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Expo-nential Futures:

How Mega-Events Continually Reshape Milan

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Urban Planning and Design,

Harvard University Graduate School of Design

by

Mike Lidwin

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

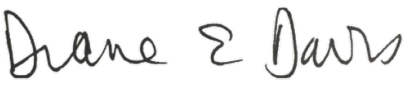
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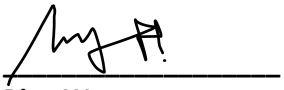
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Expo-nential Futures:
How Mega-Events Continually Reshape Milan

Mike Lidwin

Master's Thesis

Advised by Dr. Diane Davis and Dr. Bing Wang

May 15, 2022

Harvard University Graduate School of Design

Department of Urban Planning

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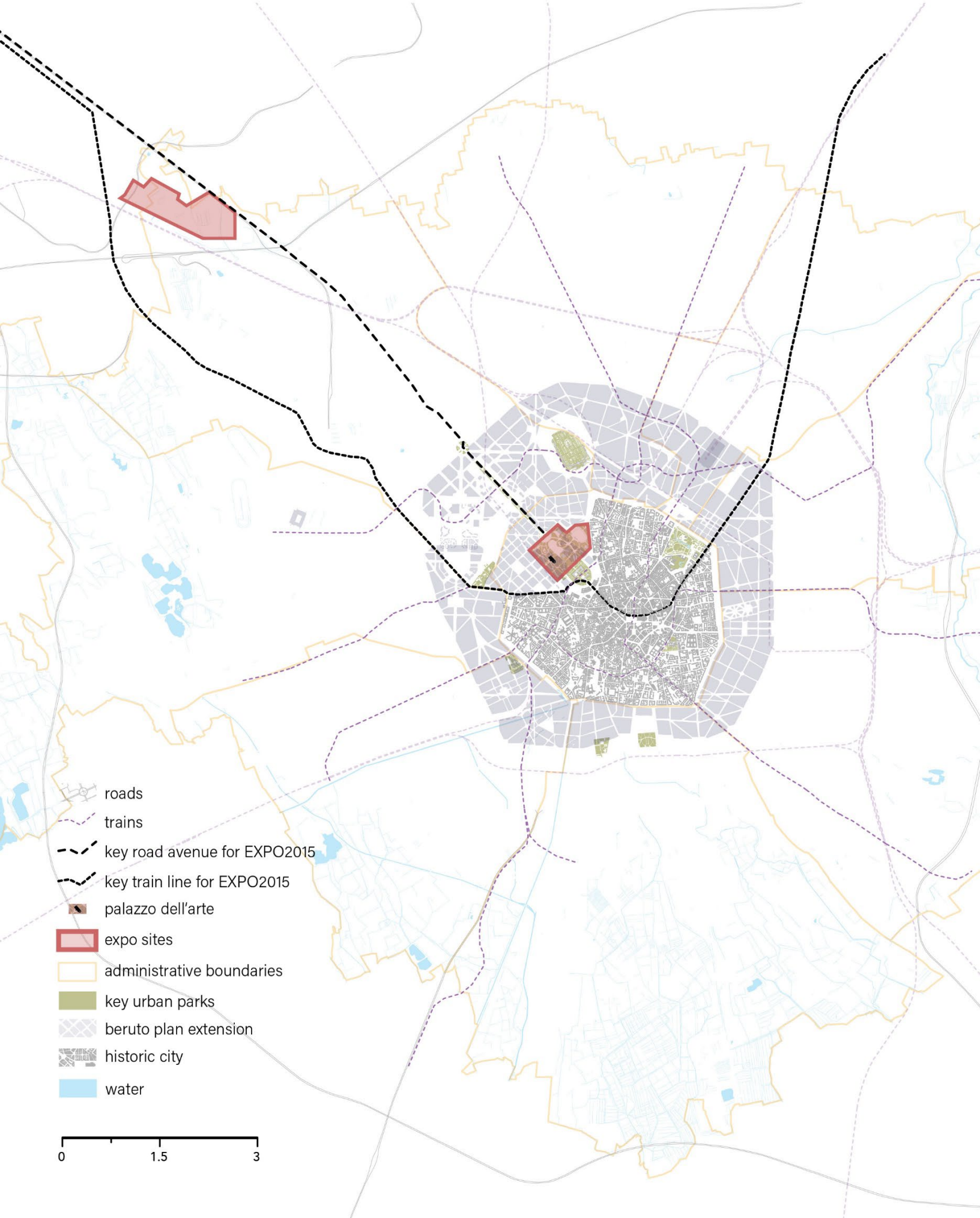
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ABSTRACT

How have repeated mega-events in Milan changed the form and nature of the city? This thesis tracks threads between universal and particular conditions that influenced Milan's decision to participate in Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) events. By analyzing urban development patterns and planning archives, I am interested in critically examining planning history to uncover the embeddedness of mega-event planning within notions of power, social imaginaries, and distinct stakeholder groups, and how this impacts urbanization processes. I argue that participation in the BIE is not an inescapable economic strategy – as records have suggested – but instead reflects the complicated entanglements between politics, economy, and civic input of planning in decision-making processes. Through the project, I find that BIE events have enabled a distinct set of space protagonists that shape the city's future development trajectories and social imaginaries, requiring planners to rethink long-term strategies for the short-term duration of BIE events.


roads
trains
key road avenue for EXPO2015
key train line for EXPO2015
palazzo dell'arte
expo sites
administrative boundaries
key urban parks
beruto plan extension
historic city
water
0
1.5
3

Introduction

In May 2015, protests were organized in Milan to counter the opening of Expo 2015, an event of 139 participating countries gathering 21, 500, 000 visitors[1] to the city for six months.[2] Event leaders had praised the event for its "political and economic success," going so far as to say the expo was "inevitable," given how advantageous it would be for the city.[3] Yet, many in the city were skeptical of these claims. The No Expo Network, composed of various activist and community leaders over the eight years from the expo's announcement to opening day,[4] argued that the Expo was nothing more than a neoliberal agenda – prioritizing "corporate interests" [5] over people and the environment. They criticized the lack of addressing local needs and "daily problems" in the city, citing worker exploitation, displacement of residents, greenwashing that masked environmentally harmful practices, and a mismatch between governing interests and those of the public.[6] The resulting protests garnered international attention as confrontations with police and conflict in Milan's city center became a stark counter to the pristine, ticketed expo site twenty kilometers away. Although the event proceeded as planned, the violent backlash from public voices raised significant questions on the legacy of expo events in Milan and presented a particularly important question for event planners.

Today, more cities follow the concerns of No Expo and are reconsidering whether to even host mega-events (Figure 01 details withdrawn bids from the Olympics). For example, in 2012, Boston famously rescinded their Olympic bid for the 2024 summer games – channeling

[1] While Expo 2015 exceed the total number of expected visitors, it received less international or foreign visitors than intended, making this a distinctly Italian event. European Commission, "Evaluation of the EU Participation in World Expo Milano 2015 - Final Report," 17; Expo 2015, SpA, "Sustainability Report 2014: Expo Milano 2015," 152.
[2] Bureau International des Expositions, "Expo 2015 Milan."
[3] Bertuzzi, "No Expo Network," 752.
[4] Bertuzzi, 752; The No Expo Committee.
[5] The No Expo Committee.
[6] Bertuzzi, "No Expo Network," 753.

similar protest concerns as in Milan, but with a very different government response. At the same time as these growing concerns, urban policymakers have doubled down on their stance that the events serve as "great [economic] opportunities."[7] In fact, Milan continues to follow a trajectory of participating in similar events (evidenced by their 2026 Olympic bid to host the winter games).[8] The conflicting conclusions that cities draw about mega-events warrants further examination into these events' rationales and roles in shaping urban development trajectories.

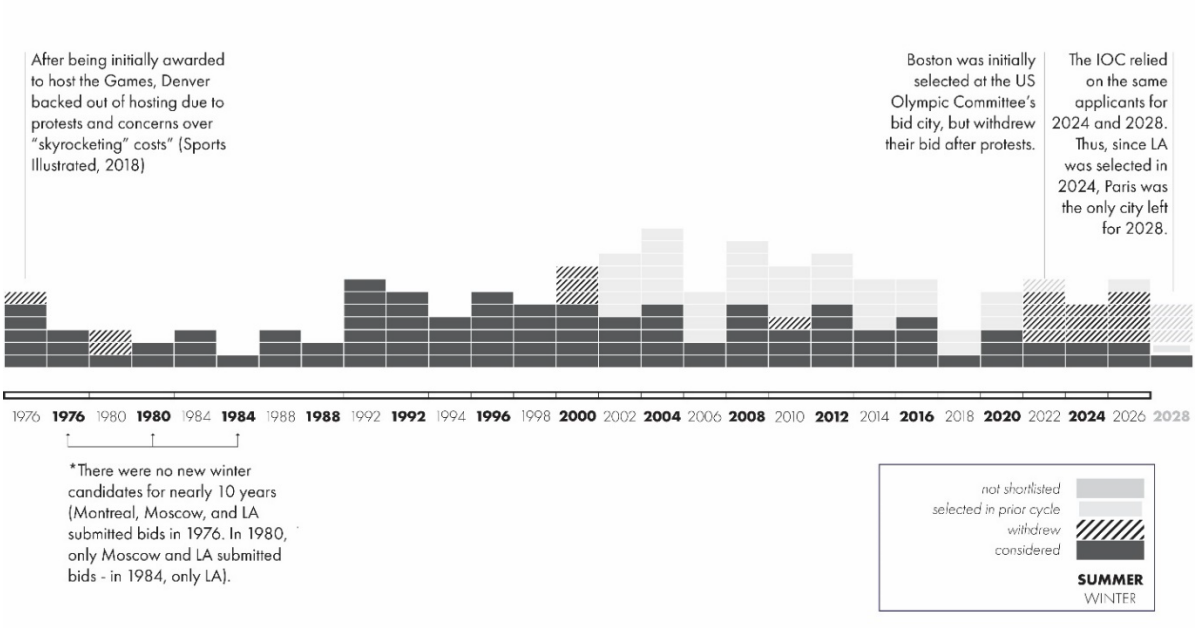


Figure 01 – Number of Olympic Bids per Games

(Lidwin, 2022 - Data Source: Wikipedia, Accessed 2022)

Yet, there are different approaches to studying mega-event projects. Some scholars have studied the economic motivations for mega-events through the rhetoric of politicians, who rely

[7] Jones and Ponzini, "Mega-Events and the Preservation of Urban Heritage," 433.
[8] OlympicTalk, "Olympic 'host' Can Now Be Multiple Countries as IOC Changes Bid, Election Processes."

on "pro-growth rationales,"[9,10] connecting mega-events to a promise of economic vitality. These studies focus on nonspatial components of mega-events, almost exclusively defining mega-events by economic and tourist metrics, such as Müller's four factors of mega-events: "visitor attractiveness, mediated reach, cost, and transformative impact."[11] For those wishing to critique economic rationales, the critique is centered around bureaucrats and government bodies involved, relying on economic critiques as stand-ins to critique the mismanagement of power.[12] However, there is another way to critique power, seen through a second approach to studying mega-events, which focuses on the spatial rationales of such events and how mega-events have a distinct formal impact on urban transformations.[13] These studies help reveal how the organization and activities of urban spaces inform and respond to mega-events. For example, Corinna Morandi[14] uses spatial and urban design frameworks to critique the physical form of an expo – arguing how having stakeholders across scales of governance complicated expectations for the event – resulting in "uncertain" spatial futures.[15]

My research adds to this literature by specifically addressing the disconnect between these two approaches. This thesis recognizes that the spatial and economic rationales of mega-events are deeply intertwined. As I conclude in this project, mega-events represent a broader dilemma within the profession of urban planning and urban design, where an understanding of

[9] Researchers at il Politecnico di Milano, Zachary Jones and Davide Ponzini, write a literature review on "mega-events" that grounds my framing of the events. They specifically bring in a spatial rationale in the analysis of mega-events for historic preservation initiatives. *See* Jones and Ponzini, "Cultural Mega-Events in Heritage-Rich Cities."
[10] Logan, "Logan on Molotch and Molotch on Logan"; Molotch, "The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place on JSTOR"; Logan, "Logan on Molotch and Molotch on Logan"; Harvey, "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism."
[11] Müller, "What Makes an Event a Mega-Event?," 2.
[12] Yang, Busquets, and Keller, *Expos as Great Urban Projects*; Di Vita and Morandi, "The Planning and Governance of the Expo 2015 and the Post-Event."
[13] Yang, Busquets, and Keller, *Expos as Great Urban Projects*.
[14] Corinna Morandi was an architect and urban planning professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Milan (Il Politecnico di Milano), where she wrote many texts on Milan's history – specifically linking the history of Milan to its participation in various mega-event projects such as expos and world Olympics. Her scholarship has been central to shaping my conception of both the city of Milan and of Milan's engagement with mega-event planning. *See more information at*: https://iuu.uva.es/in-memoriam-corinna-morandi/
[15] Morandi, "The Spatial Projects of the Expo 2015 and the Post-Event," 34.

the underlying rationales helps influence policymakers toward design or policy-oriented strategies. History complicates this understanding of rationales because past investments and development agendas led to specific spatial interventions in the city. Scholars must think across time, because - at certain moments - economic development possibilities and priorities involved different locations and sites, prioritizing some while ignoring others. This logic meant that at each historical moment when a mega-project was advanced with an economic growth logic, it impacted or was in different parts of the city. This path-dependent process impacted city form. This complication requires us to look beyond the present day and towards a more holistic analysis of the tension between spatial and economic rationales.

To study this tension, it is crucial to consider a third rationale – that of rhetorical tactics of mega-events and the role of 'placemaking' narratives in shaping the public perception of event projects. Placemaking is a concept that refers to the creation of public spaces[16] that foster community engagement and a "strong sense of place."[17] In the context of mega-events, placemaking becomes a repeated tactic used to showcase "local" places for a global gaze.[18] However, this can result in a performative, homogenizing[19] design that erases local culture and history in favor of a more marketable image. This framework and logic of placemaking have affected how people talk about planning for mega-events. This is evident in popular media like newspapers and op-eds that often highlight the economic benefits of mega-events and the need for placemaking to create attractive public spaces. We take the economic potential of placemaking for granted and justify the global influence on mega-event placemaking as providing an economic structure that supports local autonomy and long-term resiliency, despite

[16] Project for Public Spaces, "What Is Placemaking?"
[17] Project for Public Spaces; Wyckoff, "Definition of Placemaking: Four Different Types."
[18] Majoor, "Framing Large-Scale Projects."
[19] Ponzini, Fotev, and Mavaracchio, "Place Making or Place Faking?"

seeing these efforts fail drastically.[20] Thus, it is essential for scholars and policymakers to take a critical approach to the rhetoric surrounding mega-events and to consider the social, economic, and spatial implications of mega-event decisions.

