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Much has been written, continues to be written and will be written in the future about urban spaces in the time of COVID-19. These are important arguments that require reflection and study, and can never be exhausted, because the unprecedented images of cities are constantly being negated; they do not allow our thoughts to settle, because they change immediately, making predictions and forecasts pointless. We are convinced that Matera 2019 represents an excellent testing ground for exploring the capacity for resistance and resilience of a city that was a European Capital of Culture year before the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, a dramatic, unforeseen occurrence that has radically altered the phase of acquisition and re-elaboration of the benefits of the great success that accompanies a major event such as the **European Capital of Culture**, a success Matera had obtained in previous years up to the year of proclamation in 2019.



Figura 1 | Open the future! - Opening ceremony of Matera European Capital of Culture

Today, Matera finds itself having to face a dual challenge that forces it to react to the enforced break caused by the pandemic, which has especially penalised mobility, and therefore tourism, in the majority of tourist cities. Matera's challenge is now to capitalise on what has been done and, in the face of the crisis, to relaunch a cultural project that draws ideas and inspiration from the particular conditions of this moment.

The purpose of the report entitled "**Matera 2019. The event spaces and events in the space**" is to take up the common thread again, and to recreate the tension between citizens, city and urban culture so we are not overcome by the present, and so we do not forget the recent past. The intention of the study, and the proposal it makes, is to go back and think about what has been done in these recent times, to confirm – even when we are faced with the needs of the moment – that culture is a driving force for people's tangible and intangible wellbeing and the best antidote to a crisis, and that urban cultural policies are a laboratory for reflecting on and relaunching not only the city, but also the national system.

The term "Matera Observatory", followed by the number denoting the years starting from year zero, the year of the proclamation, for the years to follow, means a virtual place of urban studies by a working group on the city made up of teachers and students who draw their inspiration from the experience initiated by the persons appointed by the Lucanian university to monitor and assess Matera 2019, in particular by using an analysis of the city spaces as a parameter and privileged observation point¹.

The report returns to the complex ECoC process by looking at the spaces that were reinvented by the Matera 2019 projects, studying the facts and reconstructing the cultural process and the underlying meanings. Its purpose is to reflect on what it will be possible to do when the process becomes part of the ordinary dimension over and above the extraordinary success that was achieved during the year of the event.

The report discusses the city's principal physical transformation processes that were achieved throughout the Matera 2019 experience. They have been reconstructed based on the intersection between the Municipality's everyday policies, most of which were directed towards supporting the Matera European Capital of Culture process, and the activities connected with the scheduled events, the aim being to seek multiple interactions and repercussions.

