and one dedicated to 5G applications. After the slowdown due to the pandemic, on August 4, 2020 was inaugurated the new center of excellence for the development of applications related to emerging technologies that will be declined to pursue areas of innovation such as cultural and creative industries, cultural and environmental heritage management, sustainable services and tourism, new frontiers of digitization.

Matera and in Europe whose recipes will be shared on social media creating a large international digital cookbook.

With the decline in tourist flows since the early months of 2020 and the almost total blockage of all non-essential activities, local associations have been forced to reorganize their activities and adapt the projects already underway to the new regulations of social coexistence. In this framework, the association Casa Netural, together with the Agrinetural association, has created several meetings during the summer to understand how to live the cultural parks at the time of Covid and a new project “Families at the Park”, with a series of free meetings dedicated to children and families of the community, with outdoor activities in the garden of Agoragri⁶, scheduled from October 9 to November 1.

In Matera, the health emergency came at a time when the city was supposed to begin to reap the first fruits of the legacy of 2019: the process suffered a setback in early 2020 that only slowed down the planning of the legacy. Associations and others involved in the creative process have rethought their activities, focusing on programs that support the strengths and opportunities of the territory and local community and working on the city's outdoor and natural spaces.

The programs for the future of the city are always based on the ability to create projects and processes that combine the tourist world with the cultural one, with the involvement of new technologies, to make the city of Matera an increasingly international place, a point of reference and experimentation, a cultural hub that moves between tradition and innovation. In this context, the role of local associations and operators is fundamental to carry on ideals and projects.

Towards a sustainable growth of the city

The success of a European Capital of Culture is not only measured on the basis of the results obtained in the immediate future and, above all, on the actual ability to change the development trajectory of a territory to a concrete and significant extent. This is even more true now, after the health emergency is posing new and significant challenges to the economic and social supply capacity of individual areas.

For a prospective analysis, it is important to focus not only on the tourist appeal of the city, but also on its historical/cultural context, its productive sector and its innovative potential, in order to better exploit the entire territory.

So it is important that in the post Matera 2019 we aim at “long term” objectives, therefore on actions able to guarantee a constant future growth for the whole socio-economic system of the territory.

In keeping with some of the main objectives identified in the Application Program such as:

- strengthening cultural citizenship;
- strengthening the visibility and international tourism positioning of Matera;
- increasing international relations;
- to create useful, relevant and sustainable cultural infrastructures.

It is important now to focus on:

- young people, encouraging them to invest in the development of the area;
- present activities, to strengthen the economic fabric;
- enhancement of the cultural heritage, as a distinctive element of attraction.

The new European scenarios will be oriented with increasing attention to a sustainable transformation of the territory and economy, with the new technological frontiers that guide the new paths of growth.

The city is now facing the challenge of rediscovering a new path of growth for Matera post Covid-19, based on the extremely positive and prospective results generated by the experience of European Capital of Culture, but also setting new and challenging goals for the future of the city, finding a further impetus from those post-

⁶ Agoragri community garden today, in the past was a public green area of 5000 square meters in disuse, a non-place between residential buildings of recent construction, a historical remnant of the Agoragri that the project returns to the city reactivating its ancient function, through a series of services and activities involving all citizens and inhabitants of neighboring neighborhoods. Based on a project by the Matera studio MesonRo and commissioned by the Basilicata Region, Agoragri becomes a public urban park with a wooden pavilion for events (the first example of ephemeral architecture of the city of Matera; made of laminated fir, metal and concrete), a straw amphitheater (an example of ephemeral architecture, built according to construction techniques projected towards an innovative and eco-sustainable future), a synergistic vegetable garden, family gardens, an olive grove.

pandemic elements listed above, taking into account the vocations of the territory and the most recent projects and initiatives already started.

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