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# A QUESTION OF DEFINITION. LITERATURE AND VARIABLE STRATEGIES FOR MEGA EVENTS

*Abstract:* In the literature there are different definitions of this category which, however, are not yet satisfactory. Before moving on to redefine the concept of “mega event”, we will proceed to describe briefly the definitions already given by the experts. A definition of the big event, which incorporates the common language, must take into account: - the importance of the appearance design of the big event. This is the result of a program that already in the planning stage (ex ante) has arisen, as a general objective, to give an event a character of extraordinary. The realization confirm (ex post) only goodness (or weaknesses) of the creative process and management. Some events have become great by accident, but this is just the exception that proves the rule; - of all the strategic variables that give an event the sign of the extraordinary, making it somewhat unique. The event is a project that, as in physics, is characterized to represent a point in space-time. In other words, a project of the event is determined by four strategic variables: three can be represented in Cartesian coordinates of orthogonal reference and the fourth by a time coordinate. In the process of production of a large event all variables have the same importance. Among these will retain more detail the decision variable for the reason that in this field Italy has shown, in recent years, and until the recent award in Milan Universal Exhibition of 2015, the greatest weaknesses.

*Keywords:* mega event, tourism, economics, territory.

## 1. Introduction

In everyday language mega events are gatherings that may be of various kinds (religious, sports, cultural, etc.) which become

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events when, from a temporal point of view, they occur at short or long, regular intervals and from the point of view of size attract (or should attract) a vast audience, both real and virtual.

Although this definition requires greater precision for it to become an analytical category, it already contains some important elements that cover both qualitative and quantitative aspects.

A more robust definition of a mega event has to take into consideration, firstly the importance of the planning of the grand event. The project must set out right from the very initial stages of planning (*ex ante*) to create an extraordinary event. Its realization will confirm (*ex post*) only the strength (or the weakness) of its conception and management. Some events have become great by chance, but this is the exception that confirms the rule. And secondly, it has to take into consideration the set of strategic variables that mark out an event as extraordinary and make it unrepeatable.

An event is a project that, as in physics, typically represents *a point in space and time*. In other words, it is determined by four strategic variables: three can be represented on Cartesian coordinates as orthogonal and the fourth as temporal (Dansero, 2002; Roche, 2000). The three Cartesian coordinates that characterize a mega event are: a) a territorial variable, which accounts for the area of attraction, or the spatial variable of the event; b) a decisional variable, in the sense that it can account for the complexity of the network of relations between *stakeholders* which needs to be established when creating and realising an event of some importance; c) a strictly economic variable which measures the quality and quantity of costs associated with the event (Valentino, 2009).

Ultimately, the less frequent an event, the greater its rarity and, conversely, the greater its potential impact, not so much in terms of audience as other externalities. The variables that define the space and time of an event play a strategic role both in the process of defining and creating the conditions for the success of the project. In the production of a mega event all the variables are equally important.

This topic is complex. The paper will try to answer the question of whether a mega event is necessary for the development of a city or a region. The paper is organised as follows: paragraph 2 gives the definition of an event and a mega event; paragraph 3 ex-

amines the impacts of mega events; paragraph 4 discusses mega events and emerging countries; and lastly paragraph 5 presents some conclusions.

## **2. Definition of an event and of a mega event**

The term event is generally used to define something that is “important and unusual” (Cambridge Dictionary) and the adjective mega emphasises its exceptionalness. Different definitions of mega event can be found in the literature, but they are not yet satisfactory. Before we move on to defining more clearly the concept, we will briefly describe the definitions which have already been provided by experts.

In the 1980s researchers began to use the term mega event as a mega version of a well-established event (Kang, Perdue, 1994, p. 206). It has been defined as a great one-off or recurring event of limited duration, which is developed principally to improve the awareness, knowledge and profitability of a tourist destination in the short and/or long term (Ritchie, 1984, p. 2, and also Hall, 1989 and Quinn, 2009). Although this definition is not satisfactory, insofar as it reduces the purpose of an event simply to increase the appeal of the location as a tourist destination (Jafari, 1988), it is interesting because it illustrates one of the main aspects of an event, namely its temporal dimension. It is “one-shot” or has a “limited duration” in time.

A mega event has to be of international fame and has to attract a vast public from all over the world (Socher, Tschurtschenthaler, 1987).

Later, a number of authors tried to give more specific definitions. Donald Getz believes that there is no single definition, because this depends on the point of view of the actors involved, namely the organisers and the visitors. For the organizer of an event, it is a special event that is a one-off occasion or it is rare; for the client or visitor, a special event is the occasion for a pleasure holiday or a social or cultural experience, which lies outside the usual range of choices and goes beyond everyday experiences (Getz, 1997, p. 4). A mega event is rare and unusual because it is “extraordinary” or “beyond the normal range of choices”.

Other authors, such as Leo Jago and Robin Shaw, classified

the events on the basis of their size and impact on tourism. The literature has created a series of specific terms: minor events, big events, characteristic events, mega events and festivals. According to this taxonomy a mega event is a great special event which is prestigious and attracts a great crowd and the attention of the media (Jago, Shaw, 1998, p. 30). The level of prestige and the size of the crowd are, after all, the two distinguishing variables.

A completely different definition was given by Joe Goldblatt in an anthropological vein. He suggested that “ceremony and rituals” are the factors that distinguish and typify mega events and that “a special event is a unique moment in time celebrated with ceremonies and rituals to satisfy specific needs” (Goldblatt, 2005, p. 6; Goldblatt, 1990). Previously this definition had been proposed by the anthropologist Victor Turner (Turner, 1969).

Doug Matthews made a detailed criticism of many of the definitions mentioned so far. For example, he maintained that Jago and Shaw emphasised the tourist aspects of special events, but perhaps their biggest fault was their classification according to size rather than type (Matthews, 2008, p. 2-6).

But is it really possible to develop a single all-inclusive definition of special events? Matthews believes that it is possible and proposed the following general definition: “a special event is a gathering of human beings, generally lasting from a few hours to a few days, intended to celebrate, honour, discuss, sell, teach, encourage, observe or influence human activities”.

An event is special if it satisfies certain conditions, especially if it is: a) of a limited and fixed duration (generally hours or days at the most); b) a one-off or infrequent event; c) an unusual component of a series (unique of its kind; planned and controlled). A mega event requires one or more organizers and there has to be an audience that is much wider than the organizers present at the event (Matthews, 2008, p. 6).

All these are “defining characteristics” which transform an ordinary event into a special one, but Matthew’s definition is, however, more a description than a classification, because it does not identify the variables or criteria (apart from its periodic nature, length and rarity) that can be useful for identifying *a priori* a mega event.

However, some common elements do emerge from the definitions that have been briefly considered. Most definitions put gen-

eral limits on the length of the events and limit the objectives of the special events (tourism or festive celebrations). Some definitions are more general, such as the one given by Matthews, because it tends to include a series of either solemn or festive, religious or secular gatherings, including meetings, conferences, expositions, fairs, both public and private events and events of various sizes. They also allow for a wide range of reasons for organizing and taking part in special events and give great importance to subjective aspects. Therefore events are special in different ways according to individual points of view.

It is very interesting to note that only a few definitions stress the size of the audience and its place of origin as distinctive features of the phenomenon. Usually a great number of spectators is considered a consequence, not a cause of a mega event. The concept of audience size, however, as we will see below, creates problems for a definition, because the audience could be “real” (visitors) or “virtual” (distant users) and so it is not easy to distinguish a great event from a small one in terms of presence.

And yet, the question still remains: what makes an event unusual? Is it one or more of the features considered in the definitions above, namely, its objectives, the field of activity, the perception of participants, its length, the ceremony, audience size, the level of globalization or other characteristics?

The difficulty of identifying a mega event depends on the fact that they vary in many ways. They can belong to very different fields (from sport to religion, from expo to world championships to concerts). They may be only “virtual”, require different levels of investment, especially by the public sector and they can depend on decisions taken at an international or higher level. For these reasons the list of mega events is somewhat heterogeneous and is made up of single elements that seem to be very unlike. For the very same reasons it is quite difficult to establish a taxonomy of mega events.

A general definition of the phenomenon that could be used as a “scientific category” has to identify its characteristic structural or strategic variables, so that an event is “mega” if, and only if, all these variables are present. In order to do this, an inductive approach needs to be followed. In other words, we will start from the events that are commonly considered as excellent, then isolate and extract their common and recurrent characteristics.