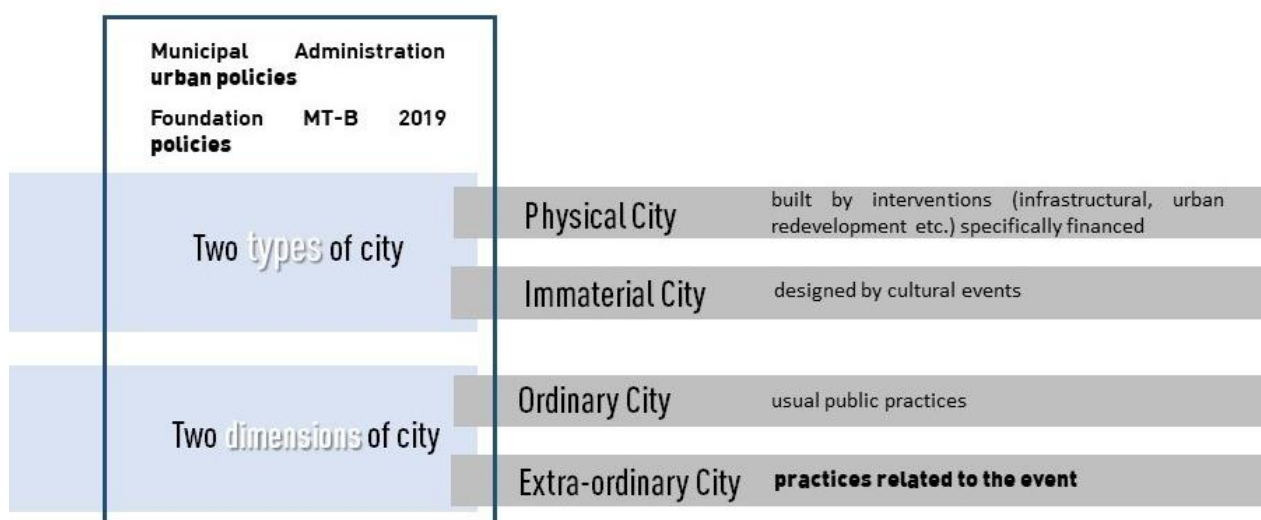


Figura 2| The actors and the actions (authors elaboration)

¹ The document has been prepared by a working group led by Professor Mariavaleria Mininni (Professor of Urban Planning and Landscape at DiCEM) as part of a framework agreement between the University of Basilicata and the Matera 2019 Foundation. Matera Observatory is a name that conveys the idea of a laboratory created by students and researchers who took part in the analysis of the process, combining education and research. It is an urban laboratory that tells the story of the city and the transformations it underwent during the application process and its proclamation as 2019 European Capital of Culture, as seen through the eyes of student and teacher citizens in the work carried out in the teaching workshops of the academic courses at DiCEM, University of Basilicata.

The reconstruction work that was carried out in the Matera1 Observatory Laboratory was planned as a place for reflecting on the relations between university and city by which the university, and especially those who work on the relationship between space and society, intend to continue to observe the city of Matera in the years following the closure and normalisation of the process. The cognitive and information base of the work being carried out may represent the manner in which, by updating the knowledge base, the Observatory becomes an open forum for active citizenship where the dynamics of urban transformation and the future of the city are discussed.

The report is divided into several sections: an introduction on the monitoring of Matera 2019 ECoC and its events; an analysis of the event spaces and an in-depth study of seven iconic spaces involved in the process; and a consideration of the creative solidification and the life satisfaction approach evaluation model.

The introduction focuses on the city and its capacity to produce urban regeneration processes using a cultural programme as a point of departure, with powerful repercussions on the social situation, the economy and the space that hosts the culture. Based on what emerges from our analysis, the Matera-Basilicata 2019 Foundation had the merit of implementing practices for the reuse of spaces by applying the most innovative parameters for urban regeneration as put into practice by the most advanced urban policies in European cities, responding to the principles of sustainability and innovation. The way in which certain urban locations that had been abandoned or undervalued for some time were chosen made it necessary to construct buildings from scratch, but working by adapting urban spaces to the needs of the performances and events, bringing their latent values and potential into focus. A lack of large-capacity theatres, cinemas and auditoriums forced the Matera-Basilicata 2019 Foundation to explore urban spaces so as to make the entire city available for use as a theatre. Rather than the usual theatres and auditoriums, urban spaces, streets, squares, disused areas and anonymous containers adapted to hold events became the places where creative actions were modified each time, challenging the configuration of the space for the staging requirements of the performance: flexible spaces made available by the city for the many events that were distributed across it during the long application process until the year Matera was proclaimed to be a European City of Culture.

Our analytical work detected spaces and events by means of a detailed mapping process, which was later geo-referenced so that the monitoring procedure could be updated over the course of time. The ultimate aim is to develop a platform for multi-actor governance between public institutions, the municipal government and the Matera-Basilicata 2019 Foundation to serve citizens, private parties and stakeholders. The information layers (maps, data, images, etc.) make it possible to interpret the transformations by re-establishing city's everyday and extraordinary strategies. It emerges from the study that the staging for the performances that transformed the city's spaces offered unexpected configurations and unprecedented capitalisation and identity processes that will now become embedded with the many stories of the

city, sometimes with a still greater impact on definitive space transformation. The study is therefore an urban heritage atlas created by *Matera 2019* by working within pre-existing histories and critically updating them to the present, establishing a new story of the city. Four fundamental spatial actions – use, reuse, recycling and new connections – were identified that operated as conceptual devices for giving shape to a new idea for spatialising the urban scene.

