
Events and Mega-events: indicators of the European urban system from a cultural perspective in the context of the Cultural Economy

Roberto Diez-Pisonero*¹

¹COMPLUTENSE UNIVERSITY OF MADRID, SPAIN – Spain

Abstract

The European urban system has traditionally been studied from an economic perspective. However, it is recognized that it is a much more complex system where evidence exists, and must be studied to obtain more holistic and interdisciplinary knowledge. It is considered that the cultural parameter in cities acquires a special meaning due to the remarkable convergence between economic and cultural scope, denominated in the specialized literature as "New Economy" or "Cultural Economy".

This new context has encouraged urban planners to think not only in terms of the location of manufacturing and competitive production conditions, but also to consider the global cultural evidence, in line with the leisure and consumer society. Among others, cultural events may be highlighted. At present, there is a growing competition among cities to host such festivals; however, this competition is adapted to the scale and possibilities of each city, ranging from international mega-events for big cities, to more modest regional fairs for mid-sized/small cities.

These events not only transform and modernize the urban texture, but contribute to the diversification of the tourist product and improve the image of the place that becomes the world cultural capital, at least for a few days. These reasons explain the use of events and festivals as statistical indicators in the approach to the cultural dimension of cities.

Two indices are used to evaluate European cities in relation to their ranks and functions: one, based on mega-events, which has been fully carried out in this research - for its elaboration, an open perspective (without preselected cities) that combines thirteen eventful and quantifiable indicators, suggested by UNESCO has been used; and a second one, based on an economic approach whose results are directly taken from the GaWC (*Global and World Cities Research Network*) research group at Loughborough University, UK.

The results confirm two important facts: on the one hand, the need to study the European urban system from a multidimensional perspective, beyond economic criteria; on the other hand, the need to stop not only at so-called global cities, widely identified in the scientific literature, but also in those secondary European cities that are positioned on the global stage through these events.

Keywords: Megaevents, cultural economy, cultural globalization, European urban system, global cities, globalizing cities

*Speaker