A mega event is a multifaceted phenomenon and can be analysed according to different criteria. The list of criteria is as follows:

- 1) Objectives. An event can be organised to stimulate local economic development, attract tourism, strengthen social cohesion, promote a town or for many other social, anthropological, economic or political reasons that can be considered separately or together;
- 2) Type. The type of an event expresses the predominant characteristics of the activities that take place in it. An unusual event can present different kinds of activities, ranging from sport (Olympic Games) to religion (Holy Week in Seville), to musical, theatrical or film festivals, and so on;
- 3) Forms of consumption. An event can be consumed directly, when the public goes to an exhibition, or indirectly, when the spectacle reaches the public through the media, or in both directions at the same time;
- 4) Spatial impact. An event can be more or less invasive on the territory. In some cases an event can take place only after a profound adaptation of physical and social infrastructures in an area (as for example, for the Olympic Games), whereas in others (such as a film festival) “radical” infrastructural changes are not necessary;
- 5) Investments. The cost of events, for the reasons described above, can vary from thousands to millions of euro. In some cases, they are not profit-making and therefore have to be financed by the public sector, whilst in other cases public-private partnerships can be formed;
- 6) The decision-making process. The decision-making process is more or less complex and changes radically according to the event that is to be organized. Whilst a festival only needs to involve local or national actors, in the case of the Olympic Games supranational institutions are called upon;
- 7) Periodic occurrence. A mega event can take place at shorter or longer intervals. Festivals are held every year, the Olympic Games every four years and the Catholic Church’s Jubilee every ten years, and yet others at even longer intervals.

Now the challenge is to identify which of these points can constitute the criteria, as the “common denominator” making events that appear to be totally different similar, so that an unusual event can be distinguished from an ordinary one *a priori*. This

implies that there must be at least one among the criteria (or variables) mentioned above that can be considered as a common denominator, which, on the one hand, makes all the activities homogeneous (celebrations, shows, exhibitions, games, fairs, etc.) and, on the other, transforms an ordinary event into an unusual one. In other words, all the events have at least one criterion in common and their size has to be directly correlated with its variations.

Now we will go on to exclude, through a process of elimination, the criteria which do not satisfy the requisites.

Firstly, objectives are not a criterion that can homogenise dissimilar events and distinguish a normal from an unusual one. Not all mega events have the same objective and a small or big event could reach the same objective, as for example, promote a town.

Event type is another variable that in itself is not sufficient to group the different activities together and to distinguish between a small and a major event. Local fairs and carnivals can be special events because of their regional and local importance (Hall, 1989, p. 264). There is not a strong correlation between the international character of an event and its intrinsic nature. A mega event may have different kinds of content that characterize events of any size. A big or small event can, for example, belong to the field of culture, ranging from one of the many local celebrations that fill many small towns with life in the summer, as for example Farroupilha in Brazil, to the Venice film festival or cultural activities in the European Capital of Culture. Religion is another area, if we think of Seville's famous "Holy Week" or the patron saints' celebrations in many towns and villages that are so eagerly awaited each year. History can also be a theme, with special "national celebrations", such as the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Italian Unification or the commemoration of an anniversary in local history. Sports events, which are the most frequently analysed mega events in economic literature, vary from the Olympic Games, the America's Cup and the FIFA World Cup to thousands of marathons organised at a local level. Economic interests include activities that have varying impacts on the participation of the public, from the Expos or car or boat shows to local agricultural fairs. And finally, there are hybrid events which are the result of the intersection between a number of the sectors mentioned above.

As far as consumption is concerned, there are two forms. First-

ly, an event can be enjoyed directly, when it provides a “service to the person” and the consumer has to go to the “source”. He may take part or visit the event indirectly when the consumption is of a “virtual” nature and a distant user consumes it “far” from the place where it is happening. For example, in sport, two mega events such as the Grand Prix and the Olympics differ insofar as the virtual audience in the first case and the physically-present audience at the event in the second are more important. And for this reason the costs and benefits of the Olympic Games are much greater. But the same event can be organized to attract different kinds of participation. The Olympic Games were held in Barcelona with the objective of attracting a vast audience to the city, but in Los Angeles and Atlanta with the objective of reaching a vast television audience. In Barcelona the cost of investment was four times higher than in Los Angeles, but the lasting economic effects were much greater.

In contrast, the size of the audience can be used to establish a more or less limited threshold, beyond which an event becomes mega. In many cases it is not easy to establish this threshold, because the quality of “big” could be attributed to an event only by measuring the two audiences together, the real and the virtual audiences. This problem can be overcome by combining the size of the audience with its place of origin. An event becomes unusual when it attracts a real or virtual audience that lives far from the place where the event is happening. It is, in fact, the range of attraction, the globalizing level of an event, even more than the size of the audience, which is the criterion that typifies mega events and distinguishes them from small events. Spatial impact and investments strongly depend on the form of consumption (real or virtual) that is favoured in the planning and to a large extent on the type of event that is being realized. Generally it can be said that, the higher the investment costs, the greater the attractiveness of the event and its “size” (and vice versa). The economic size represents, however, a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for a mega event.