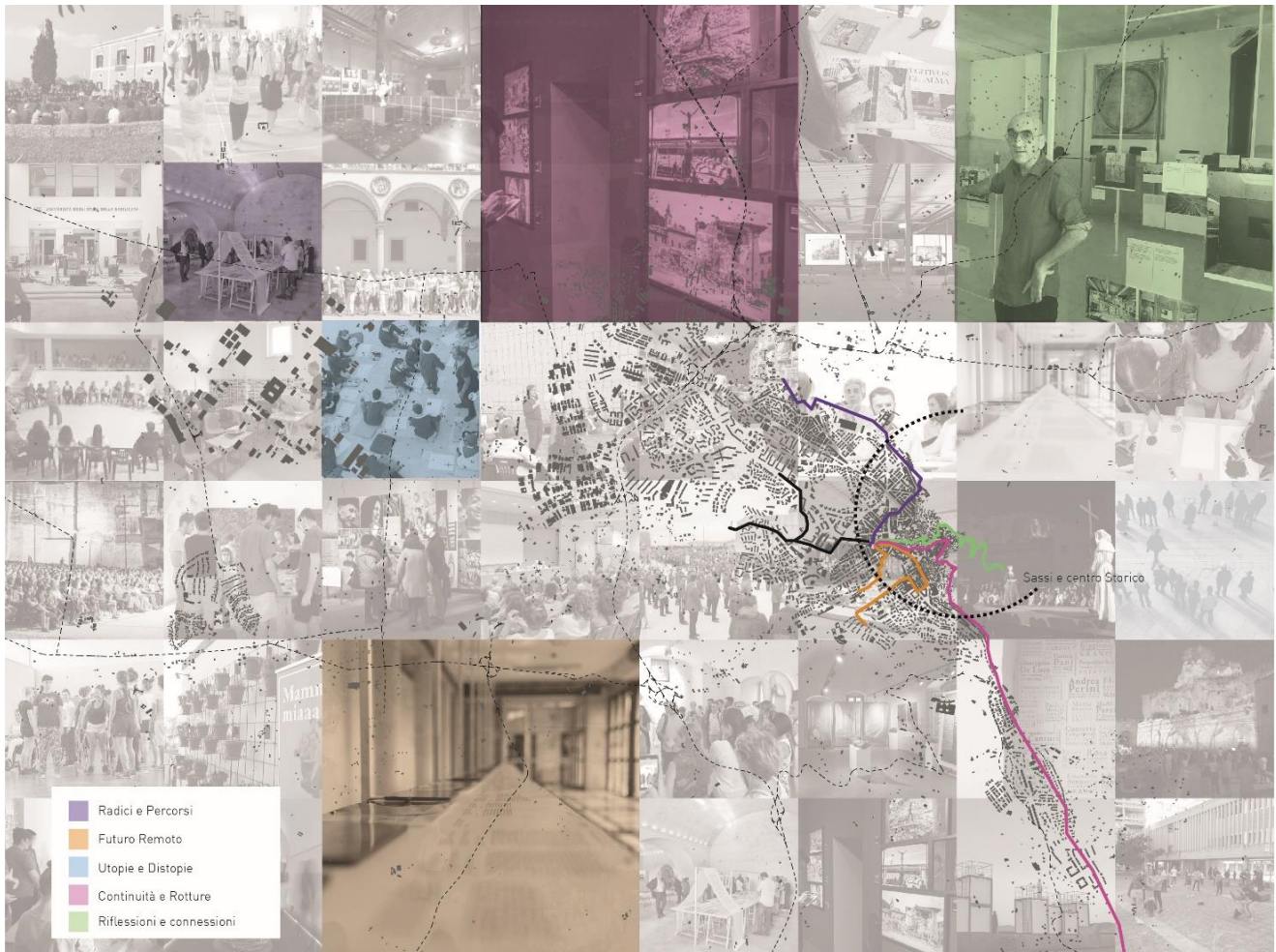


Figura 3 | People Places and Purposes (authors elaboration)

