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EVENTS AND FESTIVALS IN THE PROMOTION OF
SECONDARY CITIES FROM A COGNITIVE-CULTURAL
PERSPECTIVE: THE BIG FIVE-SECONDARY EVENTFUL
CITIES

Introduction. – During the last few decades, planners and leaders of many cities have intensified the implementation of urban plans and policies where they use culture not only as a strategy for economic and social revitalization, but also as a resource for identifying the differential aspects of cities, improve their comparative advantages and strengthen their prestige and reputation (Evans, 2009; Ali, 2022). Given the establishment of what is commonly known as the “society of leisure and consumption” (Baudrillard, 1998) or “hyper-consumption” (Lipovetsky, Serroy, 2015), the truth is that culture has been installed on the urban agenda and is increasing. There are more policies oriented towards the construction of a city image based on culture, leisure and tourism as keys to differentiation and competitiveness (Scott, 2011; Dejean, 2021), whether through the preservation of historic centers, the reconversion of obsolete infrastructure in cultural facilities, the careful design of public spaces, the promotion of cultural industries or, what seems of special interest to us, the organization and celebration of events and festivals.

In this sense, the hypothesis of this research considers the need to incorporate the cultural dimension (through cultural events and festivals) in the knowledge of the world urban system from a multidimensional perspective which is, in our opinion, more adapted to the forms and current cultural consumption framed in the so-called “new economy” (Scott, 2011) and “cognitive-cultural capitalism” (Scott, 2014). Only in this way, sectoral approaches that offer a biased panorama of reality are avoided, as traditionally occurs in economicist urban rankings.

The hypothesis also maintains that research on urban issues should not focus exclusively on the most representative cities of the global urban hierarchy, but also on the territorial flows and connections of the rest of the cities using a multi-scalar perspective. Following the idea of Marcuse

and Kempen (2000) who consider globalization as a process that manifests itself in different forms and intensities, the aim is not only to identify those global cities, but also to value those others where certain specificities establish hinterlands much more specialized from a functional point of view. These cities, although conceptually distant from the definition of world city accepted in the academic world, also contribute to the organization of the territory.

To this end, considered as a reflection of a mass culture typical of the current society of leisure and consumption, global events and festivals will be used as indicators of cultural order. The objective of this research is not to study these events from an economic, social, political and/or urban perspective as case studies; it is considered that there is extensive literature that fulfils this function (Puleiro, 2016; Páez, 2020, among others). However, there are fewer works that focus on understanding them from a holistic perspective, understanding them not only as branding and city marketing strategies that promote urban competitiveness and the international projection of cities (Maening, Zimbalist, 2012; Yezhova, 2020), but also as indicators of success that allow the global urban system to be determined from a cognitive-cultural perspective.

There are several objectives proposed in this research: i) propose an updated *Synthetic Index of Events and Festivals* (SIEF) to demonstrate how they play a primary role in the current territorial organization derived from cultural globalization; ii) compare with the SIEF of 2017 (Díez-Pisonero, 2017) and check how global dynamics have affected it, taking into consideration the global Coronavirus pandemic and some of the major war conflicts that are present in current geopolitics; iii) develop a top 5 of secondary cities specialized in cultural events in order to know how the image of a cultural city has been built, as the main strategy for urban differentiation, revitalization and competitiveness.

Relevance of the event in urban competitiveness from a cultural-cognitive perspective. – Traditionally, greater specific weight has been given to the economic issue in globalization works. However, it is maintained that this is a much more complex process where a multitude of manifestations have a place that requires more holistic and less sectoral studies to be carried out, which do not subordinate any of the areas that may influence the analysis of the real functioning of contemporary dynamics. Today, a large number of factors intervene so that cities compete to attract residents, tourists, investors and researchers, and have the essential elements to guarantee their progress and

well-being. In particular, highly qualified and diversified human capital, emblematic symbolic capital, high quality of life and an active, open and tolerant cultural environment, among other “soft factors” are very considered (Florida, 2002). Many of them are related to the society of leisure and consumption that prevails today and that it is necessary to contextualize, in turn, within the concepts of “New Economy” (Pratt, 2011) and “Cognitive Cultural Capitalism” (Scott, 2008), given the notable convergence between the economic and cultural spheres. This perspective constitutes one of the particularities of contemporary urbanization processes and acquires great theoretical weight thanks to the contributions of the Los Angeles School and the formulation of the concept of “Celebrity City” (Soja, Scott, 1986), together with those who claim the value of knowledge and creativity (Florida, 2002; Richards, 2020).