Another criterion that can discriminate a mega event from others is the decision-making process, or rather, its complexity. This depends on the number of people involved and the procedures that have to be carried out to involve actors who often work on a global scale. We can suppose that “extraordinary” events are often

the result of “complex” decision-making processes, even though the connection is not always so immediate or may not always be real. This is true for the choice of the host city for the Olympic Games, Expo, the European Capital of Culture or the FIFA World Cup. Even the events that appear to belong to one single authority, such as Catholic Jubilees, are, in fact, the result of cooperation between actors with different competences and in different countries. The organization of a Jubilee involves, for example, the Vatican, the Episcopal Conferences of different continents and countries, many national governments (and not only the Italian government) and numerous local authorities (Strangio, 2013). In almost all cases, a mega event, regardless of its type (sports, religious, economic, etc.) involves people and authorities of different countries.

Its complexity includes another characteristic of a mega event, namely, the fact it is the result of planning that sets out from the very beginning to create something unusual, something “extraordinary”. Its realization confirms *ex post* only the strength (or weakness) *ex ante* of the planning and management.

The “sum” of the complexity of the planning and the decision-making processes can be measured as a degree of the complexity of a much broader category, that is the organization. But this is only the exception that confirms the rule. Generally it can be supposed that there is a positive correlation between the degree of complexity in the organization and the importance of the event.

Another characteristic of a great event in many definitions is its periodic recurrence. Discontinuity in time, and often in space too, arises for a number of reasons. In the main, a temporal gap is the result of the commemorative role of most mega events (as for example the Olympic Games) or it is the consequence of the complexity of the decision-making process. But in many cases a rare event is a strategic choice made to increase its “rarity” and therefore its attractiveness.

Expensive infrastructure works are necessary for the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup. Less expensive works are required for a festival or an exhibition. Extraordinary events that require infrastructures permanently change (for better or for worse) the normal rhythms, habits, passing of time and daily life of a town (Imbesi ed., 2004), whilst events that require temporary changes

can nevertheless be relatively expensive and not produce any lasting effect on the life of the town. In the end, we can suppose that if costs increase, so will the size of the event and its impact on the everyday life of the town. In other words, the space and time of mega events is a composite factor.

The temporal axis plays an important role in the space of events because of their extraordinariness or rarity is directly correlated with their frequency in time. Mega events can vary greatly in their frequency: they can be repeated in the same year (such as the Palio in Siena or the series of Grand Prix races), take place just once a year (many film festivals) or can be repeated at longer intervals (as for example, the four years of the Olympic Games or even the ten years of the Catholic Jubilee).

Frequency, therefore, has a certain effect on the size of the audience that is attracted, but a much greater effect on the creation of externalities. The greater the interval of time that separates an event from its recurrence, the greater the range of potential impacts will be. Long intervals of time between one event and another are often a necessity, not a choice. The more complex events, from the point of view of decision-making and the infrastructural works required, take place less frequently. For example, Milan, which hosted Expo 2015, presented its feasibility study to the BIE (Bureau of International Exhibitions) in October 2007. In other cases, as for the Jubilees, it is the history and ritual significance of the event that determines its frequency. Generally, however, whatever the reason, a less frequent occurrence increases its rarity and, vice versa, amplifies the impacts not only in terms of audience, but above all, in terms of potential positive externalities.

### **3. The impacts of mega events**

The demand for global events is not diminishing and globalization is certainly among the influencing factors. Important investments by the public sector are necessary to host mega events, as we have already said, in order to strengthen or improve the infrastructures of towns and sports facilities. However, those who bear the costs are not always those who benefit. Mega events create “winners” and “losers” (Preuss, Solberg, 2006). Among the positive impacts mentioned in the literature are the increase in

the flow of tourists and economic and commercial benefits (Hall, 1992, p. 45). However, the question is not so simple, because a mega event does not always bring an equally distributed increase in these flows and benefits over the whole area and for all citizens. As Gratton, Ghibli et al. (2006) pointed out, nobody until now has been able to produce a complete analysis of the real impacts of mega events (especially the Olympics) because an estimate of this kind would require a substantial budget in addition to the other expenses already associated with these events.

Nevertheless, we can draw up a classification and a qualitative analysis of the positive impacts associated with an event. These impacts are not always obvious and only in some cases have a long-term value.

Cashman (2002, p. 5) considers various types of impacts, which include changes in town planning, the urban and natural environment, the image of the town, country and its culture, improvements in air, road and railway transport and an increase in costs and taxes. Changes may also occur in governance and in public decision-making processes. There may be innovation in politics and political relations, enhanced tourism and business potential, as well as the creation of new sports facilities for use by the community after the event. In addition, broader consultation, participation and even protests in the community may take place and the community may become involved as volunteers and torchbearers.

Faulkner (1993) affirms that the impacts of an event originate from three main factors:

1. Spending by visitors who come from outside the area;
2. Capital expenditure on facilities necessary for the event;
3. The expenditure borne by the organisers and sponsors to host the event.

Kurtzman (2005, pp. 48-49) believes that economic impacts should not be confused with the financial profits or losses of an event. In fact, an event may generate extra tourist impact as a result of spending by visitors, but at the same time produce takings that are lower than the costs borne to host it (see also Dwyer, Forsyth et al., 2005, p. 357).

Ritchie (1984, p. 4) proposes a synthesis of the different types of impacts, dividing them into: a) economic, b) socio-cultural, c) physical and environmental, d) tourist and business, e) psycho-

logical and f) political and administrative. Furthermore, the lasting effect of these impacts needs to be included among the factors to be considered for a real understanding of the repercussions of an event.

All these elements lead to a multiple classification of impacts (Zwolak, 1997; Gursoy, Kim et al., 2004; Richards, Wilson 2004; Lee, Taylor, 2005). Sterken (2006) points out that the Olympic Games help raise the pro capita income of the resident population and can contribute to the growth of local activities more than World Cup championships because of the higher concentration of investments. Mega events can be particularly useful for those (local, national, city and regional politicians) who propose plans to accelerate urban renovation and renewal that will, in turn, support strategies favouring long-term economic development and the creation of jobs.

Hiller (2000, p. 439) believes that it is doubtful that mega events really produce these net effects, which, in any case, are difficult to measure. It may happen, for example in the case of the Olympics that the budget of the organizing Olympic Committee breaks even or has a profit (for example through the sale of television rights), whilst the local systems that contribute to its realization make a loss.

The question of what, in the international field, is called legacy, deserves a special mention. Horne, Manzenreiter (2006) state that the social, cultural, environmental, political, economic and sporting legacy of a mega event are what attracts the political and economic elite, even though this legacy is part of the unknown of mega events. Preuss (2006b, p. 2) says that in the literature there is a notable variety of legacies to be found: his ideas may apply not only to sporting events, but also to other types. In the OECD's report on Local Development Benefits from Staging Major Events (Clark, 2008, pp. 15-16) legacies are benefits that may be economic, social and environmental, as well as infrastructures and physical facilities, the brand, image and reputation, civic, institutional and governmental evolution and confidence (see also Moragas, Kennett et al., 2003, p. 491).

Hall (2006, p. 59) defines legacy as social, economic and physical inheritances, what a mega event leaves behind and what will have a much greater impact on the host community than when the event took place. Preuss (2006b, p. 3) goes beyond the qualitative aspects and defines legacy from the point of view of size, that is:



1. the degree of planning;
2. positive or negative effects;
3. the degree of tangibility.

#### **4. Mega events and developing countries**

But what impact do mega events have on developing countries? Baade, Matheson (2002) pointed out how the essential differences between hosting mega events in industrialized countries and in developing countries have not yet been carefully assessed. Nevertheless, some observations can be made. If a country competes only to enhance its international status and present itself on the world stage without taking into account internal problems, it may not receive the hoped-for returns of hosting a mega event. But much worse, it could actually accentuate internal inequalities or make investments and transfer funds needed for more pressing questions to works that were neither necessary nor wanted. The possible consequences after the event could be:

- a) to have to repay the debts incurred for building sports or other facilities;
- b) to bear the high costs of maintenance and administration of facilities that are not, nor can be, used by local people;
- c) to have intensified the social and economic inequalities of the country or the town.

The list of cities that have hosted a mega event shows they are almost exclusively cities in industrialized countries because of the costs, the necessary infrastructures and the need for political stability. Exhibitions, for example, started with the industrial revolution, making first Europe and later the USA the prime locations for these events (Hiller, 2000). They were later joined by Korea, Japan and Australia. Most mega events (with the two exceptions of Mexico City and Moscow) have rotated between Western Europe, North America and the three countries mentioned above. Most of Asia, South and Central America, Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe have not hosted mega events nor received high marks in their bids for these events (for example, Istanbul's numerous bids for the Olympic Games) (Hiller, 2000, p. 441).

All this is true, but up to a certain point. Countries, especially the emerging countries, are moving forward. In 2008 the sum-



mer Olympic Games were held in Beijing and in 2014 the winter Olympics in the city of Sochi. Brazil hosted the World Cup in 2014 and the summer Olympic Games have been held in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

As pointed out earlier mega events can have different goals, depending on the city, region or country that presents its bid or offers to organize them. It has been said, in fact, that the big European and North American cities use mega events to solve their urban problems resulting mostly from their industrial past and therefore they either aim to redevelop degraded areas, which have now become marginal and waste or they may hope to radically change their image in the world to attract new business and new tourist or financial flows.

Cities in emerging countries, in contrast, hope mostly to put themselves on the map. Mega events serve, therefore, to raise their status and make them emerge at a global level. Naturally other motivations can and do appear on the dossiers of their bids. For example, as Hiller (2000) showed, a certain number of cities in emerging countries, such as Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Istanbul and Cape Town, made bids for the 2004 Olympic Games. In particular, Cape Town's candidacy illustrates how a mega event can encourage human development to meet the needs of a town in an emerging country. The bid explained that each aspect of the Olympic process would have contributed to raising the quality of life for the people of the city, emphasising especially the disadvantaged conditions of the local community. The objective was to use the Olympic Games to help the renewal of the city to deal with the inequalities created by apartheid, drawing attention as no other event could possibly do for the transformation of Cape Town (Hiller, 2000, p. 14).

However, it has to be stressed, as Hiller (2000) writes, the Olympics cannot be considered a project for human development in the sense that, even if they can act as an instrument for the development of an area, they are not intended to alleviate economic and social inequalities. The requisites of the Olympics, elitist sports and their athletes, the special privileges for Olympic sponsors and their guests are clearly and radically in contrast with social and human egalitarian development. The primary objective of the Olympics is not development, but sport and business. Hiller (2000) also shows that the concept of human development in this

case gives the South African elite the opportunity to present a new image of the country to the world, marking its return to the global economy after years of economic and political sanctions, but also justifies its participation in an event on a worldwide scale. Therefore, in the case of Cape Town, the Olympics would have become a symbol of economic growth through investments and the creation of jobs, but they were never put to the test and so it has remained just a good intention. In any case, what the South African government proposed to do was not growth through redistribution, but redistribution through growth.

The critical difference between industrialized and emerging countries is the opportunity cost of capital for the building of public infrastructure and the political and social institutions fundamental for economic growth. The utility of infrastructural investments necessary for mega events depends on their real utility and use after the event. On the other hand, many projects, such as transport, communications and environmental improvements, can certainly provide social benefits. Owen (2006) wondered whether it was necessary to promote projects of this size, especially in developing countries where public success in a political market is rarely necessary. Instead of being a catalyst for investment projects that are advantageous in the long run, the Olympic Games tend to divert attention and resources towards short-term projects immediately necessary for their realization. The measure in which investments in infrastructure can be used after the Games will be the main factor in their economic success (Owen, 2006, p. 253).

## **5. Conclusions**

This paper has tried, through a review of the literature, to draw up a classification of mega events and a matrix for them, namely size, motivation and intrinsic characteristics. Not all areas or cities can compete to host and organize all the different kinds of mega events and not all mega events can be hosted in every place. The reason for this lies in the fact that the characteristics and requisites of mega events, as in the quality of the locations, do not always coincide. In particular, attention has been drawn to the critical situations that mega events can create, especial-

ly when hosted by emerging countries. This is because in those contexts the demand for services is not adequately developed and only small bands of the local population really benefit from the improved standards. Indeed, the weaker sections generally bear higher negative effects. The removal, sometimes forced, of the population resident in the areas to be developed and the gentrification that follows the urban restructuring hit the very people who are at the greatest disadvantage. Furthermore, there is no point in competing at a global level to host mega events and make enormous investments in infrastructure if these projects are not part of a comprehensive plan to reorganize the local urban system. Improved quantitative and qualitative standards of services thanks to investments in infrastructure needed for mega events are met with a low demand and little use after the event in emerging countries. In industrialized countries, infrastructures are often seen as a vestige of past glories if they have not been administered well or not planned with the citizens in mind (Dansero, 2002a; 2002b). Therefore, mega events, if they are not incorporated into a development plan for the city or region, may not return the desired and expected benefits and impacts.

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