From a methodological standpoint, the analysis was conducted by using a study of the event locations as the point of departure. Over 150 spaces were selected². The point of reference was the cataloguing carried out by the Open Design School's *Venues of Matera* project, which served as a starting point for our work. Our purpose was to apply urban analysis techniques to identify the biography of the locations, the performance-related nature of the space and the conditions for use before, during and after the event, referring to the regulations for the purposes of the potential uses these spaces might have when the event concluded.

The temporary use of a space limited to the period of the event made it possible to explore the transformation potential of seven iconic locations in the city, and the extent to which the population appreciated that these uses might continue.

It was important to give students taking the third-year architecture Phenomenology

² The Annexes include the surveys that were done and the metadata that were collected for the purpose of preparing the geo-referenced cartography.

Workshop course in the 2019-2020 academic year the preparation task by assigning them an exercise to provide a technical representation (through speaking maps) of the way in which the events were adapted to a specific assigned urban space, offering a personal account of the ways in which the space was experienced during the event in which they took part.

To conclude briefly, we can say that many public resources were invested throughout the process, but that none were used to build new buildings, new museums or new works to symbolise the event, as was the case with Marseille, 2017 Capital of Culture, for example, with the construction of the MuCEM, the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations. Nor was the infrastructure improved by developing roads or services, as happened on other occasions, by building or expanding airports, major roads and infrastructure.

So what has the return on the Matera 2019 investment been, and what is its legacy? It depends on how it is now capitalised, on whether everything that was done and learned in the context of Matera 2019 will manage to change the way in which services are provided and resources redistributed for public purposes, and whether the public administration will continue to support cultural activities as a basis for social welfare policies, and carry the legacy of this experience forward. The alternative is a gradual return to the downsizing of culture, justified by limited municipal funds, and to prioritise the emergency. Learning from the experience means perfecting the ability to procure resources and know how to spend them, supporting the activities that brought innovation into every field, and not only those that were involved directly, working not for profit but to improve people's understanding of their decisive role in the regeneration processes.



Figura 5 | Movimento libero - Centro commerciale "Il Circo"



Figura 5 | Sassi - Cavalleria Rusticana

A major part of Matera's success after 2019 will depend on the creation of skills that have been formed in the course of these years, above all those needed to modernise the bureaucracy by working on the people who represent it, having the ability to look for possible solutions through adaptation and creativity, consolidating the attempts that proved to be successful. The efficient operation of the bureaucratic machine also depends on support from people who assist with the process, the creation of special-purpose agencies oriented towards absorbing the benefits, making them part of ordinary life and updating them constantly, becoming an internal process of other urban policies, so that Matera can be acknowledged as a City of Culture.

Many European capitals have favourably adopted the idea of an intermediate party to accompany the process, with the ability to be flexible, in order to extend the beneficial effects of the initiative. Many cities have successfully relied on the institution that took the process forward, which has skills obtained in the field, which is already familiar with the path that has been taken, the virtues and vices of the local system and the ability to react to the new through adaptation and a pragmatic spirit to enhance the experience and to be able to manage the passage from the Great Event to everyday policy. In other words, we believe that the Matera-Basilicata 2019 Foundation, the many young professionals who took part – both Lucanians and those who came from far away with a desire to stay – in the various roles and levels of involvement, may be the appropriate technical and political intermediary to act to improve bureaucratic rationality within a rationality of purpose, able to help renew the programme in order to update and monitor it continuously, opening the debate up to the new challenges that lie before us.