These considerations – economic, spatial, and rhetorical – significantly impact the development trajectories and social imaginaries of cities that host the events. Through uncovering the historical trajectories of mega-event decisions, I find that mega-events have enabled a distinct set of space "protagonists,"[21] which include formal actors such as event organizers, developers, and government officials, as well as informal actors of public dissenters, local businesses, and media specialists. These actors work together to shape the physical and social landscape of the city (what I refer to as the "form and nature"[22] of the city). In turn, the involvement of such stakeholders gets institutionalized over time, which highlights the importance of considering the long-term implications of mega-events and the need for planners to consider the socio-spatial impacts more holistically.

Methods

My research examines Milan's development history through the specific lens of Bureau des International Expositions (BIE) events, such as Expo 2015. Milan, Italy, is a critical case study for mega-event planning because the city's connection to the "international socio-economical system[s]"[23] of other European cities has created an urban development pattern that favors large icon projects as the dominant form of urban transformations in the early twenty-first

[20] Müller, "The Mega-Event Syndrome."
[21] Angelo, "How Green Became Good: Urbanized Nature from Garden Cities to Climate Justice."
[22] This phrase is one of many embedded in this paper that was born out of conversations with my thesis advisors, Dr. Diane E. Davis and Dr. Bing Wang. After reworking my argument after my 2023 midterm review, this phrase became a helpful tool in explaining the purpose of my study.
[23] Macchi Cassia et al., *X Milano*, 41.

century. This form of development raises questions about the local and global tensions present in Milan's development rationales. In addition, Milan's 1906 expo was the first expo for the country Italy, initiating a strong history of national expo participation. In fact, Italy has hosted the most BIE expos,[24] if one includes a recurring partnership with the BIE for the Milano Triennale, set every three years since 1933 (with a few breaks, to be addressed later in my work).

For this historical research, I track three distinct periods of Milan's history with expos, starting with the 1906 World Expo; then the Triennale of 1933, 1947, and 1968; and concluding with the recent Expo 2015. Within each period, I consult planning archives, event documents, and popular media sources to track the conversations that happened before, during, and after each BIE event. I use historical archives as a methodology to show that expos and the Triennale are not simply one-time occurrences but rather should be understood as part of a larger historical process of placemaking and *re*-making. One challenge with a critical historical analysis dating back to the early twentieth century is the lack of archived public input into the events, requiring me to rely more heavily on secondary sources and popular media articles as stand-ins for public opinions of the time. Despite this limitation, I draw connections between stakeholder interests of each era studied – using a matrix of urban decisions and stakeholder involvement to connect the stickiness and interrelatedness between various event rationales.

Definitions

Mega-events are short-term events (like the Olympics, World's Fairs, and Expos) that come with large-scale spatial projects. Martin Müller – geographer at Universität Zürich and University of Birmingham - wrote a highly cited piece, "What Makes an Event a Mega-Event?

[24] Bureau International des Expositions, "Expo 2015 Milan."

Definitions and Sizes." (*Leisure Studies* 34.6), where he distinguishes mega-*events* from a broader discourse on mega-*projects*, by defining the events as "ambulatory occasions of a fixed duration that attract (1) a large number of visitors, (2) have a large, mediated reach, (3) come with large costs, and (4) have large impacts on the built environment and the population."[25] The two terms (mega-events and mega-projects) differ in their direct connection to an event as the driving motivation for the urban project. However, mega-event discourse overlaps with mega-projects significantly, often sharing similarities in the complicated ways governing interests collide and oppose public interest[26] - even evoking "insurgent citizenship" that emerges with singular, large mega-projects.[27] For the sake of my research, I consider all mega-events to include mega-projects. All mega-projects, however, do not have to be associated with any particular event. (Figure 02).

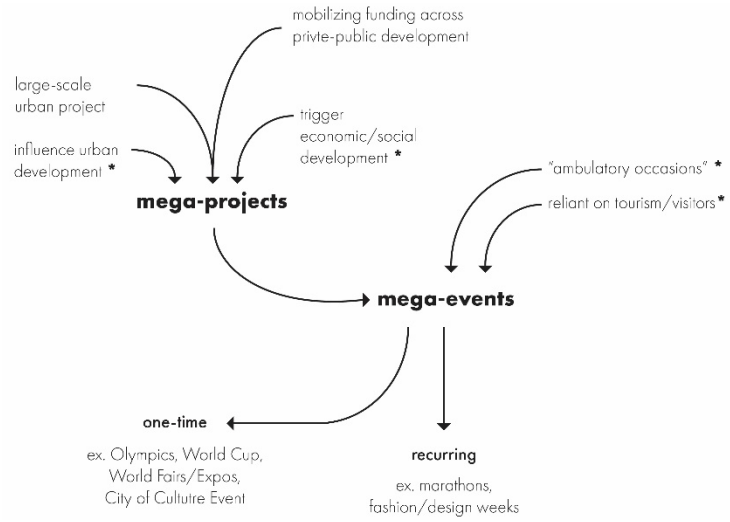


Figure 02 – Mega-Projects vs. Mega Events (Lidwin, 2022)

*in reference to Martin Müller's "What Makes an Event a Mega-Event?"

[25] Müller, "What Makes an Event a Mega-Event?," 634.
[26] Flores Dewey, "Transportation Reform a Nd Teh Transformation of Central Seoul"; Flores Dewey and Davis, "Planning, Politics, and Urban Mega-Projects in Developmental Context"; Balakrishnan, "Highway Urbanization and Land Conflicts: The Challenges to Decentralization in India."
[27] Weinstein, "Democratic Urban Citizenship and Mega-Project Development in Globalizing Mumbai."

For this research, I focus particularly on one specific mega-event: world expos (expos). World Expos are a type of mega-event that occurs every five years and rotate host cities, lasting for a period of six months. These events are marketed as a "global gathering of nations" [28] and are significant in mega-event discourse because they offer cities the opportunity to showcase their cultural and technological achievements while promoting economic development and tourism. The Crystal Palace, which housed the first World Expo in London in 1851, is still taught in design schools as an important architectural precedent for its advertisement of new technologies of the time and subsequent shift in how architects think about building materials and industrialization. In fact, the tradition of host cities designing innovative structures for their own World Expos continues. The Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Space Needle in Seattle are among other notable examples.

Although world expos have been recognized since 1851, the governing body for the expos, the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), was only established in 1928. [29] Concerned over maintaining consistent quality for the expos, an international convention was formed in Paris to set forth regulations for the expositions, determine their frequency, and establish a governing board. Today, the BIE is headquartered in Milan and hosts three other types of events in addition to the World Expo. For example, the “Milano Triennale” is a recurring exhibition every three years in Milan. The city’s complicated history with the BIE serves as an additional entanglement between the rationales of a host city that chooses to host multiple mega-events.

[28] Bureau International des Expositions, “Expo 2015 Milan.”
[29] Bureau International des Expositions.

Defining Frameworks

Sociological Imaginations provide a critical framework to identify planning goals "not immediately obvious."[30] That is, the sociological imagination allows us to 1) consider the contexts of individual decision-making, 2) consider the *system* that groups individuals, and 3) consider the *actors* at play in urban space-making.[31] I believe this framework can be applied to mega-event processes to uncover social contexts and motivations behind the events. That is, we can use sociological imagination to uncover how urban transformations relate to larger societal dynamics. And it is with this idea of the sociological imagination in mind, we can call into question the governance and organizational structures of mega-events, the master narratives and ideas of the social imaginary, capitalist frameworks, and placemaking tactics behind the events. I am specifically interested in how mega-events "reflect the major social changes now influencing our societies."[32] To uncover how scholars have engaged such topics, I find commonalities that help develop a critical narrative-imaginary framework for mega-events.

Governance and Organizational Structures of Mega-Events

Governance surrounding mega-events' logistics and their legacies are complex and engage multiple stakeholder groups.[33] For example, mega-events require coordination and planning from politicians and planners to the public and civil society organizations. Mega-events are often defined by internal impacts, evoking conversation on the local scale of host cities.[34]

[30] Davis and Hatuka, "3.9 Imagination as Method for Generating Knowledge about Possible Urban Futures," 226.
[31] The framing of sociological imagination through this lens is credit to the insightful writings and lectures of one of my advisors, Diane E. Davis. In her article on imagination as a research method, Davis and Hatuka highlight the important ways that imagination visioning can influence planning methodologies. *See* Davis and Hatuka, "3.9 Imagination as Method for Generating Knowledge about Possible Urban Futures"; Davis, "The Day After a Mega Event."
[32] Roche, "Mega-Events, Urban Space and Social Change: Expos, Parks and Cities."
[33] Di Vita and Morandi, *Mega-Events and Legacies in Post-Metropolitan Spaces*; Jones and Ponzini, "Cultural Mega-Events in Heritage-Rich Cities"; Müller, "What Makes an Event a Mega-Event?"
[34] Müller, "What Makes an Event a Mega-Event?," 634.

These internal impacts include "high costs, and… significant impacts on the built environment and the population."[35] When discussing the specific benefits of mega-events, the impact is even more locally focused, with scholars noting strategies of "reusing abandoned building stock; transforming large brownfields; [leveraging] cultural, historical, and natural heritage; as well as diffusely increasing the quantity or improving the quality of public spaces, facilities, services, and transport networks."[36] Yet, these benefits focus on the spatial impacts on the city,[37] even though the events are often entangled with external motivations such as attracting tourism, [38] improving the city's global image/reputation,[39] and driving economic growth. [40]

These conflicts of global and local interests can lead to tensions between stakeholders with competing interests. One way to mitigate this potential tension is to brand mega-events as a package of urban investment initiatives, which calls into conversation the various local and external stakeholders who are motivated by "infrastructural investments, [increased] tourism, and [improved images] of the city."[41] This association between mega-events and a package of resources is consistent with host countries who sought to leverage the so-called "Olympic

[35] Müller, 634.
[36] Di Vita and Morandi, *Mega-Events and Legacies in Post-Metropolitan Spaces*, 5.
[37] Italian professors – Macchi, Orsini, Secchi, and Privileggio – present a detailed atlas of urban transformations in Milan, Italy – a history presented in text, visual diagrams, and maps. They trace the history of urban interventions in the city, drawing connections between the complex urban and planning motives that shaped the city – raising particular attention to the terminology of "peripheries" and how recent development in Milan seems focused on the terminology. As they argue, Milan has "never been a capital city" for Italy (99), and as such, developed in different logic than other European cities, where the city's industrialization and connection to broader "international socio-economical system[s]" (41) set the stage for architectural projects to become the dominant form of urban transformations in the late twentieth century. *See* Macchi Cassia et al., *X Milano*.
[38] Jones and Ponzini, "Mega-Events and the Preservation of Urban Heritage," 433; Müller, "What Makes an Event a Mega-Event?"
[39] Jones and Ponzini, "Mega-Events and the Preservation of Urban Heritage"; Pasotti, "Brands and Megaprojects"; Kassens-Noor and Lauermann, "How to Bid Better for the Olympics"; Lamberti et al., "Mega-Events as Drivers of Community Participation in Developing Countries."
[40] Shingal, "The Olympic Curse"; Jones and Ponzini, "Mega-Events and the Preservation of Urban Heritage."
[41] Ponzini and Jones critique a lack of scholarly connection between mega-projects and heritage-based projects, specifically drawing connections to how mega-events have inspired "heritage-led regeneration policies" [41] that direct urban development to tourism and city branding priorities. They address the transnational nature of mega-events to include agencies such as the IOC, which is UNESCO's World Heritage Centre. [41] They conclude with a call to investigate how mega-projects may leverage existing preservation policy interests and work in tandem to advance broader urban objectives. *See* Jones and Ponzini, "Mega-Events and the Preservation of Urban Heritage."

Dream," as an opportunity to boost market economies.[42] In fact, the ability for mega-events "to concentrate – both temporally and spatially – physical and intangible resources otherwise dispersed"[43] leads to tactics for political power and getting the planning done quickly – seen as a positive rationale for politicians who want to see projects accomplished during their terms.[44] Yet, the mobilization of resources can backfire when lofty promises and shared goals presented by policymakers fail to deliver on their promises.[45] In fact, several mega-events, including expos, notoriously go over budget.[46] This can provoke strong public reactions, especially in Milan, where the start of the 2015 World Expo was met with a violent protest of close to 30,000 people in opposition to the summer-long event.

To offset potential backlash, or perhaps to garner support, politicians may also use mega-events to rally the public behind their vision of what the future could be. Pasotti describes the effect on identity through an examination of mega-*projects*, where she discusses how megaprojects often rely on narratives that help unify the public.[47] This unity can be used in tandem with Di Vita's concept of "speeding up the [planning] process"[48] as an additional tool for city mayors to bypass internal city council discussions by building public excitement around such projects, thus putting political pressure on council members to support the endeavor. Yet, the unity behind a brand, as Pasotti points out, can limit democracy. That is, dissenting views can often be overlooked in megaproject propaganda, even though they are often expressed.[49] In

[42] Shingal, "The Olympic Curse."
[43] Di Vita and Morandi, *Mega-Events and Legacies in Post-Metropolitan Spaces*, 2.
[44] Stefano Di Vita describes the potential appeal of mega-events for governments for its "capability to speed up processes of urban development and change…in host cities." *See* Di Vita and Morandi, 2.
[45] Müller, "The Mega-Event Syndrome."
[46] Müller; Shingal, "The Olympic Curse"; Bertuzzi, "Urban Regimes and the Right to the City."
[47] Pasotti, "Brands and Megaprojects."
[48] Di Vita and Morandi, *Mega-Events and Legacies in Post-Metropolitan Spaces*.
[49] Pasotti, "Brands and Megaprojects."

essence, mega-projects evoke a form of citizenship when building support behind an event. [50] Faranak Miraftab's concepts of invented and invited spaces of citizenship serve as an important reminder to consider how mega-events mobilize or call into question different citizen and governing bodies.[51] As Hilary Angelo, urban and environmental sociologist, presented during the 2023 lecture, *When Green Became Good* (a reference to her book), "creating an ideal city means thinking about ideal citizenship."[52] As world expos seek to project a view of who or what practices are in the future and who is in the past,[53] ideas of the "future" begin to influence binary thinking of future and past. These ideas translate into thinking not only of the physical buildings of the event, but the people involved in them and of those not involved.

The literature on citizenship (who gets called in as a stakeholder) in the context of mega-events has been more thoroughly explored in the realm of mega-*projects*, rather than directly in relation to mega-*events* themselves. Therefore, I will draw on insights from studies of mega-projects to inform an understanding of the processes involved in mega-events. For example, Flores Dewey and Davis' case study of the Texcoco Airport in Mexico examines the political motivations and consequences of mega-projects. They found that mega-projects, like the Mexico City Airport, often create divisions within and between political classes and citizens, driven by democratization, decentralization, and globalization. Politicians promoting these projects tend to take proactive measures to minimize citizen opposition rather than gain support. As a result,

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[50] Roche, "Mega-Events, Urban Space and Social Change: Expos, Parks and Cities"; Pasotti, "Brands and Megaprojects"; Di Vita and Morandi, *Mega-Events and Legacies in Post-Metropolitan Spaces*.

[51] Faranak Miraftab's take on invited and invented spaces of citizenship help connect ideas that policy decisions or specific pursuits of a city (such as the decision to host a mega-event) have direct influence on the type of citizens that are designed for in the planning project. Miraftab borrows concepts of "invented citizenship" from Andrea Cornwall's 2002 article, "Locating Citizen Participation," page 50. *See* Miraftab, "Insurgent Planning: Situating Radical Planning in the Global South," 38.