Creative, artistic and cultural services take on a special meaning in the global urban system, since urban centers are the best manifestations of cultural production and consumption practices, and therefore, they are elements that promote the development of cultural globalization (Margulis, 2006). The positioning of culture as an urban planning strategy is associated with the transition from the machine city to the city that is an object of consumption (Arantes, 2000). Thus, given the growing notoriety of the creative dimension in cities, many urban planners have taken into consideration cultural manifestations of a global order, closely linked to tourism and leisure. Among these manifestations, it is worth highlighting leisure and recreation activities, creative and innovative dynamics, or the celebration of cultural events and/or festivals, whose development and generalization contribute to an unprecedented spectacularization and theming of the city, with special relevance in the so-called “playful city” (Stevens, 2007), “entertainment city” (Clarks, 2005) and “fantasy city” (Hanningan, 1998).

Some authors consider that these manifestations, in addition to enriching the socio-economic aspect (economic growth, diversification of the tourism product, promotion of social cohesion), allow the development of the concept of the urban (infrastructures and equipment, plot or plan and strengthening of the image, among others), enabling the integration of cities into the logic of cultural industries. Cultural activities and services, therefore, acquire great notoriety, not only as inherited potential, but as a creative value that allows the projection of new factors of urban differentiation (Scott, 2010). This is considered especially relevant in the current competition between cities on a global scale that

are trying not only to create an identity that promotes their brand value, but also to distinguish themselves from the rest in a context of global homogenization (Díez-Pisonero, 2017).

Although there is no “magic formula” to create a successful urban brand image (Ali, 2022), more and more urban leaders consider the celebration of events (cultural, sports, etc.) and the festivalization of cities (Richards, 2007; Bild, Steele, Guastavino., 2023), which contribute to their progressive theming (Tressera, 2004; Ruiz, 2020). These initiatives include the celebration of international events, such as the Universal Expositions, the Olympic Games or the Soccer World Cups, among others.

The purpose of “putting cities on the map” adapts to the size and capabilities of each city, from international mega-events to more austere regional festivals. Despite the significant economic effort to celebrate them, these events are characterized by their temporary nature, their media nature and the high number of people necessary for a successful realization (Maening, Zimbalist, 2012; Lee, 2022).

These events allow the generation of high investments with which to carry out changes in the host cities and/or countries. In order to guarantee the perfect realization of these events, especially when these are mega-events, significant urban restructuring is undertaken, correcting deficiencies in transportation and tourist infrastructure (Essex, Chalkley, 2003; Kumar, 2020). However, these impacts are also widely discussed by those who consider them as a “commodification of culture” (Bauman, 2006) at the service of neoliberal urbanism, which generates, in many cases, an intensification of gentrification processes, as well as the forced migration of the most disadvantaged social groups (Aramata, 2020). At the same time, this literary movement reflects on the importance of planning in order to avoid underuse of facilities after the event has taken place, in addition to the security and corruption problems that may arise from them (Matheson, Baade, 2002; Neri, 2021).

It is the impact of these events on the image of cities and/or countries that seems most interesting to us in the global dimension. In addition to changing and modernizing the urban structure, these projects improve the image of the host cities and promote the diversification of the tourism product, turning it, for a few days, into the cultural city of the world (Maening, Zimbalist, 2012; Shin, Peachey, 2021).

For all these reasons, the use of events and/or festivals as statistical indicators in approaching the cultural dimension of cities is considered relevant. It should be clarified that these events are not measuring culture, but rather a

specific type of manifestations linked to the cultural strategies of the current phase of capitalism (Amin, Thrift, 2007). These events constitute, in any case, measurable parameters in terms of events held and attendees, while they are services offered in very uniform formats that are consumed worldwide.

Investigation methodology. – To carry out this research, a Synthetic Index of Events and Festivals (SIEF) has been expressly created in order to evaluate cities in relation to the offer of these events. To do this, the methodology used in Díez-Pisonero (2017) is used, although on this occasion, in a renewed, expanded and perfected way. Thus, the number of cities that make up each of the categories of the index has been expanded, all indicators have been updated to the most recent available dates and, in addition, new types of events have been incorporated with the aim of offering a more holistic eventful perspective. Specifically, in this new edition, global celebrations of a greater number of sports have been added since 2010, more musical genres have been incorporated to value this category from a more global perspective, and award and recognition of different cultural aspect ceremonies have been included, because they have been gaining prominence on the international scene in recent years (Report, 2017; Sandberg, 2023). With this, this research tries to modernize the 2017 SIEF ranking in order to observe the possible changes in trends that have occurred in seven years and, thus, assess the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and some of the armed conflicts that are present, currently, in international geopolitics.

For its preparation, a prior selection of cities has not been used, but rather these have been included in the sample as they appeared in the lists of each of the indicators that make up the seven types of events taken into consideration. Thus, a possible biased investigation of preselected cities is avoided. These events, counted by large urban areas, are grouped as follows (tab. 1): mega-events, music concerts, sport events, film festivals, art exhibitions, international conferences and awards-recognition ceremonies. Table 1 summarizes the event modalities, indicators, sources and units taken into consideration. All events are subject to a statistical analysis and a subsequent normalization process, before assigning the corresponding discriminant weights (30% mega events; 20% music tours and sporting events; 10% film festivals and awards and recognition ceremonies; and 5 % international conferences and artistic exhibitions) to obtain a synthetic index that reflects a global urban hierarchy in relation to the events and festivals hosted by urban centers.

Tab. 1 – *Synthesis of the indicators and used sources in the preparation of the ISEF 2024*

EVENT MODALITIES	INDICATOR	SOURCE	UNITS
Megaevents	Olympic Games	Official website	Winter and Summer Olympic Games venues since World War II Candidate cities since 1945
	Universal Expos	Bureau of International Expositions (BIE)	N° de celebrations since World War II
	World Soccer Cup	Official website	Men and Women World Soccer Cup Finals venues since 1945.
Music concerts	Pop music	Official website of the artist/band	Taylor Swift (2023-24) and Coldplay's (2023) world tours
	Rock music	Official website of the artist/band	Bruce Springsteen (2023-24) and Guns N' Roses' (2016-2019) world tours
	Hip Hop music	Official website of the artist/band	Kanye West (2013) and Eminem's (2014) world tours
	Electronic music	Official website of the artist/band	David Gueta (2016) and Lady Gaga's (2018) world tours
	Opera performances	Official website of the artist/band	Piotr Beczala (2023-2024) and Aigul Akhmetshina's (2023-24) world tours
	Rhythm & Blues music	Official website of the artist/band	Beyoncé (2023) and SZA's (2023) world tours.
	Indie music	Official website of the artist/band	Arctic Monkeys (2022) and The Strokes' (2020) world tours.
	Latin music	Official website of the artists/band	Bad Bunny (2022) and Karol G's (2023) world tours.
Other sport events	Champions League	Official website	Final venues since 2010
	Libertadores Cup	Official website	Final venues since 2010
	AFC Cup	Official website	Final venues since 2010
	ATP tennis circuit Master series	Official website	Tournament venues: (Grand Slams, Master 1000, Master 500 and Master 250 are included)
	Badminton World Championship	Official website	Tournament venues since 2010
	Baseball World Championship	Official website	Tournament venues since 2010
	Formula 1 World Championship	Official website	N° circuits of 2024 championship

	American Football	Official website	Super Bowls Finals since 2010
	Basketball World Championship	Official website	Tournament venues since 2010
	NBA Finals	Official website	Tournament venues since 2010
	Handball World Championship	Official website	Tournament venues since 2010
	Cycling World Championship	Official website:	Tournament venues since 2010
	Tour de France	Official website:	Last stage city since 2010
	Giro d'Italia	Official website:	Last stage city since 2010
	La Vuelta España	Official website:	Last stage city since 2010
	Athletics World Championship	Official website	Tournament venues since 2010
Film festivals	Film Festivals	Film Festival World	FIAPF class "A" venues in competitiveness
			Specialized Film Festival venues
Art Expos	Art Expos	The Art Newspaper (2022 and 2023) and Papercity Magazine (2023)	Most visited museums (2022)
			Best Art Expos (2023)
International Conferences	International Conferences	International Congress and Convention Association (2018 and 2023)	N° of conferences (2022)
			N° attendees (2018)
Awards and recognitions	Nobel	Report, 2017; Sandberg, 2023	Ceremony venues since 2010.
	Oscars		
	Palme D'or		
	Pulitzer		
	Globos de Oro		
	Grammy		
	Latin Grammys		
	Tony		
	Ballon D'or		
	Emmy		

Source: own elaboration

Comparative analysis between the SIEF 2017 and SIEF 2024. – The comparative analysis of both indexes has allowed us not only to update the positions with respect to 2017, but also to reveal how the Coronavirus pandemic has affected global cities and how they, through the offer of cultural services, have treated to position themselves, again, in the world hierarchy (tab. 2).

Tab. 2 – *Comparison of the Top 25 of ISEF 2017 and ISEF 2024*

	ISEF 2017		ISEF 2024	
Position	City	Position	City	Variation
1°	London	1°	Paris	+1
2°	Paris	2°	London	-1
3°	New York	3°	Los Angeles	+2
4°	Beim	4°	Madrid	+16
5°	Los Angeles	5°	Milan	+31
6°	Amsterdam	6°	Buenos Aires	+16
7°	Tokio	7°	Mexico City	+20
8°	Barcelona	8°	New york	-5
9°	Montreal	9°	Tokio	-2
10°	Rome	10°	Amsterdam	-4
11°	Bem	11°	Montreal	-2
12°	Melbourne	12°	Barcelona	-3
13°	Río de Janeiro	13°	Munich	+4
14°	Viena	14°	Vancouver	+18
15°	Stockholm	15°	Roo de Janeiro	-2
16°	Sao Paulo	16°	Miami	+2
17°	Munich	17°	Toronto	+6
18°	Miami	18°	Melbourne	-6
19°	Sydney	19°	Beim	-15
20°	Madrid	20°	Stockholm	-5
21°	Nice	21°	Brussels	+17
22°	Buenos Aires	22°	Sao Paulo	-6
23°	Toronto	23°	Rome	-13
24°	Helsinki	24°	Sydney	-5
25°	Shanghai	25°	Zurich	+44

Source: Díez-Pisonero (2017) and own elaboration

It is worth clarifying that, although the events considered in this work are mostly periodic, other very specific world events appear whose exceptional nature makes them unique (mega-events). It is considered that these events, despite their punctual nature, have great importance that projects the city internationally. Their memory lasts in the collective imagination because they are successively remembered in the media and because they leave a very important mark on the physiognomy of the city.

Thus, the celebration of mega events after the pandemic has allowed cities like Paris (1st) and Doha (32nd) to climb the current list. However, it seems that other cities such as Rio de Janeiro (15th) or Tokyo (9th) have not been able to take advantage of the potential of hosting, respectively, the 2016 and 2020 Summer Olympic Games, which has caused them to drop positions (two in each case) in the new index.

The specialization in concerts and winter sports has allowed Milan (5th) and Vancouver (14th) to enter into the top 25 of the 2024 ranking, while the absence of them has noticeably dropped Vienna (38th) and Bern (145^o), present in the previous edition. The same has happened with Helsinki (46th) which, except for the 1952 Olympic Games and its candidacy for the 2006 Winter Olympic Games, has no presence on the international sports circuit. Shanghai (58th) and Nice (72nd), although they are positioned in the sports sphere, are penalized by not being part of any of the musical tours taken into consideration. That is to say, from being in the global eventful showcase of 2017, in just seven years they have taken a backseat to it.

The legacy of mega sporting events of the past, the hosting of international concerts and sporting events of global significance, as well as the reception of artistic exhibitions and international conferences has allowed cities such as Madrid (4th), Buenos Aires (6th), Mexico City (7th) and Brussels (21st) to have experienced a considerable rise compared to 2017. This rise has had an impact on other cities such as Barcelona (12th), Berlin (19th) or Rome (23rd), which have relegated their positions to the background in their respective countries, falling in the new global index. Thus, it is not only a competitiveness of cities between different countries, but also a competition between the most important cities of each country to host the most outstanding cultural and sports services.

The New York metropolitan area (8th) drops five places compared to 2017, being relegated to second place in the American hegemony in favor

of Los Angeles. Although New York is one of the first cities to host international art exhibitions as well as to have the museums with the largest audiences, it lacks presence in the sphere of mega events. Perhaps that is what New York lacks to be able to compete on equal terms with London and Paris since, throughout the history of the Olympic Games, New York has never hosted them.

London and Paris present a very even competition. Although the British capital was number 1 in the 2017 ranking, in 2024 it has been relegated to second place due to the rise of Paris. With the exception of the “Film Festivals” modality, both cities are represented in the different categories. While Paris excels in hosting international artists and sporting events, London manages to surpass it in art exhibitions and hosting mega events. However, it is precisely the awarding of the 2024 Summer Olympics that gives Paris the necessary score to surpass London in the current edition. In this case, the mega sporting event has been the differentiating element.

In the one hand, it is interesting to take into account the global and geopolitical events that have taken place in recent years. Added to the Coronavirus pandemic, there is interest in the international conflict between Russia and Ukraine and its impact in the index.

The Coronavirus affected internationally, in addition to public health, the employment market as well as consumption. The policies implemented worldwide to defeat the virus were capacity limitations, home quarantines and teleworking, among others. This fact has had an impact on the global world and also on global cities specialized in the tertiary sector (Chung and others, 2021). In this SIEF edition, these changes are evident: both Shanghai and Beijing (25th and 35th position in the 2017 ranking) have been affected by the restrictions associated with the pandemic. The “zero covid” policies imposed by China caused a great impact on their economy and international arrivals, causing restrictions on events with large crowds such as concerts or sports (Ramzy, 2022). This has had an impact on the reception of both concerts by international artists and notable sporting events since the restrictions on holding events directly affected the cultural industry (Sánchez, Moreno, Moya, 2022). At the end of 2022, this “zero covid” policy was ended and a process of economic reactivation began, leading the country till levels of 2019 (Dong, 2023). Thus, since 2023 both cities have begun to celebrate, after three

years without doing so, sporting events such as the Beijing Master 500 or the ATP Shanghai Master 1000. Likewise, for the 2024 season, the Shanghai circuit has returned to be part of the Formula 1 calendar.

In the other hand, we have to consider that wars have a significant impact on cultural production. The lack of security and international trust, as well as the destruction of infrastructure and displacement of artists causes the interruption of celebrating cultural events (Carman, Sorensen, 2009). Economic resources are directed towards the war effort, leaving the cultural aspect in the background (Stone, 2011). The Russian and Ukrainian capitals have also seen how their global status has been harmed by the active war between the two countries since February 2022. Moscow lives off the legacy of past megaevents, such as the 1980 Olympic Games or having hosted the final of the 2018 Men's World Football Championship. The international reprimands, as well as the boycotts carried out, have caused only one international artist of those considered in this investigation to schedule one of her concerts in Moscow. But that artist, Aigul Akhmetshina, is Russian. The majority of the artists analyzed for this index have been against the conflict and have supported Ukraine (El Cronista, 2022). However, the city has continued to hold its Film Festival each year, as well as welcoming visitors to its most renowned museum: the State Tretyakov Gallery.

By contrast, Kyiv has been more affected by the conflict. The Ukrainian city offered limited cultural services that allowed it to reach 149th place in 2017. In the current index, it drops to 162nd place. Although in 2018 it hosted the Champions League final, its presence after the outbreak of the war was limited exclusively to the celebration of its specialized Film Festival. And, precisely in 2022, the celebration was moved to Hamburg for security reasons. The war also had an obvious impact on the country's cultural offering in 2023. Ukraine won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2022 with massive public support, but the 2023 edition, which was due to take place in Kyiv, had to be held in Liverpool (United Kingdom) also for security reasons (Sutil, 2023).

In summary, it is evident how sporting and/or cultural events allow the host cities to be projected and singled out in the global urban system from a cultural perspective contextualized in the society of leisure and mass consumption. However, in our opinion, these effects are not only felt in the so-called global cities commonly identified in specialized literature, but

also in those other more specialized ones that try to define their “eventful” identity to compete and rise in the urban hierarchy with a cultural component based on the celebration of sporting and/or cultural events. In addition to the cities previously identified, the so-called “Big Five Secondary-Eventful Cities” (B5-SEC) stand out greatly.

Positioning and functional specialization of secondary cities: The Big Five Secondary-Eventful Cities (B5-SEC). – In the present research, Montreal, Munich, Rio de Janeiro, Melbourne and Doha make up the Big Five Secondary-Eventful Cities (B5-SEC). This acronym refers to those cities that do not constitute the “global cities” par excellence of their respective countries, understanding this “global” status from an economic-productive point of view, according to the postulates of Sassen (1991), who coined the concept. For this author, a city is called “global” when it experiences a strong concentration of activities linked to the highly specialized tertiary sector, especially advanced production services (accounting, advertising, insurance, legal services, business management consulting, real estate, as well as banking and finance) considered, according to her, as mechanisms of “control capacity.” In her book, *The Global City* (1991), she centralizes and typifies these advanced services in London, New York and Tokyo, cities considered at the top of her hierarchical classification.

Based on Sassen’s postulates, the Global and World Cities Research Group at Loughborough University, under the direction of Peter J. Taylor, offers a list of cities with great international impact based on intercity links for advanced business services to assess this economic-productive perspective (GaWC, 2020). Depending on their representativeness, cities are labeled as Alpha, Beta, Gamma, High Sufficiency and Sufficiency. Despite the criticisms received as a result of ‘economic reductionism’ in their analysis (Robinson, 2016), this urban ranking is widely recognized and cited by researchers (e.g. Díez-Pisonero, 2016; Derudder, Govind, Taylor, 2024)¹.

In this classification, the B5-SEC do not constitute the “global cities” par excellence of their respective countries or regions, as they are overtaken by their closest economic rivals. That means that, from an

¹ For more information about this ranking, it is recommended to visit: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/microsites/geography/gawc/gawcworlds.html>

economic-productive perspective, Montreal is eclipsed by Toronto, Munich by Frankfurt, Rio de Janeiro by Sao Paulo, Melbourne by Sydney and Doha by Dubai (tab. 3).

Tab. 3 – *Comparative positioning of the B5-SEC and their main urban competitors in the GaWC ranking and ISEF²*

World Region	The B5-SEC and their main urban competitors	Pre-Pandemics		Post-pandemics	
		GaWC position (2016)	SIEF position (2017)	GaWC position (2020)	SIEF position (2024)
North America	Montreal	80°	9°	40° (Alpha -)	11°
	Toronto	21° (Alpha)	23°	12° (Alpha)	17°
Europe	Munich	56° (Beta +)	17°	41° (Alpha -)	13°
	Frankfurt	17° (Alpha)	51°	16° (Alpha)	55°
South America	Río de Janeiro	98° (Beta -)	13°	95° (Beta)	15°
	Sao Paulo	11° (Alpha)	16°	18° (Alpha)	22°
Oceania	Melbourne	30° (Alpha -)	12°	29° (Alpha -)	18°
	Sydney	10° (Alpha)	19°	10° (Alpha)	24°
Middle East	Doha	74° (Beta)	-	64° (Beta +)	32°
	Dubai	8° (Alpha +)	94°	7° (Alpha +)	95°

Source: Díez-Pisonero (2017) and own elaboration

² To analyze a pre- and post-pandemic comparison, dates before and after Covid-19 have been used. However, the selected years could not be unified for both classifications (GaWC and SIEF) due to lack of data availability. In the case of GaWC, the years selected have been 2016-2020, as they are the years that this research group offers openly on its website (<https://www.lboro.ac.uk/microsites/geography/gawc/gawcworlds.html>). In the case of the SIEF, the years selected have been 2017-2024, coinciding with the dates on which the first and last versions of this ranking were carried out. Despite being different dates for both classifications, the evolution experienced in both indices during the period considered is evident.

That is the reason why the B5-SEC are considered secondary cities if they are compared to economic opponents.

However, although these B5-SEC do not achieve “global” status from an economic-productive point of view, constitute the great cultural capitals of their respective countries or regions of influence, with a marked functional specialization in the celebration of events and festivals, even above their closest economic rivals. Thus, authors of this research decided to use this acronym to refer to these cities, as they are unique cases that move away from the traditional concept of “global city” proposed by academic experts, being their strong eventful specialization one of the main characteristics that drive and position them in the world urban system.

These B5-SEC are positioned in the Top-35 of the SIEF and are some of the most prominent examples worldwide, where it is observed that, during the last decades, many planners and urban leaders have developed policies oriented towards the construction of an image of a city where culture, in this case through the celebration of widely recognized events, becomes the main strategy for dynamization, differentiation and competitiveness. In the five cases, it is observed how cities opt for events (punctual and periodic; large mega-events and others with a more local influence), as a way to socioeconomically energize their respective economies, contribute to urban regeneration and strengthen their image in a context of international competition. These are some ideas about it:

Montreal (9th), known as “Canada’s Capital of Culture” (Monocle, 2017), is the third largest tourist center in the entire country, after Vancouver and Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2024). It was able to position itself internationally with the celebration of the 1967 World’s Fair and the 1976 Summer Olympics. Currently, it is the venue for two global sporting events, the ATP Master 1000, which it co-organizes with Toronto, and the Canadian Formula 1 Grand Prix at the Jacques Villeneuve circuit. In addition to its rich heritage and numerous cultural services, the city hosts more than 100 festivals a year of various types (music, humor, cinema, sports, etc.), which are what essentially define its cultural effervescence (Expedia, 2017). The uniqueness of Montreal from a cultural point of view is that it has tried to make use of culture as a way to integrate a diverse city, guaranteeing the democratization of its access to allow everyone (citizens and tourists) to feel active participants in cultural production.

Among the most unique recent policies in the promotion of culture, the following stand out: i) the Cultural Development policy called Montreal, Cultural Metropoli (2005) as part of the Agenda 21 project. This policy promotes the recognition of culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development, along with the environment, social inclusion and the economy; ii) and the 2007-2017 Action Plan, whose main points are investment in cultural infrastructure, better financing of artistic organizations and a revitalization of the Quartier Des Spectacles (which is the creative and entertainment district of the city).

Munich (11th) has become the first German city in creative and cultural potential (Joint Research Center of the European Commission, 2020) above Berlin and Frankfurt. The capital of Bavaria stands out for its baroque architecture as well as its presence in the artistic scene. The celebration of Oktoberfest has allowed it to gain international renown (Ugurlu, Ay, 2023). It has managed to combine its Bavarian and imperial charm with cosmopolitan modernity. On the one hand, it houses historical buildings such as the *Glyptothek* (which functions as a museum of Greek and Roman antiquities), the *Nymphenburg Palace* (belonging to the Bavarian monarchy but which currently serves as a museum), or the *Bayerische Staatsoper* (the Opera State of Bavaria where international artists of the classical genre come to perform). On the other hand, Munich has hosted different types of events, such as the 1972 Olympic Games or the final of the Men's World Football Championship in Germany in 1974. The Allianz Arena, built in 2005, and with a capacity of 75,000 spectators, had an important role in the 2006 World Cup in Germany, where the semifinals were played. Since then, in addition to being the headquarters of the Bayern Munich football team, it has hosted the 2012 Champions League final and will host the 2025 final. It is precisely the hosting of these sporting events that makes it stand out above the other cultural city of Germany, Berlin, more specialized in cinema and art. In the 2010s, political leaders, with the aim of promoting German and Munich culture, launched some measures such as the *Kulturfonds Bayern* (with the promotion of cultural projects in the city), the *Kulturgutstchutzgesetz* (federal law for the protection of cultural heritage) or participation in the “Seven Star Cities in Central Europe” initiative (Balzan, 2022).

Rio de Janeiro (15th) is one of the cultural capitals par excellence of all of Latin America. A multitude of elements such as Copacabana beach,

the statue of Christ the Redeemer, carnivals, the Maracaná stadium and the Arts City, among others, define its cultural and creative image (Dezfoulian, 2023). To this, we must add its recent role as a sports city, hosting two top-level sporting events: the final of the Soccer World Cup in Brazil in 2014 as well as the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. The approval of laws 12.035 (Olympic Law) and 12.663 (General Law for the World Cup) allowed these events to be held with guarantees. Both have allowed Rio to not only position itself as the cultural capital of the country, but also to use culture as a tool for economic development and urban transformation with new mobility projects, real estate developments, revitalizations of entire areas, city marketing and construction of new sports and cultural facilities, such as the Museum of Tomorrow, designed by the Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava. However, the social tensions generated by the unequal distribution of investments between neighborhoods and the displacement of the low-income population living in the city center have accentuated, in some cases, processes of social segregation and isolation (Perrinho, Pascual, 2019). In order to avoid this situation, the Brazilian government has developed political actions such as the “Favela Urbanization Program in Rio de Janeiro”, the “Renda Melhor Jovem Program” or the “Mais Médicos Program” that seek to unite the territory and offer equality opportunities to all its citizens (Maso, Passador, Alves, 2021).

Melbourne (18th) is the third best liveable city in the world according to The Economist Intelligence Unit and its Global Liveability Index (2023). As of 2023, it is also the most populated city in Australia and has become a cultural garden with an eclectic offering. Melbourne offers international festivals such as the Melbourne Fringe Festival (which celebrates creativity and innovation and is presented as a platform to promote emerging artists) or the Melbourne International Arts Festival (which celebrates the performing arts and features the participation of national and international artists), among others. It has also promoted cultural innovation with the regeneration of the neighborhoods of Fitzroy and St. Kilda, where multiculturalism, both gastronomic and artistic, has become its best calling card. Precisely, in the St. Kilda neighborhood, in Albert Park, the Australian Formula 1 Grand Prix has been held since 1985 (except for the two years of the pandemic), an event that has been chronicled over time and that has already its part of Melbourne’s annual

cultural offer. Along with Formula 1, another international sporting event held in the capital of the state of Victoria is the ATP Tournament known as the Australian Open. It is part of the four most renowned tournaments in tennis (Grand Slams). Furthermore, Melbourne knew how to take advantage of the cultural legacy after hosting the 1956 Summer Olympic Games, the first in the history of the southern hemisphere, which allowed Australia to gain international relevance (International Olympic Committee, 1956). Despite its global status, Melbourne's leaders try to apply the term "glocal" to their city, thinking about the well-being of their citizens. The Melbourne Plan 2017-2050 sets out the guide to follow to achieve a 20-minute city where all the services offered cover the needs of its population, promoting sustainability and inclusion in order to enhance the economic, social and cultural development of their neighborhoods (Barnes, 2017).

Doha (32nd) has seen exponential improvement throughout the 21st century. The capital of the Qatari emirate has developed a competitive global positioning strategy linked to sports diplomacy. Framed in the so-called Qatar National Vision 2030, this strategy seeks to reduce its energy dependence on hydrocarbons, diversify its economy and contribute to the whitening of its image or sportwashing (Søyland, 2020). And, to achieve this, various actions are used, such as the sponsorship of football teams, the purchase of football clubs or the recruitment of former stars to encourage teams sponsored by the country, among others. However, the one that seems most relevant, in our opinion, is the organization of sports competitions. The celebration of the 2022 World Cup has positioned Doha in the global imagination (Prieto, Díez-Pisonero, in press). And once the Soccer World Cup was held, the country continues to commit to this strategy because, in 2023, it hosted eight international sporting events, not only linked to football, which have allowed it to position itself as a leading sports agent. Added to this are two factors: on the one hand, its consolidation as a luxury travel tourist destination thanks to the urban regeneration carried out through the construction of numerous tourist attractions; on the other hand, the role played by the transport and aviation sector, through its main airline, *Qatar Airways*, and its airport hub, Hamad International, which follow complementary commercial strategies (Díez-Pisonero, Prieto, in evaluation).

Tab. 4 – *Comparative between cities, cultural policies and specialization categories*

City	Cultural policy	Specialization categories
Montreal	Montreal, Cultural Metropoli	Sports (tennis and F1), festivals (cinema) and music (international concerts)
Munich	Kulturfonds Bayern	Sport (Champions League Finals) and music (Opera and international concerts)
Rio de Janeiro	Ley Ferederal n° 12.035 (Ley Olímpica) Ley n° 12.663 (Ley General de la Copa del Mundo)	Recent mega-events and music (international concerts)
Melbourne	Melbourne Plan 2017-2050	Sports (tennis and F1), festivals and music (international concerts)
Doha	Qatar National Vision 2030	Sports events

Source: own elaboration

Table 4 shows the different specializations of the cities analyzed. Although all of them have hosted mega sporting events in the time period analyzed, each one stands out with different specializations. Montreal and Melbourne, with *Montreal, Cultural Metropoli policy* and *Melbourne Plan 2017-2030* respectively, have followed the same path, differentiating themselves by hosting a Formula 1 Grand Prix and an ATP tennis tournament, in addition to hosting benchmark cultural festivals and being one of the stops on the world tours of international artists. Munich follows a similar trend. From *Kulturfonds Bayern law*, the city stands out for hosting two Champions League finals (2012 and 2025) as well as betting on music (through performances in the opera building as well as hosting international concerts). Rio de Janeiro, in addition to being a Latin American reference for the international concerts taken into account, hosting up to four major musical events, stands out

especially for the celebration of recent mega sporting events of the last ten years (World Cup 2014 and Olympic Games 2016). Those have been celebrated with guarantees of security and success due to the approval of the *Law n° 12.035* and *Law n° 12.663*. Finally, