

"The 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona are widely considered to have been a game changer for the city (e.g. Jauhiainen, 1995; Marshall, 2004). The event was an integral part of an ambitious programme of urban regeneration and contributed to repositioning Barcelona as a global tourist destination. The 'Manchester of the Mediterranean', or the 'Catalan Manchester', with its industrial waterfront stretching between the rivers Besòs and Llobregat, is now a distant memory. The Olympic Games provided the political rationale, and the resources, to reconvert the historic inner harbour Port Vell and to develop Port Olímpic, a marina surrounded by the artificial sandy beaches and waterfront promenades that are now much appreciated by residents and tourists. Nevertheless, even if local imaginaries of the industrial port city have been replaced by those of a cosmopolitan, global metropolis by the sea, Barcelona is still one of the most important ports on the Mediterranean, albeit the ties among the city, its port and the sea have changed in the last decades. As in many other port cities across Europe, Barcelona's commercial port moved to the outskirts of the city, while the local population gradually lost track of maritime practices, which became difficult to observe and appreciate" (p. 1).

Port cities across the world notably feature among the places bidding for and hosting sporting and cultural mega events. As a matter of fact, culture- and event-led regeneration have been catalysts for the transformation of redundant urban port areas and for the reframing of the image of many these places, often as a response to the negative socio-economic and spatial impacts of the restructuring of ports and maritime economies. And yet, there is little understanding of the impacts of these processes of urban transformation on port-city relationships, as well as of how port city cultures shape mega events and the related regeneration strategies. The book examines the underexplored mutual links between, on the one hand, urban and socio-economic regeneration driven by cultural and sporting mega events and, on the other hand, the spatial, political and symbolic ties between cities and their ports.

By adopting a longitudinal, cross-national and comparative perspective, with in-depth case studies – Hull (UK), Rotterdam (The Netherlands), Genoa (Italy) and Valencia (Spain) as well as examples from other port cities across the world, the

book engages with a range of socio-economic, political and cultural issues. These include the tension between port and cultural uses and their competition for space on the waterfront, the changing approaches to event-led regeneration in the post-2008 crisis world, the reactions and opposition to mega events from port city dwellers, the potentially clashing imaginaries of the 'port city' and the 'city of culture/host city' in urban policy and planning, the role of port authorities and companies in the city's cultural life, the spectacularisation and commodification of local maritime cultures and heritage, and the variegated, sometimes subtle processes of cultural demaritimisation and remaritimisation of port cities that are fuelled by culture- and event-led regeneration.

The book is therefore a contribution towards the bridging of port city and mega-event studies, and it provides a framework for the study of event-led regeneration in port cities, as well as insights for port city policy makers and mega-event promoters, drawing from a range of international experiences. The book also highlights the changing socio-economic and political context in which culture- and event-led regeneration strategies – and their legacy – now operate, discussing how societal and political change in the current 'ontologically-insecure' times challenges the very paradigm of culture- and event-led regeneration in the years to come.

The word to the Author

Editorial Team of PORTUS – *With a look at international experiences, the book crosses studies on port cities with those on mega events. What are the socio-economic impacts and in terms of urban regeneration that the processes implemented can generate?*

Enrico TOMMARCHI – If we think about the mega events we can remember, many of them have actually taken place in port cities, often with the provision of spectacular event venues on the waterfront. The urban transformation associated with these events of course may impact port-city relationships substantially, and in different ways depending on the approach adopted. Potential impacts include competition for space between port uses and new urban uses, or a more balanced integration of functions, erosion or transformation of local maritime economies,

clashing imaginaries and visions for the city, or improved institutional relationships between ports and cities. This pattern is set to continue, as we see more cultural and sporting events being celebrated in port cities, for example in developing countries. Port city studies therefore need to engage with the impacts of these events, while mega event studies should acknowledge the specificities and challenges of these contexts.

Some case studies are examined and presented in the publication. Can you briefly describe the choice and the approach adopted in your research?

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How was the socio-economic and political context investigated, starting from the fact that the territories examined are areas often in continuous evolution?

Another key argument of the book is that much of the research on port cities and waterfront redevelopment still explores these environments making use of the neoliberal framework that was used to study waterfront redevelopment from the 1980s to the early 2000s, whereas we could agree that we have been witnessing profound socio-economic and political change in the last 15 years. The book engages with these aspects and attempts to highlight how these ongoing changes

could be taken into account to explore port-city relationships and waterfront redevelopment in today's port cities.

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BOOK Info

Enrico Tommarchi
European Port Cities and Urban Regeneration: Exploring Cultural and Sporting Mega Events at the Water's Edge

Publishers Taylor & Francis Ltd, Routledge; July 2022
Pag. 236
ISBN 978-0-36776-176-9

Author's Biography

Enrico TOMMARCHI

Enrico Tommarchi is Lecturer in Urban Planning at the University of Dundee. He has previously lectured at London South Bank University, and he has taken part in the JPICH-funded project HOMEE (Heritage Opportunities/threats within Mega-Events in Europe) and in the evaluation of Hull UK City of Culture 2017 at the University of Hull. His research focuses on culture- and event-led regeneration and port-city relationships. He is a spatial planner by training (IUAV University of Venice) and he is interested in the geographies of port and coastal cities, the socio-spatial and symbolic outcomes of mega events, culture-led urban regeneration.