[52] Angelo, "How Green Became Good: Urbanized Nature from Garden Cities to Climate Justice."

[53] Bruno Cavalho, Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures with affiliation to the Urban Planning Department at Harvard University, spoke in April 2023 about his upcoming book, The Invention of the Future: A Transatlantic History of Urbanization. Calvalho's discussion on the role of future imagination in planning specifically connected to the discussion on the Crystal Palace, the first world expo held in 1851 (in London). Cavalho describes expos as proto socialist utopias, where the idea of the "future" becomes a global common denominator, and the mega-events mediate this experience, complete with the arrival on new transportation infrastructure, etc. *See* Cavalho, "Imagination in Planning."

cities often situate mega-projects in areas with vulnerable and marginalized populations, who cannot express their opposition to the project. This political decision of location supports spatial analysis studies that describe the location of events towards the edge of "urban territories."[54]

Master Narratives and the Social Imaginary

As recent mega-events are often located in areas with vulnerable and marginalized populations, it is important to consider the broader social context and the role of master narratives and the social imaginary in shaping attitudes towards these projects. The way in which mega-projects and mega-events are framed within these narratives can have significant implications for how different groups perceive and respond to them. This thesis calls out master narratives and social imaginaries as an important lens to embed in all mega-event analyses, especially one as entangled as the Bureau International des Expositions, where this study is situated. The quantification and use of numbers to promise prosperity overlooks the social considerations being disregarded in favor of national economic figures. Referencing scholarship like Donna Haraway's "master narratives"[55] and Michelle Murphy's The Economization of Life,[56] I believe figures are fictions. That is, they are only partial narratives that seemingly depoliticize a topic while ignoring the other stories (and thus actors) involved. It is important to recognize that while narratives endure, mega-events are not just statements, but have real spatial implications and legacies tied to such narratives. In terms of mega-events, three characteristics are particularly important to call into question when considering a lens of master narratives: master narratives are deceptive, pervasive, and political tactics.

[54] Macchi Cassia et al., *X Milano*.
[55] Penley, Ross, and Haraway, "Cyborgs at Large," 20.
[56] Murphy, Michelle, "Economy as Atmosphere."

Master narratives are often used (either intentionally or ignorantly) as misleading tactics that suggest a sense of naturalization. That is, the stories we tell and the rationales we use to explain decisions are anything but objective or obvious.[57] In reality, planning actions are political decisions that deliberate what future trajectory to pursue. Haraway's critique of master narratives highlights the problem of presenting planning decisions, especially mega-events, as universal, objective truths. According to Haraway, knowledge is always "situated"[58] in a particular context and shaped by the historical, social, and cultural, factors that influence our perspectives and experiences. Master narratives, on the other hand, create a false sense of universality that obscures the situated nature of multiple knowledge sources. In doing so, these narratives reinforce power dynamics, masking alternative perspectives that may challenge these dominant views. Instead of striving for a universal, objective truth, Haraway argues for the recognition of "partial, locatable, critical knowledge" productions.[59]

These practices of master narratives can be pervasive as they get instilled in public memory. That is, planning themes have evolved and persisted over time.[60] The social imaginary - referring to the shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape the way people understand and interact with the world – motivates certain agendas. Dr. Hillary Angelo describes sustainability and the "green" movement as a particular mobilization that is driven by social imaginaries.[61] As Angelo spoke about in a 2023 lecture, the outcome of sustainability movements ('green' architecture) is an urban process itself – not just a city form. Through this lens, I argue that mega-events undergo a process of urbanization and are equally fueled by urban processes as

[57] Thank you to Dr. Abby Spinak for highlighting this concept of master-narratives and for introducing me to literatures and scholars who shine light on the many political projects that contribute to our present-day systems..
[58] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges."
[59] Haraway, 584.
[60] Daniels, "A Trail Across Time"; Angelo, "How Green Became Good: Urbanized Nature from Garden Cities to Climate Justice"; Cavalho, "Imagination in Planning."
[61] Angelo, "How Green Became Good: Urbanized Nature from Garden Cities to Climate Justice."

much as they influence and direct the urban processes. As urbanization of physical components shapes the city, urbanization of ideas evolves and lingers in the palimpsest of the city.

Yet, despite how pervasive and misleading master narratives may be, it is important to recognize that language is a tool used by *people*. In particular, Angelo refers to a set of protagonists as a way to label "decision-makers who change across eras"[62] of urbanization. Planners must think beyond how present-day actions reinforce legacies of false dichotomies and analyze the people behind this "urbanization of ideas." [63] There is power behind foreclosing other possibilities and constraining imaginaries. Why have we defaulted to thinking of these expos as isolated moments in a city's history rather than part of a larger trajectory? We need to look at how the extent of these mega-event decisions also become decisions for social and economic determinants for a place.

Kian Goh, an urban planning professor at the University of California, extends Angelo's discussion on the urbanization of ideas by talking about how urban transformations in a city can be intrinsically linked to larger, not-inherently-urban situations. She provides a framework for connecting urban transformations to environmental considerations[64] in order to show how the very process of urbanization becomes a narrative-building action, not just a physically producing action. If Haraway and Murphy call us to think about the politicization and the naturalization of our relationships and knowledge bases, Goh presents a specific concern for planners to consider how the very practices of planning have been urbanized.

[62] Angelo.
[63] Angelo.
[64] Goh, "Urbanising Climate Justice," 561.

Starchitecture + the Capitalist City

"Starchitects" is a portmanteau used to describe famous architects, whose buildings are often associated with expensive budgets and strong aesthetic brands.[65] Starchitecture, the architecture of starchitects, is just one mode of space production that happens under mega-events,[66] and becomes particularly important to acknowledge in a study on mega-events due to existing critiques of the role capitalist globalization has had in supporting key starchitecture projects.[67] This critique of the space production of starchitecture is in line with a critique and examination of master narratives because the framework allows us to challenge the institutions responsible for hegemonic urban growth – not just the symbols or the products themselves.[68]

Maurice Roche, sociologist at the University of Sheffield, presents the considerations of starchitecture in mega-events as:

> "[We have to] recognise on the one hand the new and persisting presence of substantive buildings [starchitecture] which are often bequeathed to urban publics by mega-events and also, on the other hand, the new and persisting presence of urban spaces they can also often leave. The former is the product of forms of architecture (whether familiar or unfamiliar) and thus of projects of filling urban space: however, the latter is very different."[69]

[65] Sklair, *The Icon Project*.
[66] Like mega-*projects*, it is important to note that starchitecture happens outside of mega-events as well.
[67] Di Vita and Morandi, *Mega-Events and Legacies in Post-Metropolitan Spaces*; Sklair, *The Icon Project*; Ponzini and Nastasi, *Starchitecture: Scenes, Actors, and Spectacles in Contemporary Cities*; Roche, "Mega-Events, Urban Space and Social Change: Expos, Parks and Cities."
[68] Sklair, *The Icon Project*, 23.
[69] Roche, "Mega-Events, Urban Space and Social Change: Expos, Parks and Cities," 200.

Three things become important to note with commentary on starchitecture: public funding, class relations, and ideas of the spectacle. Planners need to be cautious of starchitecture for the degree to which their buildings truly serve the public. The No Expo Network, the activist group protesting against the Milan 2015 Expo, spoke out against the power imbalance persistent with mega-events and the housing inequities continued by the event.[70] A view of a planner as a mediator or facilitator between conflicting interests of capital[71] becomes challenged by scenarios where public funding is used, yet the benefits are disproportionately celebrated by private investors and corporations.[72] Angelo questions at what point does something that could be a public good become a private good or be enhanced for market and private sake that it undermines its role and capacity to function as public good? Ponzini and Roche further complicate this questioning by pointing to ideas of the "urban spectacle" as a moment where the look of the building was prioritized over its function, dislocating architecture from their physical and cultural contexts and failing to address social and environmental issues.

Placemaking

Mega-events involve cross-scalar considerations from the organization and motivations of the events to the impact and physical form at the city or district scale. Yet, like the nature of the events themselves, the tactics used in mega-events can be read in a similar cross-scalar function. One such function that has been co-opted as a mega-event tactic but speaks to larger shifts in the planning profession is "placemaking." Placemaking is a process of prioritizing

[70] Bertuzzi, "No Expo Network," 753; The No Expo Committee.
[71] Foglesong, "Planning the Capitalist City."
[72] Hillary Angelo's questioning of the extents something becomes a public good become private is especially useful in thinking through the implications of starchitectures and the legacies of the mega-events. Anguelovski, Irazábal-Zurita, and Connolly, "Grabbed Urban Landscapes"; Angelo, "How Green Became Good: Urbanized Nature from Garden Cities to Climate Justice"; The No Expo Committee; Shingal, "The Olympic Curse"; Roche, "Mega-Events, Urban Space and Social Change: Expos, Parks and Cities."

public spaces to enrich one's home, work, and recreational environments.[73] It involves 'public space' and 'people,' Although some scholars have attempted to differentiate types of placemaking,[74] it can be seen as a language to describe the physical outcomes of planning (what placemaking designers may refer to as 'place').

Placemaking serves as an attractive alternative to the comprehensive plan because it centers participatory frameworks and small-scale intervention, sometimes even at the scale of tactical installations. The embrace of the profession towards placemaking can be read as a response to the profession's difficulty with enacting comprehensive plans, knowing very well the real damage and violence past planning proposals have brought.

Because of this hesitation in the planning profession to enact large-scale mega-events serve as a helpful transition that retains a broad large-scale vision but promotes localized "placemaking" initiatives in the forms of 'new' districts, expo sites, and starchitecture-lined parks. For example, when Boston withdrew their application for the 2024 Olympics, it was met with a series of disgruntled advocates who lamented the would-have-been planning initiatives encouraged in the proposal. Urban design professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Alex Krieger, outlined one such vision in an article in the Boston Globe. Krieger discussed the potential for the games to introduce a new "transit ring" for the City of Boston, where new infrastructural investment around the core of the city may alleviate current networks that require users to venture downtown before making a transfer.[75] Siv-Ellen Kraft, a Norwegian scholar, gives name to this thinking – that the Olympics can serve as a production model for the city – as

[73] Mark Wyckoff, legal scholar studies the definition of the term from an institutional perspective, providing a helpful framing of the term for my context: "Placemaking is the process of creating a quality place that people want to live, work, play and learn in." *See* Wyckoff, "Definition of Placemaking: Four Different Types."
[74] Wyckoff.
[75] Krieger, "Olympics Can Give Boston Its Overdue Urban Transit Ring - The Boston Globe."

a "place construction" mindset.[76] While Krieger doesn't specifically mention the term "placemaking," the focus on urban mobility and infrastructure references the same underlying principles. Krieger's lament for the rejected Boston Olympics emphasizes the lost potential and transformative nature mega-events can have.

Yet, mega-event tactics of placemaking are not just about single, small-scale interventions as other placemaking initiatives may emphasize. On the contrary, the agglomeration of placemaking sites (across space and time) for mega-events becomes a sort of placemaking at the urban scale. Mega-events, in this way, can circumvent the profession's current timidness towards master plans by advertising such larger visions through the guise of piecemeal placemaking initiatives that coalesce under one larger mega-event project master plan. Such a plan promises similar ambitions to the city master plans by addressing social, economic, and cultural improvement.[77]

Placemaking in mega-events is a paradox: mega-events, on the one hand, represent planning processes fueled by global capitalism while placemaking evokes scales of the locality.[78] Ponzini, et al. deliberate the authenticity of placemaking when writing:

> "These projects are intended to distinguish tourist destinations as unique, but on the contrary, they tend to dramatically homogenize the urban landscapes of cities worldwide,

[76] Siv-Ellen Kraft is Professor in the Department of Archaeology, History, Religious Studies, and Theology at UiT The Arctic University of Norway who writes more recently on topics of indigenous religions. Her earlier work in the 2000s wrote about overlaps between culture and mega-events, explicitly addressing the productive logics that mega-events entail. *See* Kraft, "Place Making, Mega Events and Ritual Effervescence," 43.

[77] Project for Public Spaces, a NY-based planning non-profit that is credited with coining the term placemaking, goes so far as to claim academic ancestry from the writings of Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte, prominent planners of the 20th century. Of their many blogs, Juliet Kahne writes about definitions of placemaking in relation to gentrification, marking participation and community empowerment as key factors in avoiding negative impacts. *See* Kahne, "Does Placemaking Cause Gentrification?"

[78] Under this paradox, firms like Populous, a corporate design firm often hired by private interests and known for specializing in arena and stadium design for mega-events, would seem ignorant to claim ownership of placemaking since their practice is embedded in the very private sector that Kahne claims is unable to produce placemaking. *See* Populous, "Placemaking, Legacy and the 2032 Games."

and in particular those cities wishing to distinguish themselves are becoming more and more similar"[79]

Anguelovski, et al. further write about the 'copy-paste' logic that green infrastructure has encouraged in global placemaking practices that do not rely on local design influences in favor of global perspectives (usually global capitalist and white viewpoints of what makes a good urban space). When planners introduce placemaking, Anguelovski et al. would argue that placemaking runs a real risk of dispossessing locals "of their greatest assets – location, land, and social capital."[80] The memory of the place is important to acknowledge in mega-event planning, requiring planners to look at the history of past users and consciously acknowledge what historical baselines get elevated in narratives.[81]



Figure 03 – Frameworks Slide (Lidwin, 2023, presented in 2023 final review)

[79] Ponzini, Fotev, and Mavaracchio, "Place Making or Place Faking?"
[80] Anguelovski, Irazábal-Zurita, and Connolly, "Grabbed Urban Landscapes," 133.
[81] Laura Martin, environmental historian and scientist, presents a critical examination on the use of historical baselines as a kind of "firsting and lasting" application from Voyles' own writing. I intend to reference Martin's work more in my thesis paper as a framework for thinking about history and choosing what narratives we hold for a place. Martin, *Wild by Design*.

A Summary of Frameworks

At its core, placemaking for mega-events gets to the heart of the profession's aspirations: that, of course, planners must think long-term, weigh investment sources, and consider space. Yet, even if planners themselves aren't setting out comprehensive visions anymore, planners are not exempt from understanding how mega-events have become an artifice for comprehensive city planning that produces and reproduces a social imaginary with each subsequent mega-event. This is the form of planning that exists, that persists, yet the city has not acknowledged nor held accountable to such standards. The following chapters seek to embed this understanding as a framework to uncover the ways one city has wrestled with the placemaking tactics of its many mega-events.[82]

[82] Planners, like historians, hold an accountability to consider how they frame their narratives. In Traci Brynne Voyles' book, The Settler Sea (2021), she presents a framework for understanding colonialism through the lense of Jean O'Brien's concept of "firsting and lasting," which "allowed settlers to draw starkness between Natives who belonged to a fictive romantic past and their own forward-looking modernity." (pg. 78). Placemaking in this framework risks contributing to an actively undoing of place by claiming a place has been "made" at the time of placemaking. In a way, placemaking efforts that seek to 'remediate' brownfield landscapes and industrial zones of the city for mega-events follow the same "premature memorialization" stories that Voyles critiques during her mention of Fig Tree John and the displacement that was mobilized by these narratives. *See* Voyles, *The Settler Sea*, 78.

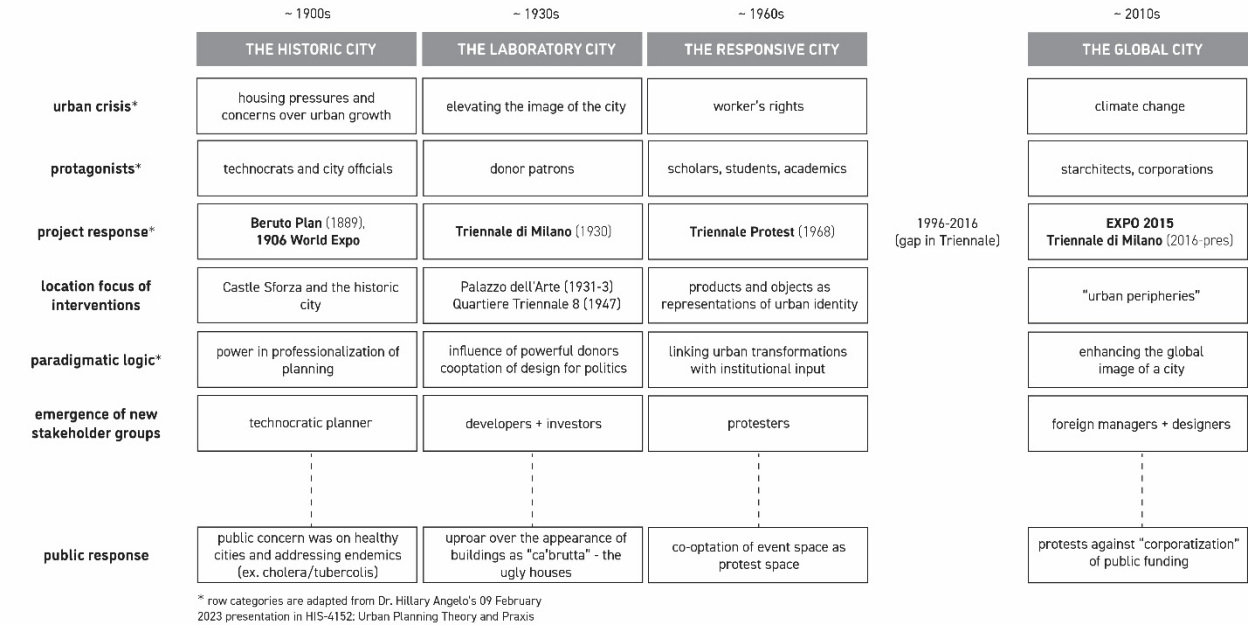


Figure 04 – Space Protagonists and Logics in Milan's Mega-Events (Lidwin, 2023)

Chapter 1: Parco Sempione + the Turn of the Century

"*Milano la città più città d'Italia [Milan: the most city of cities in Italy].*"

– Giovanni Verga [83]

The Napoleonic Origins of a Mega Event Site

To understand what prompted Milan to host Italy's first world expo, we must start with an understanding of the Parco Sempione site in Milan – an approximately 39-hectare site,[84] adjacent to the historic Castle Sforza and the location of the 1906 World's Fair and the current home to the Triennale di Milano. In the 1800s, when Napoléon conquered Milan and established the city as the capital of the Cisalpine Republic (1797) and later capital of the Italian Republic and the Kingdom of Italy (1802 and 1805, respectively),[85] Milan underwent a series of changes, including increased investment from Napoléon's empire. Napoléon didn't just provide money and resources to demolish existing feudal fortifications - he also played an active role in shaping the city's future by offering ideas and proposals about how it should be developed. Urban planning from this era became just as much about managing growth – as it was about projecting visions of the city's future (and specifically projecting Napoléon's vision). In the case of Milan, Napoléon's vision helped lay the groundwork for a social imagination that borrowed elements from French democracy – where large squares and key avenues were central to providing civic space for commerce and government, even if a major caveat to such 19th-century ideas was that civic space was only designed for some of the city's residents: Milan's elite.[86] As such, Napoléon

[83] Former Senator, Giovanni Verga, commented that "Milan is the most city-like city of Italy" when referring to Milan's participation in the 1881 National Exposition, which brought attention to Milan as an industrial and economic capital for the newly unified country. *See* Verga, *Milano la città più città d'Italia*.
[84] The size of Parco Sempione was calculated using ArcGIS geometries.
[85] Fondation Napoléon, "Foro Buonaparte."
[86] Antolini critiques the vision set forth by Giovanni Allocchio when arguing that while the original project was motivated more by vanity than practicality, it still had an important influence on later urban planners and architects. Napoléon's project, in other

was not only interested in transforming Milan as a strategic location for trade and commerce but also saw the city as an opportunity to showcase his vision for urban development and modernization. In particular, Napoléon's decision to demolish the ancient star-shaped walls around Sforza Castle in 1800 was a significant moment in Milan's history, because it set the stage to question how Milan would develop beyond the former Spanish walls, as well as address a key historical structure in Milan: Castle Sforza (immediately adjacent to present-day Parco Sempione).[87]

Napoléon sought to leverage the prominent position of Sforza Castle in the northwest of Milan, given the site's closer proximity to trade routes with France. As part of this planned expansion for Milan, Napoléon defined an avenue ("Sempione Road")[88] leading away from the Sforza Castle where the Arco della Pace now sits.[89] He also commissioned a forum of buildings ("Foro Buonaparte")[90] to encircle the Castle – reinforcing it as a prominent business center in the city, while connecting Milan to neoclassical interpretations of classical Italian cities, like Rome. This shift in recentering the city of Milan attempted to direct the city's view of Milan away from the Duomo (Milan's largest cathedral) and towards its role as a business and economic center – a tension that remains with Milan to this day. Yet, as Napoléon's plan unfolded, "public debate"[91] arose other whether to continue with the expensive business district – seen by the public as an expensive "civic space of French domination."[92] Napoléon's vision for Milan's new center failed

words, established a legacy of urban development that continued to the early 20th century, even if the motivations and circumstances surrounding the two projects are quite different. *See* Antolini, *Descrizione del Foro Bonaparte*; Allocchio, *La nuova Milano*, 6.

[87] Camerin, "Quartering as an Aspect of Italy's Post-Unification Urban Development," 355; Antolini, *Descrizione del Foro Bonaparte*.

[88] Antolini, *Descrizione del Foro Bonaparte*, 2.

[89] Rejna, *Descrizione dell'Arco della pace in Milano*.

[90] Fondation Napoléon, "Foro Buonaparte."

[91] Camerin, "Quartering as an Aspect of Italy's Post-Unification Urban Development," 356.

[92] Camerin, 355.

to secure the necessary funds, [93] leaving space open for military personnel to claim the surrounding castle land (present-day Parco Sempione) as a military parade ground. After the fall of Napoléon's empire, the military site continued to be in use but took on an important civic role as the site of bread production, food distribution, and hospital aid (not to mention security) for the city.

Milan's urban planning since Napoléon can be distilled into three key aspects: 1) the ongoing debate around where to focus development efforts, with Castle Sforza serving as Napoléon's proposed 'center'; 2) Milan's expansion to the northwest as a strategic trading center between the Italian peninsula and Europe; and 3) the transformation of a military site into a public utility, emphasizing the importance of urbanization for civic programming and services and instilling a public expectation that urbanization is an opportunity for civic programming and public services.

Land Disputes and Milan's Response with Planning

The site of Parco Sempione in Milan underwent significant changes due to pressures that arose from various factors. The unification of Italy in 1861 challenged the country to examine the city's role in reinforcing a cohesive Italian image. [94] As a country, Italy focused on improving infrastructure that would connect cities across the peninsula. Italian politicians mobilized rhetoric of urban renewal that encouraged cities to relocate hospitals, factories, and even military grounds (such as Parco Sempione) outside of the city centers. [95] Milan's role as the transit hub from Italy into Europe led to a large percentage of national funds being directed towards the city, later

[93] Eventually, though, funding emerged to build Napoléon's forum, and only about half of the forum's circle proposed by architect Giovanni Antolini was constructed. *See* Antolini, *Descrizione del Foro Bonaparte*.
[94] Allocchio, *La nuova Milano*; Camerin, "Quartering as an Aspect of Italy's Post-Unification Urban Development"; Morandi, "Italian Planning in the Later 19th Century: The Milan Example."
[95] Camerin, "Quartering as an Aspect of Italy's Post-Unification Urban Development."

influencing Milan to become Italy's most populated city by 1880. [96] The influx of capital and the need to reconsider the military grounds at Parco Sempione raised concerns about prioritizing market-driven development over subsidized public services in Milan's urban planning.

New financial companies that acted as real estate brokers were formed to help finance and construct new infrastructures, especially railways.[97] These firms also began to study the surrounding lots of Milan, conducting analyses on speculation on land that was in high demand. The question arose: should the city release the military site near the castle back to the market for development?

At the same time, Milan faced several epidemics, including two cholera epidemics in 1867 and 1884,[98] and a smallpox outbreak in 1878-82,[99] killing thousands of city residents. In response, citizens began calling for new sanitation infrastructure and green spaces, leading to a growing concern that the city needed to rethink how it could expand and develop healthily for its citizens. With the national trend to relocate military activities away from the city proponents of residential development around the castle mobilized around these conversations of healthy development as rationales for providing a replacement for the military activity, that despite offering public services to the city, was seen in competition with the social image of what an Italian city should be.

Of the new financial companies formed, Fondiaria, a development company supported by two banks,[100] proposed an extensive development plan to repurpose the land surrounding Castle Sforza. The proposal included converting "the partially demolished castle into a three-floor

[96] Allocchio, *La nuova Milano*.
[97] Allocchio.
[98] Morandi, "Italian Planning in the Later 19th Century: The Milan Example," 366.
[99] Morandi, 366.
[100] Fondiaria was "created with the participation of the Banca Generale and the Banca di Milano, whose capital was partly owned by French banks." French urbanism continues to influence the city of Milan long after Napoleon's exit – this time in the form of capital investment. *See* Morandi, 371.

building complex for 20,000 wealthy people,"[101] and developing the land from Castle Sforza to the Arco della Pace (one of the built works from Napoléon's incomplete "Foro Buonaparte). Fondiaria negotiated with the city to come up with an agreement on how to proceed, which involved "exchanging some of its land with the city council in order to create new barracks in an area further out"[102] to execute Fondiaria's vision.

As conversations progressed, some residents of Milan supported the renovation of the military parade ground near the castle because it offered an alternative to the otherwise "barren land."[103] Although no mention is given of who these residents are, one could assume the plan would favor more of elite in the city, who would benefit from luxury housing at the loss of a public utility site. Morandi documents how others were concerned over the municipal debt Milan was collecting since it took decades to pay off the prior debts Milan had accumulated through efforts to beautify the image of the city, partly initiated during Napoléon's reign, but especially encouraged post-unification of Italy.[104] They opposed large new projects that would require "public and private"[105] funding. Fondiaria's negotiations with the city sought to reflect these differences by reaching a compromise.

A growing number of architects and engineers became increasingly concerned about Fondiaria's proposal. Specifically, the technical experts of architects and engineers were concerned over the effect it would have on the existing layout of the city – specifically the preservation of small streets and organization of roads along central avenues that would highlight Milan's existing landmarks, rather than propose a grid that would not acknowledge these

[101] Although plans were made to renovate the area around and within the historic castle, the luxury residences proposed were only to serve a select population of Milan's wealthiest citizens. *See* Camerin, "Quartering as an Aspect of Italy's Post-Unification Urban Development," 358.
[102] Morandi, "Italian Planning in the Later 19th Century: The Milan Example," 371.
[103] Allocchio, *La nuova Milano*, 1.
[104] Allocchio, 2.
[105] Allocchio, *La nuova Milano*.

buildings. Together, they formed the Association of Engineers and Architects[106] and proposed a park, gaining support from the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments in the Province of Milan. Yet, failed attempts to promote their counter plan resulted with the dissolution of the commission. Rather than except defeat, disgruntled architects sought political life, taking "their technical beliefs to the city council"[107] as they looked outside of their current professions to seek change at the governance level.

Science as a Counter to Market Forces: The Technocrat-Politician's Vision for Milan

After Milan's growth and railroad investment, the country proposed hosting a national expo in 1881, centered on producing a cohesive image for the county to adopt. In an analysis of Milan's sites for the expo, it was previously decided that the park near Porta Venezia served as a greater potential for the national expo: it was already "the most elegant and cheap location because this area already included three buildings, amidst a succession of leafy groves or flowering meadows."[108] Nonetheless, the city council decided to pursue the site at Castle Sforza. City officials cited the prior ambitions of Napoleon, as reasons to host the event there,[109] but it could also be read as a sly attempt to subvert the intentions of developers and the tension they held with the city council at the time. Planners would have been eager to produce buildings or interventions to solidify their goal, especially as the city council's decisions began to reflect this addition of the technical practitioner's voice, specifically that of the architect. Architects' education at the time would have been influenced by Beaux Arts style thinking, which prioritized a formal and spatial design approach to cities – seen in opposition to developers who may be

[106] Morandi, "Italian Planning in the Later 19th Century: The Milan Example," 371.
[107] Morandi, 371.
[108] Camerin cites the "Guida del Vistatore" released by the Municipality of Milan for the national expo. *See* Camerin, "Quartering as an Aspect of Italy's Post-Unification Urban Development," 357.
[109] Camerin, 357.

looking to maximize lot coverage and building efficiency over ornamentation and architectural styles.

This tension between developers continued after the 1881 national expo, with a back-and-forth proposal by Fondiaria that had been initially approved or close to it by then-Mayor Belinzaghi.[110] However, Belinzaghi, a banker, had been accused of having a conflict of interest due to his personal investment and involvement in Fondiaria,[111] so he resigned.[112] In his place, Mayor Negri hired a chief engineering officer to devise a comprehensive plan for Milan to put the tension to rest. Beruto, the engineer they hired and head of the city's technical office, proposed limited block sizes, new sanitation infrastructure, and key avenues that framed historic buildings relating back to the Duomo. In fact, in his plan for the expansion of Milan, Beruto referenced the same focus on the Northwest of the city, initially encouraged during Napoleon's rule. Although limited knowledge of Beruto is known, Corina Morandi suggests Beruto did little to engage with town planners, resulting in an evident "technical-engineering" approach to the urban plan. [113] This resulted in a "technical-engineering" [114] approach to the urban plan, which can be seen as representing the engineering and architect perspective that felt unheard. The plan went through several back-and-forth iterations, the growing board of engineers and architects who sat on the city council had an ally under Negri's term and used it to undergo several planning iterations of Beruto's plan in favor of design-focused urban planning.

Literature on Milan's planning marks a final iteration of Beruto's plan in 1889 – suggesting that negotiations with developers were sufficient and that the city would then move on with the plan. However, what this history excludes or fails to make explicit is how the 1889

[110] Morandi, "Italian Planning in the Later 19th Century: The Milan Example."
[111] Morandi, 373.
[112] Cima, *Mezzo secolo di caricatura milanese*, 28.
[113] Morandi, "Italian Planning in the Later 19th Century: The Milan Example," 373.
[114] Morandi, 373.

plan was proposed just before an economic collapse in the 1890s that halted much development throughout Italy.[115] In addition, the city council was unable to remove the former Mayor Belinzaghi for long, seeing as his prominent position in almost every "public utility institution" in the city likely enabled him to return as mayor in 1889.[116] Even before Milan's first international expo, an institutionalization of bankers and a professionalization of planners as technocrats take shape and is reflected in the timeline of events.

1906 Expo (aka The World's Fair of 1906)

The World's Fair of 1906 established Parco Sempione through the creation of a public park, temporarily home to 40 country pavilions participating in the international expo.[117] The position of the event along the site that bordered Castle Sforza effectively positioned the new park as a venue to showcase the increased investment coming into Milan since unification. Although this came at the expense of deferring essential "drainage and drinking water system" improvements,"[118] avenues were constructed to reinforce the connection between the castle and the Duomo. Here, the spatial organization of the city leveraged the social imaginary of post-unification efforts, which sought to portray Milan and Italy as cities of advanced infrastructure,[119] including the roads, while still rooted in a rich, common history highlighted by iconic structures such as the castle and the Duomo. In fact, while the World's Fair of 1906 was temporary – the inhabitation of the event on the former and current military grounds (Piazza

[115] Morandi, 382.
[116] Cima criticizes Belinzaghi's overinvolvement, saying, "from railways to dance school, from the chamber of commerce to the society of the arts, there was no public utility institution in Milan where he was not at least president or adviser."[116] *See* Cima, *Mezzo secolo di caricatura milanese*, 28.
[117] Bureau International des Expositions, "Expo 1906 Milan."
[118] Morandi, "Italian Planning in the Later 19th Century: The Milan Example," 382.
[119] Allocchio, *La nuova Milano*; Fondation Napoléon, "Foro Buonaparte"; Camerin, "Quartering as an Aspect of Italy's Post-Unification Urban Development"; Morandi, "Italian Planning in the Later 19th Century: The Milan Example."

d'Armi), led to discussion shortly after the expo to annex the nearby municipality of Baggio into Milan's territory,[120] so that the current Piazza d'Armi could relocate for a second time further out of the city. The expo, in part, served to advance the national agenda of decentralizing the location of military and other public utilities from the city. It became a literal catalyst for municipal expansion.

While some may question why the World's Fair of 1906 existed economically,[121] given the pressing need for more residential districts and sanitation infrastructure, which left untreated could lead to more costs in externalities, others see it as an opportunity to showcase Milan's progress and establish its position as a leading European city. This tension between economic and social considerations reflects the ongoing struggle between planners and developers in Milan, who often clashed over the city's direction. While developers were eager to advance their own profits and add value to Milan through new residential districts, the municipality had to consider multiple revenue sources, including Milan's role in commerce. By enacting the World's Fair of 1906 during a time conveniently after Mayor Belinzaghi's death and shortly after a national economic recession, event planners can be seen as turning their back on developers who long proposed other uses for the site. The advertisement of the expo as a national economic boost to revive the economy may have merit but should not be confused as being the central reason for hosting the expo, given its complicated entanglements with decades-long feuds over the expo site.

[120] Camerin, "Quartering as an Aspect of Italy's Post-Unification Urban Development," 363.
[121] One such critic describes it as "As one critic writes, "The two stories of postponed investments in waste water treatment and drinking water treatment in Milan are paradigmatic of a public policy failure in implementing sound and sustainable investment policy choices." *See* Reghizzi, "Providing and Financing a Municipal Infrastructure : A Long Run Analysis of Water and Sanitation Investments in Milan (1888-2000)," 93.

Despite the potential profits that could have been made by converting the Castle Sforza into luxury apartments and developing new residential districts,[122] the World's Fair was leveraged to promote commerce to the rest of Europe and showcase Milan's new train tunnel through the Alps.[123] In this way, the World's Fair of 1906 became an advertisement for future economic activity with surrounding countries, and external economics seemed to outweigh internal economic decisions, even though they included delayed infrastructure and rejection of much-needed housing for the wealthy. The spatial and imaginative rationales that sought to glorify Milan pushed the city to consider economic rationales that would also justify how that glory could be solidified. In this case, planners opted to promote commerce and market Milan to the rest of Europe, leveraging the event as an opportunity to increase Milan's importance on the global stage.

Implications

The World's Fair of 1906 has implications for planners, particularly regarding the relationship between citizenship and expos. By locating part of the World's Fair on the site of both the current and former military parade grounds, the expo inspired a later annexation of the Baggio region after the city began to envision different uses for the military site. [124]

By connecting this annexation to the World's Fair, I argue that the expo set a precedent that such mega-events could expand citizenship for those not currently serviced. Although Baggio residents gain citizenship through the literal municipal redefinitions that came with

[122] Although plans were made to renovate the area around and within the historic castle, the luxury residences proposed were only to serve a select population of Milan's wealthiest citizens. *See* Camerin, "Quartering as an Aspect of Italy's Post-Unification Urban Development," 358.
[123] Simplon Tunnel celebrated engineering feats by providing the first tunnel through the Alps to connect the Italian peninsula with the rest of Europe. The Bureau of Exposition – which did not exist at the time of the 1906 expo – cites the tunnel as one of the key reasons Milan chose to host the World's Fair of 1906. *See* Bureau International des Expositions, "Expo 1906 Milan."
[124] Camerin, "Quartering as an Aspect of Italy's Post-Unification Urban Development," 363.

annexation, other Milanese residents gained a new relationship with the Parco Sempione site, since the expo's creation of the park foreclosed opportunities to build Fondiaria's luxury apartments.[125] This distinction is helpful to note for future expos, where expectations that mega-events could urbanize *people* would lead to future conflict when such evoked citizenship is denied.

In addition to civic relations with events, the very institutionalization of the planning profession is extremely important at the start of the 20th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, the institutionalization of the planning profession was crucial, in addition to civic relations with events. The conflict between technocratic and developer interests may seem straightforward in terms of categorizing stakeholders, with architects and engineers on one side and real estate investors and bankers on the other. However, what is essential is not how the groups were separated but that men in both groups oversaw various other organizations across the city. [126] This established a precedent that those involved in such events would also have an interest in many other aspects of the city, and also prevented these events from truly reflecting public interest. The unequal concentration of power behind these early mega-event endeavors makes it harder for opponents to speak up – perhaps evident in the lack of documentation on dissenters of the 1906 World's Fair, a presumed category of opponents that may differ from the banking and developer opposition, whose arguments would be tied to financial interest in the site over sociability and civicness.

[125] Although plans were made to renovate the area around and within the historic castle, the luxury residences proposed were only to serve a select population of Milan's wealthiest citizens. *See* Camerin, 358.
[126] Brilli and Conca Messina, "A Rentier Class?"

Chapter 2: Bureau International des Expositions and the Triennale

> *"The origins of new architecture in Italy remain confined to the chronicles of Exhibitions and Fairs ... which remain, for architecture, only an account of lost genius'"*[127]
>
> *- Anna Maria Mazzucchelli, Editor of Casabella (1939)*

By establishing a public park on disputed land, the expo of 1906 helped solidify the technocrat's visions for Milan by preventing developer proposals for luxury housing. In this way, the expo served as a powerful moment of collaboration where the "municipal technical apparatus"[128] worked with city councilors (many biased and direct with their interests for some proposals of Milan over others) to secure their own vision of the city.

Critiques in the 1920s

However, although the city was able to leverage the expo to help ensure the *implementation* of Beruto's 1889 plan, the expo could not correct the *shortcomings* of the plan. City councilors still failed to anticipate all the forthcoming challenges that new growth for the city would bring. In fact, less than twenty years after the expo, Milan faced a renewed set of challenges for its future growth. This time the issue was not looking outward of the Spanish walls for development, but rather reflecting inward on the challenges posed by a single-centered city plan.[129] For example, the new areas around the city failed to accommodate adequate space for public squares, which would provide needed green space closer to residents than parks like

[127] Anna Maria Mazzucchelli wrote this quote in Casabella Marcello, "Fascism, Middle Class Ideals, and Holiday Villas at the 5th Milan Triennale," 5.
[128] Morandi, "Italian Planning in the Later 19th Century: The Milan Example," 388.
[129] Morandi, 388.

Parco Sempione were providing.[130] While Beruto's extension for the city sought to provide consistency with the inner, historic city, in doing so, he continued a legacy of dense urban areas that exacerbated the inadequacies of Milan's hygiene sanitation networks.[131]

While Milan is considering these updates to its first major master plan, the city is also experiencing several compounded social tensions brought on by an interwar economy[132] and the rise of fascism with Mussolini in power from 1922-1943.[133] A September 1923 call to "radically transform Milan" can be read as the "birthplace of fascism,"[134] which (like the 1880s restructuring of the city) was met with conflict of social imaginations that had shaped Milan prior. For example, Lucy M. Maulsby, Associate Professor of Architectural History at the School of Architecture at Northeastern University, describes the conflict as on one hand a Fascist push "to curb the growth of large cities and in the development of new agricultural centers" while on the other hand, the legacy of Milan has been set up such that Milan was projected to be *the* modern metropolis for a unified Italy since 1865.[135] The 1906 Expo, for instance, was a moment of celebration for the country, where narratives were mobilized around making Milan the trading port for the country into Europe. How was this new political and "cultural religion"[136] of fascism going to reconcile an "anti-urban"[137] agenda within "the most 'city-like' city of all

[130] Although the implementation of the Beruto plan started more than a century ago, it is interesting to see the ways that modern concerns about the "fifteen-minute city" are shared concerns with early-twentieth century Milanese residents. Despite efforts to push industry out of Milan's city center and despite efforts to beautify the streets and avenues, it seems like the image of the city as an unhealthy spatial organization sticks around with Milan no matter what plan is proposed. For more information on the fifteen-minute city, *see* Moreno, "Carlos Moreno."
[131] Morandi, "Italian Planning in the Later 19th Century: The Milan Example," 388.
[132] Although this thesis does not include details on the influence WWI has had on the city of Milan, it is important to note the event as a component to the collective questioning occurring in Milan during the early twentieth century.
[133] Maulsby, "Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943"; Marcello, "Fascism, Middle Class Ideals, and Holiday Villas at the 5th Milan Triennale."
[134] Maulsby, "Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943," 3.
[135] Verga, *Milano la città più città d'Italia*; Allocchio, *La nuova Milano*; Antolini, *Descrizione del Foro Bonaparte*; Morandi, "Italian Planning in the Later 19th Century: The Milan Example"; Camerin, "Quartering as an Aspect of Italy's Post-Unification Urban Development."
[136] Maulsby, "Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943," 6.
[137] Maulsby, 4.

Italian cities?"[138] As Milan would look to a new form of expos through the "Triennale" – architecture and corporativism would become the attempted answer.

1923 and the Idea of the Event Spectacle

With the changing city and amidst Fascist rebranding, Milan looked to architecture and the built environment to seek solutions for its urban future. In 1923, the head of the city planning office, Cesare Albertini, was tasked with developing a new master plan,[139] which sought to reconcile needed updates from Beruto's earlier vision. If Beruto's plan sought to refine the question of how the city would expand, by focusing on outward expansion and anchoring historical monuments, then Albertini's plan would look inward and question the historical monuments, opening urban grids to prioritize sanitation, amongst other initiatives.[140] Later critics of Milan's urban history, such as Milanese critic and architect, Ferdinando Reggiori, would look back on Albertini's plan and critique the reinforcement of the "city's monocentric character…a direct consequence of fascism's desire to reinforce the authority of the central state."[141] This time period – when Milan sought to redesign its city under Fascist ideals – is a critical moment not often described in the history of Milan.[142] The 1920s in Milan became a clear moment when the political and rhetorical rationales intermingled with spatial decisions directly influencing the urban environment.

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[138] Verga, *Milano la città più città d'Italia*.
[139] Maulsby, "Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943," 6.
[140] Maulsby quotes Reggiori, specifically in the context of Reggiori's contributions to the history of Milan's interwar period. *See* Maulsby, 6.
[141] Maulsby quotes Franchi and Chiumeo when discussing the two scholars' critiques of Albertini's plan. As Franchi and Chiumeo describe the role that politics played in the physical shaping of the city. *See* Franchi and Chiumeo, *Urbanistica a Milano in regime fascista*, 7; Maulsby, "Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943," 9.
[142] Lucy M. Maulsby starts her book with a description of how interwar history in Italy is often overlooked in its role in architecture and the city, especially Milan. Although Maulsby's argument focuses on an in-depth examination of this interwar period and is not as explicitly about her focus on the social imaginary, her critique of the lack of literature is relevant to my study, as well. Fascism had a profound effect on shaping Milan and played a critical role in understanding how master narratives and placemaking strategies were first mobilized to the scale at which Mussolini directed his urban renewal efforts. *See* Maulsby, "Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943," 3.

The specific institutionalization of corporativism from 1925-1929, [143] on the other hand, complimented efforts to rethink the city, because it relied on delegating control of a state to large interest groups, such as the Ministry of Corporations, which "acted as an economic parliament with its own councils and assemblies made up of employer/worker organizations for industry and crafts…and the arts professions."[144] Aesthetics and image became the unifying tools of corporativism to gain popular legitimacy in advancing corporativist stakeholder interests.

1923 is a particularly important date, not only for the start of Mussolini's rise as a senator and the start of Albertini's plan but also for the creation of the Monza Biennale of Decorative Arts, which brought mega-events back to the focus as a means to project new images of the city. The specific use of crafts production could be seen as setting the groundwork for contemporary Design Weeks and Fashion Weeks. As Fascist agendas evolved to center Milan's renewal efforts in Lombardy, the event was relocated to Milan, and its duration altered.[145] This connection between the Triennale/Monza Biennale to Fascism is rarely (if at all) mentioned – especially in official BIE publications. Yet, by understanding the actors and the political climates of the time, historical analyses help connect these events to the motivations that fueled and birthed such experiences.

Internationally at this time, countries were rethinking the role of expositions, specifically hoping to reach agreements regarding the quality of such events and the duration. Thus, in 1928, founding countries met in France for the 1928 Paris Convention, establishing the Bureau

[143] Flavia Marcello defines corporativism as "a uniquely Italian (and fascist) economic policy and was presented as a 'Third Way' between Capitalism and Communism. Born of a fusion between syndicalism and authoritarian nationalism, it was tied to new models of hierarchical organisation made manifest during World War I." *See* Marcello, "Fascism, Middle Class Ideals, and Holiday Villas at the 5th Milan Triennale," 2.
[144] Marcello, 2.
[145] I was not able to access documents relating to the transfer to the Monza Biennale to Milan. Yet, I suspect the decision for relocation could have had to do with positioning the event so that the soon-to-be-created Bureau International des Expositions would adopt it under its convention articles. Little mention is given to the specific formation of this event as a Fascist artifact itself, although some consider the themes and particular events.

International des Expositions (BIE)[146] and adopting the new Milan Triennale under its jurisdiction. This adoption of the Triennale under the BIE satisfies some elements of corporativism through the institutionalization of such an event. However, the Bureau of International des Expositions'[147] website about the Triennale does not mention Italy's political regime at the time of the event's adoption. Although likely in part to distance the event's legacy from a harmful past, I believe this lost connection misses an opportunity to understand an expo's true legacy and the imaginative potential (even if misused) of events.

The Overlooked Fascist Imaginaries that Shaped the Triennale [148]

With the new attention, management, and focus that the Triennale would receive after the 1928 Paris Convention, key city councilors and investors rethought its location. In particular, Senator Antonio Bernocchi, an industrial designer who was featured in Barcelona's Expo 1929, was determined to establish "a center of Italian art and design that could serve as a place of meeting and exhibition,"[149] specifically in Milan. Through his patronage that funded the creation of a permanent location for the Triennale, he convinced the city to build the only building in Parco Sempione Square, becoming the Palazzo dell'Arte, home of the Triennale.[150] His donation and persistence in establishing a permanent residence for the Triennale at the Palazzo dell'Arte

[146] Bureau International des Expositions, "Triennale Di Milano."
[147] As of 2023, there have been 35 world expos sponsored (or retroactively recognized) by the BIE, with 15 distinct host countries – averaging a rate of 2 expos per host country, although cities like Paris, France have held up to 4. "Specialized expos" - smaller events but also supported by the BIE - have totaled close to the same amount, at 34 specialized expos. The Triennale is currently the only BIE event to stay in one location each time: Milan. *See* Bureau International des Expositions, "About | World Expo."
[148] …and, by extension, the Bureau International des Expositions, itself – perhaps partly. In fact, the First National Urban Planning Conference for Italy, held in Rome in 1937 was a Fascist conference. The origins of urban planning, in this lens, would be tied to fascism (although the exact party dynamics is less important for this paper). The origins are also tied to the fascist logic and sensibilities of urban imagination – reinforcing the need for planners to not only be cognizant of the imaginaries we continue and perpetuate but also of what imaginaries have lingered and continued to inform the work to which planners must now respond. *See* Maulsby, "Fascism, Architecture, and the Claiming of Modern Milan, 1922-1943," 161.
[149] Bureau International des Expositions, "The Story behind the Palazzo Dell'Arte."
[150] Bureau International des Expositions.

solidified the physical park of Parco Sempione as not only a public good but also as a park onto which the city could imagine its future (now through the prompts of the Triennale's exhibitions). Some scholars may point to Bernocchi's many philanthropic projects as advancing his own status in the city. After all, he wanted to promote fine Italian designs, which would have included his own "Luminator Bernocchi" lamp. [151] Yet, I believe Bernocchi's complicated and quiet support of Mussolini should be considered in the rationale for the Palazzo dell'Arte, which would connect the Triennale as part of the same party vision for the city that Albertini's plan was seeking to remake.

It is important to note that Bernocchi was never officially a member of the Fascist Party in Italy (PNT). However, his designation as an "ad honorem"[152] member by the PNT on the announcement of his death, combined with speech notes where Bernocchi praises Mussolini during the opening ceremony of the school Bernocchi founded, suggests Bernocchi would have followed in the steps of several entrepreneurs at the time by supporting Mussolini. As such, his actions and influence should be seen not as the power of one man (although we can read it this way, too), but also as the power of a political party, who through these key actors, projects future urban spaces. [153] Bernocchi, therefore, played an important role in channeling donor money to advance the vision of his political party, especially on a site that had been in contention for decades earlier, previously opting not to develop the park to retain its publicness.[154]

[151] Bureau International des Expositions.
[152] Restelli and Oldrini, "Chi Era Antonio Bernocchi?"
[153] *See* Restelli and Oldrini; Etlin, "Giovanni Muzio and the Milanese Novecento, 1919-38."
[154] *See* Restelli and Oldrini, "Chi Era Antonio Bernocchi?"; Etlin, "Giovanni Muzio and the Milanese Novecento, 1919-38."

Not Just an Exhibit: Imaginaries Tested, Products of Repeated Events

Following in the ambition and time at which the Palazzo dell'Arte was created, the First Triennale projected ideas of the fascist home[155] – seeking to show Italians how they could envision life under this new political regime. Parco Sempione was transformed for mock-ups of housing units. Pavilions, such as "The Saturday House for Newlyweds"[156] offered an image of domestic life "for the emerging 'new man,' thanks to fascism, regenerated and totally integrated into the community."[157] Flavia Marcello, architectural design and theory professor at Deakin University, describes the event as an opportunity where politics are aestheticized to foster "consen[sus]-building process[es]…where architects played a central role in fascism's mission to transform Italian society."[158] This strives for building consensus, an early staging for later planning theorists such as John Forrester's work on communicative planning,[159] yet raises questions regarding what insurgent or dissenting practices may emerge – even if early Triennales sought to silence opposing views through the propaganda of one collective image.

In fact, the Triennale brought nuance to Milan's relationship with mega-events and the opportunity for events to expand citizenship that is evoked in public spaces created by the events. That is, the 1906 Expo provided *access* to such public spaces, but now questions about who could help *envision* such futures began to complicate the event stakeholdership. Yet, as the first

[155] Colombo, "Giovanni Muzio, Palazzo Dell'Arte (1931-1933)"; Marcello, "Fascism, Middle Class Ideals, and Holiday Villas at the 5th Milan Triennale"; Marcello.
[156] Marcello, "Fascism, Middle Class Ideals, and Holiday Villas at the 5th Milan Triennale," 10.
[157] Marcello, 2.
[158] Marcello, 1.
[159] A spring 2023 course offered at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design (HIS 4115: Urban Planning Theory and Praxis, taught by Dr. Diane E. Davis) introduced me to concepts of communicative planning, including a lecture by John Forester, a leading scholar on the specific framing of planning as consensus building. John Forester's notions of participation center around minimizing instances of "not-listening" in favor of "listening" – challenging planners to center decisions on building consensus. Although the early Triennales provided little opportunity to voice concerns – especially as growing fascist practices sought to silent dissenting views – the intention to build consensus through mega-events raises a question regarding what happens when communicative or consensus planning fails to consider how citizens may seek other outlets to accomplish their planning needs when they become frustrated by the participation process? *See* Forester, "Options Analysis as Context-Responsiveness in Practice."

expo in the country/city sought to urbanize people through the annexation of municipal boundaries and expand access to public sites, the era with the Triennale revealed the limits to such citizenship. That is, if the 1906 era made us think about the institutionalization of planning, then this era with the Triennale revealed the way that events themselves became institutionalized into a set of public expectations for what type of commentary and critique the events would deal with – even if such vocal dissent was not leveraged as best it could (it still struggled to make its way beyond the Triennale).

However, the Triennale was not an isolated site to project images and pavilions of possible futures. As Italy reconciled with the aftermath of World War II, early Triennales had a distinct spatial relationship with the city – often involving physical projects that were located well outside the park perimeters of Parco Sempione, where the 1933 Triennale was limited. For example, the 1947 Triennale's Quartiere Triennale Otto (8) project developed an entire neighborhood towards the then-edge of Milan.[160] Events in this capacity became design-build exercises. While projective about a future for the city and helping jumpstart such visions, they still restricted involvement and visioning power to those within the institution of the BIE and Triennale boards. Subsequent Triennales continued to have similar effects on the city, and up until the fourteenth Triennale, much of the products produced were built with similar intentions – an important note for planners looking to learn from Milan, given the opportunities for modern-day participation sensibilities may have on how these Triennale's could have progressed differently, in a perhaps more radical way.

This sustained disconnect between planners and public residents may have worked under former administrations – where the conflict between investors and technocrats could be seen as

[160] Benetti, "QT8, a Tour in the Ideal Neighborhood of Postwar Milan"; Kousidi, "Expanding (on) the Core. The QT8 Project in Milan."

more vocal, given the decision-making power involved between the two opposing parties. Yet, as events become repeated, such as the Triennale, I argue that they start to solidify an expectation of what is to come. In the case of the Triennale, new event themes helped illuminate new questions and foster discussion, but the method at which those questions were explored remained decided: the Triennale was to produce projective projects that were generated from within the institution. Unlike the Beruto plan disputes which questioned which bureaucratic figures would be granted the agency to vision, each Triennale seemed to reinforce an idea that 'events' meant 'opportunities for the elites' in the city (like the Triennale's founding donor, Bernocchi).

On May 1, 1968, the fourteenth Triennale changed these expectations. The 1968 Triennale sought to correct the shortcomings of the prior Triennale, which had been focused on leisure[161] and was thus seemingly disconnected from the public. As a response to the prior event, the curators of the 14th Triennale wished to express commentary on how the spatial products and forms of the city are related to the "immense power of the instruments [actors and industrial production processes] available."[162]

What was meant to be a commentary on what influenced the city backfired. A group of students mobilized around the Triennale and staged protests that sought to question the very institution itself who sought to project its vision[163] and how the institution's role in projecting futures for the city overlooked many of the working class.[164] Thus, the critique on architecture shifted from the influence of production methods toward the institutions responsible. This shift in critique highlights an important moment for considering the producers and space protagonists of urban imagination. Past Triennales sought to produce products to influence Milan's urban

[161] Zardini, "Milan (Italy) 1968 - Triennale Milano: 'Il Grande Numero.'"
[162] Zardini.
[163] Vannucchi, "A Disciplinary Mechanism."
[164] Zardini, "Milan (Italy) 1968 - Triennale Milano: 'Il Grande Numero'"; Nicolin, "Beyond the Failure."

identity, even implementing ideas of utopia through public housing projects.[165] In contrast, or rather, by extension, the 14th Triennale focused on the immaterial products – shifting attention to how *ideas* themselves shape and produce urban identity. As a result, Triennales and mega-events in general in Milan would have to reconcile with the emergence of a new stakeholder groups in social imaginary production: that of protestors and specifically that of academics and working-class residents, whose interests merged in the 1968 Triennale.

Implications

In moments of institutionalization of events, it becomes important to recognize how citizenship is made regarding whose involved in such institutions and who is seen as outside. Milan's early involvement with the Bureau International des Expositions and supporters such as Senator Bernocchi institutionalized a public expectation that on one hand, donors could sponsor events and in doing so, directly influence the built projects in a city. On the other hand, political parties mobilizing to express their visions of the city found much success in the expos to gather the public. Above all, however, urban transformations begin to have a strong link to institutional input (as in the Triennale and its bureaucracy), complicating event space as a cooptable spaces of protest. Following this expectation, the 1968 Triennale critiqued the very institutions that were shaping the city. The product "made" from this Triennale was not a public park, nor public housing, but rather an "idea" – an object-less critique that had real spatial consequences in how students and young residents protested worker exploitation, mismanagement of public projects that felt more catered to Milan's elite.[166]

[165] Benetti, "QT8, a Tour in the Ideal Neighborhood of Postwar Milan."
[166] Things not too dissimilar from today's current events.

Although this paper does not delve into the specifics of fascism, it's important to reference the early movement as a clear manifestation of certain futures and social imaginaries. I note this connection to draw attention to how the underlying foundations - of projecting social imaginaries through an institution like the Triennale - continue to exist today. Rather than hiding from its past, we can acknowledge the misuses of the Triennale and uncover the effective tool employed regarding the social imaginary. We can understand the situation that inspired non-institutionalized actors, such as students, to take over the event and connect such aims to political movements.

Chapter 3: The Return of the Expo

> "*There is now an international flying circus which travels the world, leaving signature buildings in its wake. The major cities of the world share a need to collect them, in the same way that art galleries from Osaka to Liege need Henry Moore, David Hockney, and Julian Schnabel. So Richard Meier builds essentially the same building in Frankfurt and the Hauge, and Michael Graves builds apartment towers in Yokohama and offices in Atlanta."* [167] *- Davide Ponzini, 2016*

After 1996, Italy stopped hosting the Triennale. This every-three-year recurring event in the city paused, in part to the growing success of the nearby Venice Biennale,[168] but also for "unceremonious"[169] reasons not elaborated on by the Bureau International des Expositions, which oversees these particular mega-events.[170] In fact, there seems to be missing literature on the reason for the Triennale's cancellation, and amongst articles I gathered, sources point to two potential reasons: 1) a restructuring of the Triennale "from an institution into a foundation,"[171] although to what extent this designation has baring on the event remains unclear, and 2) the creation of a permanent design museum at the Triennale in 1996.[172] I did not manage to gain access to financial records from the Triennale or the Bureau International des Expositions (which future studies could investigate), but the idea about the Triennale switching to a (private?) foundation[173] and having a permanent exhibition raises questions over whether the Triennale was

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[167] Ponzini and Nastasi, *Starchitecture: Scenes, Actors, and Spectacles in Contemporary Cities*, 45–46.
[168] Guarano et al., "The Triennale Is Dead, Long Live the Biennale?"
[169] Lloyd, "Milan Triennale XXII."
[170] Bureau International des Expositions, "Triennale Di Milano."
[171] Pederbelli, "A Brief History of Italian Design at Triennale."
[172] Di Mino, "A New Season for the Museum of Italian Design at the Triennale di Milano"; Pederbelli, "A Brief History of Italian Design at Triennale."
[173] Although the definitions of "foundations" are interpreted in many ways, and could be in reference to public charities being labeled as public foundations, there is a tendency for foundations to be in reference to private non-profits and charities, as expressed on the United States Internal Revenue Service website. Thus, I am interested in thinking about the Triennale's pause as a moment of organizational restructuring towards a more privately funded-and-operated operated procedure. How this may fit

discontinued due to financial restructuring. The early 1990s included a minor recession in Italy.[174] These economic pressures brought on additional considerations to an already saturated event market with a growing number of events in Milan (from fashion and design weeks to nearby Venice Biennales). This may have also encouraged a private restructuring of the Triennale. Although calling the Triennale a foundation may or may not indicate a changing funding structure to more private sources, it is still important to consider how the Triennale began to be viewed as a more explicit partnership with private funders in the 1990s. This context, although seemingly unimportant to events at the end of the century, becomes relevant again as the 2000s usher in Milan's next era of expo involvement, centered on global corporate involvement.

The Timing of an Expo: Connections and Overlaps with the Triennale

As with the years preceding the 1906 Expo, Italy's next expo in 2015 was also marked by a recession prior to the event: the global financial crisis of 2007-2008.[175] Additionally, similar rhetoric emerges around how expos will help bring Italy out of its economic slump – relying on common mega-event tropes that seek to 'save' the city.[176] With this understanding, I argue that economic recessions give rise to rhetorical narratives that create an apparent inverse relationship. When one rationale faces a crisis, such as the lack of financial security to sponsor an event, other rationales compensate by adopting lofty promises and examining spatial arrangements in the city. These alternative rationales aim to address the deficiencies of the affected rationale. For

within the jurisdiction of the Bureau International des Expositions, however, remains unclear. It is important to note that the Triennale has always been influenced by private donations – dating back to the 1933 endowment from Senator Antonio Bernocchi (described in the prior chapter). Yet, 1996 marks a point where more corporate sponsorship is gathered for the Triennale. *See* Internal Revenue Service, "Private Foundations | Internal Revenue Service."

[174] Grant, Miniaci, and Weber, "Looking for the Causes of the Recession: Italy in the Early 1990's."

[175] Lorenti, Dudel, and Myrskylä, "The Legacy of the Great Recession in Italy," 283.

[176] Müller, "The Mega-Event Syndrome."

example, the use of rhetorical or spatial strategies benefits expos in times of economic uncertainty, as they provide intangible solutions. However, each rationale also offers compelling perspectives that warrant examination at Milan's expos.

An Economic Event

In 2008, Italy won its bid to host the Expo 2015. This marked a successful start towards its ambitious goal of revitalizing a local, if not national, economy using another international exposition with the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE).[177] In doing so, the winning bid spurred the creation of a company to oversee the expo, "Expo 2015, SpA" (SpA),[178] and with it – a distinct network of stakeholders that included corporate sponsors. Although "criticized for its complexity,"[179] the governing structure of the expo bodies seeks to make up a range of stakeholders that can help protect against one group (ie. corporations) from controlling all the financial decisions.[180]

Still, the economic rationale for the event seems to uphold prior expectations that stakeholders can expect to profit from the event. Yet, unlike Milan's previous expo more than a century earlier, this expectation of profit is carried out by large, global corporate sponsors,[181] thirty-one different entities to be exact.[182] In monetary terms, this sponsor involvement totaled

[177] For announcements and news articles surrounding Expo 2015, I rely on a mixture of official press releases from the municipal government and BIE institutions, as well as publications from popular media sources, where the public of Milan is more likely to gain this information. It is important to note that the articles I reference are English texts, so the audience is likely ex-Patriots or similar non-native Italians who prefer to read the news in English. *See* Balmer, "Italian City of Milan to Host 2015 Expo."
[178] Expo 2015, SpA, "Sustainability Report 2014: Expo Milano 2015," 11.
[179] Di Vita and Basso, "The Spatial Projects of the Expo 2015 and the Post-Event," 39.
[180] These stakeholders include the company itself ("Expo 2015, SpA"), a national representative ("Sole Commissioner of the Government of Italy"), an institutional coordinator ("Commission for the Coordination of Activities Connected with Expo Milano 2015"), and a regional governing board ("Official Panel for the Overall Governance of Regional and Supra-regional Interventions"). *See* Expo 2015, SpA, "Sustainability Report 2014: Expo Milano 2015," 14.
[181] These sponsors play a major role in helping execute the idea of an expo, much like that of the wealthy donor or rentier class by offsetting costs incurred by the nation and city. *See* Brilli and Conca Messina, "A Rentier Class?"
[182] These sponsors include a total of thirty-one corporations of different categories that included shareholders from banks and governments, official global partners, official global airline/rail/cruise carriers, official premium partners, and official partners. *See* Expo 2015, SpA, "Sustainability Report 2014: Expo Milano 2015."

more than 280 million euros of investment,[183] even including participation from the United Nations (UN), whose work was sponsored by a joint "trust-fund" with SpA of an undisclosed amount.[184] These numbers, while an incomplete picture of stakeholdership as a whole, highlight those actors who have the most financial influence in the Expo 2015.

Moreover, the financial influence of the highlighted actors in Expo 2015 aligns with the BIE's expectation for expo host cities to independently secure funding and take on the necessary preparatory work for the expo site.[185] Public funding, in this case, becomes necessary to conduct the required sewage and water infrastructure updates needed for the tabula-rosa-like treatment for the Expo 2015 site, formerly agricultural land. In the case of Expo 2015, this site preparation cost amounted to more than 1.3 million euros alone.[186] Since SpA relies on Italian public funds for site preparation but also has a hand in managing said public funds given to the company, planners need to think through funding methods that can be transparent for the public, which can then also "guarantee the absence of financial losses after the closing of the event."[187] SpA's former website used to list a "società transparente" ("transparent company") tab[188] where they would provide references and documents referring to their finance and governing decisions.[189]

SpA's initial sustainability report further discusses how funding is not just a question of where the investment sources come from, nor just about reducing unnecessary costs, but also involves thinking *how* that money is spent. Specifically, the company includes a clause in the

[183] This included direct and in-kind investments. *See* Expo 2015, SpA, 174–92.
[184] Expo 2015, SpA, 128.
[185] Expo 2015, SpA, "Sustainability Report 2014: Expo Milano 2015."
[186] Iraldo, Melis, and Pretner, "Large-Scale Events and Sustainability."
[187] The sustainability study conducted by Sant'Anna School and Bocconi University researchers points out these two concerns that need to be considered. Compared to reports by the BIE and company, it seems like powers in play already acknowledge these concerns in publications and website documentation. *See* Iraldo, Melis, and Pretner, 16.
[188] Expo 2015, SpA, "Società Trasparente."
[189] Corinna Morandi's furthers this budgetary concern by implying that public funding comes with an inherent need to reduce the budget as much as possible[189] – likely to ensure the money would not be excessively spent given its involvement with public investments. *See* Morandi, "The Spatial Projects of the Expo 2015 and the Post-Event," 25.

report about reducing the risk of mafia "infiltrations."[190] SpA identifies the transportation of goods as the most vulnerable opportunity in the construction process for mafia involvement. Although this concern stems from a connection between organized crime and funding sources, the dilemma has a direct spatial implication as it calls to question the lifecycle analysis of materials, and thus what type of buildings are made. Additionally,

SpA becomes an opportunity to study how technocratic decisions of money management translate into a complex governing body. Yet, despite well-intentioned transparency (no matter how "complicated" [191] such transparency may be), a financial-driven governing structure had its shortcomings. For example, the complex governing structure delayed construction due to bureaucratic delays in approval, as well as needing to resolve dissent between parties. [192] This created a tight construction timeline, which put pressure to build quickly. [193] Costs rose as contractors applied surge charges to last-minute rush orders – a required expense for SpA, who would be unable to shift the date of the expo so close to opening.[194] In addition, critics of Expo 2015 cite volunteer labor and worker exploitation as direct financial contributions to the expo, which are not often given credit in the determining of financial stake.[195] Even the theme of Expo 2015 was adjusted to include an expanded definition of sustainability beyond food systems. In 2011, energy and technology were added to the food theme of the expo to appease investors who thought it would help generate more revenue.[196]

[190] Expo 2015, SpA, "Sustainability Report 2014: Expo Milano 2015," 140.
[191] Morandi, "The Spatial Projects of the Expo 2015 and the Post-Event," 25.
[192] Morandi, 25; Wainwright, "Expo 2015."
[193] Morandi, "The Spatial Projects of the Expo 2015 and the Post-Event," 25; Wainwright, "Expo 2015."
[194] Müller, "The Mega-Event Syndrome," 9.
[195] Ciccarelli, "Expo Milano 2015"; The No Expo Committee.
[196] Morandi, "The Spatial Projects of the Expo 2015 and the Post-Event," 27.

Spatial Considerations

The spatial rationales of Expo 2015 served multiple purposes beyond addressing funding challenges. For instance, the supply chain of building materials (and thus what material could be used) became important to prevent the promotion of mafia-controlled supply routes.[197] Yet, Expo 2015 also served as an important spatial project for broader city initiatives like sustainability and the physical expansion of the city – both distinct from economic rationales. This means that even if the financial motive behind hosting the expo did not successfully stimulate the economy, the spatial rationale alone justified pursuing the expo, because it contributed to the city's long-term future.

Before the recession of 2007-2008, the city of Milan started the 2000s with rapid investment in the creation of new districts towards the Northwest, including present-day Porta Nuova, CityLife, and more. Proposed in the same year CityLife broke ground on some of their buildings,[198] and almost a decade after Porta Nuova,[199] Expo 2015 is part of a string of several other developments along the loose axis centered by Sempione Road.[200] The expo's theme "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life"[201] adopted sustainability measures that sought to use climate change and resource scarcity as reasons why spatial reorganizations in the city could help relink important climate assets in the city. The ideas that emerged from Milan's historical focus on outward expansion, coupled with recent efforts to revitalize 'new' districts within the city, influenced this new mega-event development. For example, the selected site for Expo 2015 is

[197] Expo 2015, SpA, "Sustainability Report 2014: Expo Milano 2015," 140.
[198] CityLife, "Project | History."
[199] Urban Land Institute, "Porta Nuova - Milan."
[200] Morandi, "The Spatial Projects of the Expo 2015 and the Post-Event," 35.
[201] Bureau International des Expositions, "Expo 2015 Milan."

viewed as a crucial node within a network of interconnected sites that would help reinforce 'sustainability' efforts.[202]

Yet, if spatial connections between existing sites seemed to influence Expo 2015, the vision to connect the expo to surrounding development was made explicit with the hiring of Stefano Boeri - global architect, Politecnico di Milano professor, and designer of the Bosco Verticale tower at Porta Nuova, the new district already in construction at the time of Expo 2015's conception. Boeri, whose decision to not pursue copyright for his Bosco Verticale Tower, is praised as embracing an environmental consciousness to the skyscraper typology. Yet the towers do little to provide affordable housing for the city,[203] and the water use and heating loads of the building have raised questions regarding the degree of sustainability,[204] especially when it might overlook the intersection of environmental and social inequities. These considerations, while by no means dismissive of the progress Bosco Verticale brought to architecture, become emblematic of broader concerns Milanese residents were having about the "green" expo and for whom these innovations sought to design.[205]

The spatial rationales for Expo 2015 become an opportunity to understand how perceived success, especially that of globally practicing architects such as Boeri, become coopted into mega-event discourse, evoking a need to legitimize mega-event "experiments" with the credibility and backing of key starchitects. Starchitects, in this view of the spatial rationale, function as a form of technocrat. The design of starchitecture is seen as a type of best practice for

[202] I put 'sustainability' in single apostrophes to call out the greenwashing nature and lack of clarity that such words evoke. Although EXPO 2015 implemented several policies that sought to challenge society's relationship with food consumption, energy usage, and the overall climate, the overreliance on "sustainability" raises questions as to what definitions we assume with the use of such a term. *See drawing,* Stefano Boeri Architetti's drawing of "Three Projects for Milan" helps highlight the thinking of the peripheral boundaries of Milan. *See* Cilento, "Milan Expo 2015."
[203] Last, "This Vertical Forest Tower Makes Elite Green Design Affordable. But Is It Actually Green?"
[204] Lund, "Sustainability in the Built Environment."
[205] Bertuzzi, "No Expo Network: Multiple Subjectivities, Online Communication Strategies, And The World Outside."

cities to emulate, perpetuating a competition amongst cities to attain the most concentration of these examples of good architecture. Such a practice can perpetuate a desire to "use…branded large-scale projects [for]…'quick fixes' for contemporary cities."[206] Even if the link is not made explicit, the reliance on starchitecture and the starchitect, themself, establishes a norm of global architecture that becomes a status quo for what a city aspires to be. Planners, city councilors, investors, and other urban decision-makers need to consider how this logic of starchitects as a type of technocrat compares to the logic of economic rationales used in organizing the governing structures of Expo 2015. That is, it is crucial to recognize how these two approaches align in their pursuit of objective truth. Economic rationales may leverage starchitecture to secure profits for the city, loosely connecting mega-events to a civic goal – that mega-events should help the city and nation's economy. Those that start from a spatial rationale may use mega-events to fund desired starchitecture (often connected to ideas of luxury apartments) that keep the city focused on designing for the elite. Both rationales in this way, become deeply intertwined, but the underlying motivation – although distinct – becomes blurred. For example, Boeri's Bosco Verticale may have initially sought to provide the city with cleaner air brought by the new trees. Yet, the tower ended up solidifying divides in the city through the creation of a district, which was isolated from Milan in terms of affordability.[207]

Understanding Placemaking's Place in Expos

This conflict between the seemingly aligned desires of both spatial and economic rationales further warrants the need to examine the social imaginary and the rhetorical strategies.

[206] Ponzini and Nastasi, *Starchitecture: Scenes, Actors, and Spectacles in Contemporary Cities*, 47.
[207] Lund, "Sustainability in the Built Environment"; Last, "This Vertical Forest Tower Makes Elite Green Design Affordable. But Is It Actually Green?"

Even more so, such an examination is warranted, because the media and documentation around the "success" of the Expo stops short after claiming a twenty-three-billion-euro profit.[208] Aside from whether or not this profit factors in exploited labor and volunteer work conducted on behalf of the event, there is not nearly as much popular news coverage around the destination of expo profits as much as there is about the announcement of the profits themselves. If the purpose of the expo was to generate revenue and funds for the city, it is reasonable to assume that citizens would be interested in knowing which projects would be financed with the profits from the expo. The financial aspect of the event serves not as an economic indicator but as a narrative and social imaginary for the city, where the emphasis lies on whether the city made strategic investments to capitalize on the event. This achievement may be reflected in newspaper reports that highlight the success of the expo but fall short to describe the benefits gained as a result. The assumption here is that the economy has been revived, instilling a narrative to unify people, even if many in the city (especially lower class and minority residents) may understand this sweeping narrative about the city bouncing back has only helped a select few in power: in the case of the expo, the corporate investors.

Such a view on the city can help highlight who is given a seat at imagination in the city. And specifically, the rhetorical rationale helps us think about, whose memory of a place gets preserved when a place is remade through starchitecture districts and spectacle.[209] But it also shows us who the public elevates and grants permission to vision on their behalf.

The case of Expo 2015 highlights the helpfulness of rhetorical rationales in uncovering how people become the subject of both rationales described above: on one hand, the formation of a complex governing body to manage funds, on the other the promotion of a global architectural

[208] Wanted in Milan, "Expo Milano 2015 Closes Books with €23m in Profit."
[209] Ponzini and Nastasi, *Starchitecture: Scenes, Actors, and Spectacles in Contemporary Cities*, 34.

style (through starchitects) to ensure the success of the event. Previous discussions have primarily focused on the built environment outcomes of mega-events, overlooking the fact that the people involved are central to their institutionalization. Just as the 1968 Triennale shifted the focus onto the institution itself and just as the Beruto plan revealed the complex interplay among various actors behind the scenes, it is essential to recognize the individuals behind these visions as crucial institutional elements of mega-events and Expo 2015.

To understand this, we can look at the shortcomings from Expo 2015, where seven former Parliament members got arrested for rigging bids and committing bribery.[210] Although popular news media highlighted the corruption involved in the Expo 2015,[211] including the vocal protests of the No Expo Network,[212] corruption did not result in the entire public losing faith in the institution of the BIE or the complete set of actors involved. A year after the expo completed, Milanese residents voted the former CEO of the "Expo 2015, SpA" as Mayor of Milan[213] . So while complications arise in how the public forms skepticism around the management of the events (in regards to mafia ties and the many arrests of parliament officials), there is still an overall trust that even if the people are broken, the system of mega-events is one that is useful for the city (evident with the election of Giuseppe Sala, the former CEO). Like Sala, Stefano Boeri becomes institutionalized through his appointment to run the Triennale from 2018 to present,[214] influencing Milan through not one mega-event, but multiple involvements now with two Triennales already under his leadership. In fact, his first Triennale in 2019 sought to analyze the

[210] Wainwright, "Expo 2015."
[211] Further controversy arises and is documented by counter-expo groups, such as No Expo Network, when they learn about how some of the key stakeholders (developers around the Fiera region) were able to sell their land for expo for higher prices, and then later became investors on the expo itself (raising questions around conflicts of interest if sellers are also part of the buyers. *See* Expo 2015, SpA, "Sustainability Report 2014: Expo Milano 2015," 190; Wainwright, "Expo 2015."
[212] The No Expo Committee.
[213] Morandi, "The Spatial Projects of the Expo 2015 and the Post-Event," 25.
[214] Bertuzzi, "No Expo Network: Multiple Subjectivities, Online Communication Strategies, And The World Outside."

"spread of design skills across the world"[215] and was the first Triennale to bring in "non-traditional actors" such as non-profit groups – even if the invitation of such actors still created formal boundaries that left some groups (like No Expo Network) unrecognized.

Protests against the expo, therefore, should not be seen as a dislike of the products (although it is part of the critique) but as a central critique of the people visioning on behalf of a community that feels overlooked. As Niccolò Bertuzzi of the Università di Parma notes, public-facing initiatives of EXPO 2015 only sought to "consult and build consensus among the stakeholders, more than pursuing a real and intense engagement in the decision and planning process."[216] This led to mobilization through "collective aggregation,"[217] with four distinct protests helping vocalize the dissent against the expo.[218] MACAO, an activist group who also participated in the expo, draw on past imaginaries of event and art spaces as protest space by advocating that all "art production [should be seen] as a viable process for rethinking social change, elaborating independent political critique, and as a space for innovative governance and production models"[219] Under these views, there is an underlying – likely democratic undertones reflecting Italy's political system – that demands public input into these expo processes that currently do not include much participation. [220] By having such a large group like No Expo Network voice their opposition to the city's urban agenda, the rhetorical rationale helps point planners in the direction of participation. Perhaps it is not the complicated governing structures established by the BIE nor even the greenwashed sustainability objectives of a starchitecture

[215] Bureau International des Expositions, "Triennale Di Milano 2016."
[216] Iraldo, Melis, and Pretner, "Large-Scale Events and Sustainability," 27.
[217] Bertuzzi, "No Expo Network," 752.
[218] May 2010, June 2012, October 2014, and May 2015. *See* Bertuzzi, "No Expo Network: Multiple Subjectivities, Online Communication Strategies, And The World Outside," 141.
[219] MACAO, "Chi Siamo."
[220] Iraldo, Melis, and Pretner, "Large-Scale Events and Sustainability," 27.

movement that need to be reworked, but rather the very participation and input models that gather public perception in the first place.

Conclusion

My research started with an examination of mega-event discourse that identified two main rationales for understanding mega-events (and specifically world expos). Scholars have studied the economic rationale, while others have focused on spatial rationales and urban forms. I found through much of the literature review, that scholars often focus or prioritize discussion on one rationale over another. Even when both are mentioned – a false dichotomy is created that suggests that cities are weighing economic costs against their formal/spatial needs and expectations. For example, scholars tend to claim that cities view world expos as either capable of 1) accelerating urban development, sometimes, "by up to 10 years"[221] or 2) recognizing the economic limitations but see it as an important opportunity to test out new infrastructural organizations - such as Boston's transportation system.[222] Yet, little discussion exists around how the constant presence of mega-events has activated a third rationale. This third rationale involves public perception, and specifically how social imaginaries evolve and influence mega-events. My research began with an interest in understanding how these rationales had reciprocal relationships to broader urban planning initiatives – often shaping and being shaped by broader movements and directions from the urban planning profession in Milan.

After studying planning documents, archival publications (such as political newspapers and *Casabella* articles), and accounts of urban decisions shaping Milan's history before and after Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) events, I find that economic and spatial rationales still have a strong influence on mega-event decision-making, but the choice to design a mega-

[221] Müller criticizes the way mega-events have failed to deliver on economic promises, citing several "symptoms" of mega-events and his proposed solutions. *See* Müller, "The Mega-Event Syndrome," 7.
[222] Krieger, "The Olympics Can Give Boston Its Overdue Urban Transit Ring."

event is far from a sole economic or design viewpoint. These nuances and entanglements can be summarized in four takeaways:

Takeaway One: The False Attention to Only Look at Finances

Profiting from a mega-event has not always been a requirement for Milan's participation in BIE events, as seen with the 1906 World Expo's ability to counter development pressures to convert the Piazza d'Armi into luxury apartments and housing for Milan's elite. [223] In this context of 1906, economic rationales were used to refine mega-event proceedings and guide subsequent development. However, site selection was based on the goal of *preventing* post-event development, rather than maximizing any potential profits. In 2015, we see a different disregard for economics, but one that seemed disinterested in tracking the supposed profits from Expo 2015, compared to the amount of media attention given to the fact that there was a profit itself.

That said, mega-events are less focused on economic potential than popular media and politicians advertise. Since mega-events are not solely about economics, determining the 'successes' of mega-events is not about tracking financial statements – it should be about tracking *whose* vision was used to influence future development. Milan's expos show how a sole look at economic factors distracts from the larger narratives that are pushed forward through the guise of mega-events. This was seen in the 1906 Expo, when financial interests of city council members complicated decisions with the Parco Sempione site. Or when Expo 2015 sought to reinforce key placemaking and redevelopment trends in the city that had rationales beyond just

[223] Although plans were made to renovate the area around and within the historic castle, the luxury residences proposed were only to serve a select population of Milan's wealthiest citizens. *See* Camerin, "Quartering as an Aspect of Italy's Post-Unification Urban Development," 358.

making money for the city – it was focused on providing environmental strategies for the city, as well.

Takeaway Two: The Need to Institutionalize Change and Reflection

Secondly, as mega-events become an institutionalized feature of urban development, planners must consider the implications of these institutions. Specifically, they must ask themselves what goals are being reinforced through the standardization of urban placemaking practices. In other words, what is the status quo that is being perpetuated by each successive mega-event, as it becomes integrated into the city's existing bureaucratic structures and stakeholder networks?

Economic rationales suggest that status quos continually strive to make profits off mega-events while a spatial rationale would have us look at the role of mega-events as developing new spatial areas. Sometimes these objectives to profit and to continually make (or remake) are intertwined, but a key takeaway from Milan is that even amidst the institutionalization of mega-events, the status quo never stayed the same. It constantly changed – at least in terms of its formal impact on the city – sometimes by projecting physical interventions, sometimes by projecting ideas and critiques against the institutions themselves. While some stakeholders prioritize the continuity of the status quo - generating revenue and branding Milan as a mega-event city - the city is in a constant state of flux – constantly getting remade. As such, planners play a critical role in maintaining opportunities for change that guide the city's transformation.

Takeaway Three: The Need for Mediation

While mega-events like the Olympics and World Expos are closely linked to public oversight through their reliance on public funding and planning technocrats, the presence of a mega-event can result in a shifting landscape of stakeholders within municipal government. In other words, there can be a reciprocal relationship between mega-event organizers and politicians, with expo CEOs running for political office or vice versa. The case study of Milan helps illuminate how this overlap blurs the boundaries between the two stakeholder groups, complicating interests. Given this complication and the inherent publicness of mega-events, the perceived success of a mega-event relies on public interaction and acknowledging the expectations of city residents from their planning departments. The role of the planner becomes ever important in orchestrating the mega-event as both a developer and a community representative.

In essence, there is a need for planners to double down on their role in mediating mega-events, especially when master narratives go unchallenged. These narratives include assumptions around the profitability of mega-events, the perceived necessity for an 'urban spectacle,' the role of the event itself, and the processes of participation in mega-event planning is conducted. As planners straddle economic, formal, and identity concerns for the city, there is a need to think about solutions across long-term and short-term strategies and how the scale of time to implement those strategies may rely on one sensibility over another.

For example, in reimagining BIE events, planners could restructure the bid application process to require comprehensive vision plans to be created five years prior to submission. Such an initial visioning for the city would require expos to fit in within the set visions of the city – seemingly distant from the event itself, versus altering the city's objectives to conform to event needs. Such a strategy may leverage how many cities already pursue climate-ready or resiliency

visions to discuss projected growth. This way, expo bids can be judged on how they fit with existing, locally structured vision criteria before the global influence of mega-event sponsors.

Takeaway Four: The Need for Locality

Often mega-event donors, such as banks and private firms, complicate the financial interests involved in mega-events, given their participation across stakeholder groups. This raises questions over who profits from mega-events.[224] That is, profits are still made from expos even if the specifics of the profit do not completely capture the reasons for participation in a mega-event. As seen with the three time periods in Milan, profits are not distributed widely across the city and wealthy investors find themselves with a greater financial return from the expo than the city or civilian experiences. Over time, the beneficiaries of mega-events become more concentrated in corporations and select groups of individuals – away from a broader class of nineteenth-century rentiers and wealthy donors. And as these corporations find profit in mega-events, the global corporations can leverage their foreign markets to support mega-events across a wider range of countries, rather than local companies or individuals who may have more stake in the specifics of one mega-event site.

As these global powers shift across the globe, they mobilize and hire more starchitects to provide consistency in the type of buildings (however homogenized such architecture becomes).[225] This reliance on placemaking strategies and global design for mega-events has cultivated a social imagination and expectation that development means 'spectacle.'[226] Through this lens, cities use mega-events as ways to test out foreign design strategies (such as emulating

[224] Müller describes this as a mega-event syndrome of "elite capture," leading to "spatially uneven urban landscapes" and "gentrification." *See* Müller, "The Mega-Event Syndrome."
[225] Ponzini, Fotev, and Mavaracchio, "Place Making or Place Faking?"
[226] Ponzini and Nastasi, *Starchitecture: Scenes, Actors, and Spectacles in Contemporary Cities*.

New York's Highline for Milan's Olympic Village at Porta Romana) at the expense of falling short on some of the city's long-term needs. This was seen with the 1906 World Expo's decision to forego an update to sanitation infrastructure (despite then-recent cholera and smallpox epidemics)[227] in favor of funding Beaux Arts style ornamentation and ensuring boulevards maintained proper orientation to historic buildings. We can use this to understand that opponents to mega-events want a different branding for the city – or a different sociological imagination based on concepts like the just city, perhaps, over spectacle city. This understanding helps identify the disconnect between proponents and opponents.

As a result, there is a need to consider where there is room for local expertise in mega-event climates where global powers bring in global starchitects to function as the experts on such events. It reinforces a need to think about planning and design as a local craft, embedded with sensibilities and local knowledge that help tap into the calibrated needs of a city's people.

Is there a Future for Mega-events?

Even though Milan has only hosted two international expos, the city has been involved in other types of events such as Design Weeks, Fashion Weeks, National Expos, Triennales, and the Olympics. This involvement shows that the city of Milan is committed to the idea that mega-events can have a positive impact on the city and can be used as a tool to spur urban change. This is important to note, because when planners do not think about long-term strategies, mega-event priorities run the risk of "displac[ing] long-term urban development priorities…[and] instead of the event becoming an instrument for urban development, urban development becomes the

[227] Morandi, "Italian Planning in the Later 19th Century: The Milan Example," 378.

instrument for the event."[228] I propose two recommendations based on my study of repeated mega-events in Milan.

Recommendations

Planners must recognize that plans generated from mega-events are *not* city plans and as such, must be understood as distinct from their own stakeholders and set of success metrics, even if the money funding expos and Triennales originate with national and city governments. Mega-event plans are a complicated political product that oscillates between a global gaze influencing the events and their local execution through the conflicts and competing agendas of local actors. Yet, in recognizing this distinction, mega-events serve as a helpful transition that retains a broad large-scale vision but promotes localized "placemaking" initiatives in the forms of 'new' districts, expo sites, and starchitecture-lined parks.

1. Understanding mega-events as a type of infrastructure for planning allows consideration of mega-events as both an *analytic* for planning (it reveals relationships between people and things in unique ways) as well as a *politic* (used in public discourse and mobilizes different agendas).[229] It raises questions over who maintains such structures[230] and how it shapes the city,[231] allowing for a critical history of why mega-event decisions were made and continue to influence the present day.

[228] Müller, "The Mega-Event Syndrome," 10.
[229] Dr. Abby Spinak's spring 2022 course, SES-5380: Experimental Infrastructures, at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, introduced me to infrastructural scholars such as Susan Leigh Star. In class, we had discussed the definitions of critical infrastructure, referencing Star to pull out two important topics that make infrastructure a valuable topic of study: infrastructure as an analytic and a politic. *See* Star, "The Ethnography of Infrastructure."
[230] Adam Plaiss, earned his doctorate from Northwestern University, talks about how some things that are now utilities are things that we would have once done on our own (like get water). This same way of thinking helps open discussion around the ways that mega-events (or the services under them) start to naturalize an orchestrated dependency when other agencies, peoples, or individuals may have maintained them previously. *See* Plaiss, "From Natural Monopoly to Public Utility: Technological Determinism and the Political Economy of Infrastructure in Progressive-Era America."
[231]Deborah Cowen, associate professor of geography at the University of Toronto, describes infrastructure as "We' build infrastructure, and it builds 'us." This quote helps frame the reciprocal nature of mega-events and city development, thus supporting a call to consider it a form of urban infrastructure. *See* Cowen, "Infrastructures of Empire and Resistance."

2. University involvement with mega-events helped offer outlets to explore solutions outside of traditional planning offices – seen with protests in 1968 and later adoption of the Expo 2015 site to use for studio prompts, where students envisioned a new future. However, in tying the sites to universities, publicly subsidized land now exists outside of a truly public sector because the academic community now serves as a facilitator in determining the city's future. While the long-term presence of a university can be helpful in the early stages of project processes, universities have not traditionally carried mega-event projects through completion, often passing them off to city planners to implement them. These dilemmas suggest a need for planners must develop a framework to address the shortcomings of institutional linkages, while also considering the legacy of mega-events. By pairing university involvement with resident experts who offer direct community knowledge, vulnerabilities imposed by globally focused mega-events may be able to be strengthened by consistent investment in local sensibilities.

Through this project, my hope is to challenge the belief that mega-events are some neutral economic driver for the city, intended to finance other initiatives. In contrast, I argue that the mega-events themselves are the political initiative, a concretization of visions at a specific moment in time. By proving how mega-events function as the endeavor itself, we can urge planners to re-evaluate their assumptions about mega-events and whether they are genuinely economically feasible or help to progress other endeavors. Planners can use this approach to reflect on whose imagination is not included (for example, the No Expo Network)[232] and develop strategies that involve rethinking mega-events as chances to explore alternative imaginaries from

[232] The No Expo Committee.

underrepresented groups (although significant caveats exist).[233] If we can understand how past expositions laid the groundwork for exploring the visions of those in power and institutionalizing their beliefs, we can then leverage such frameworks and institutions to envision other possibilities for the city, harnessing mega-events' imaginative capacity and repurposing it for the greater public good.

[233] Davis and Hatuka, "3.9 Imagination as Method for Generating Knowledge about Possible Urban Futures."

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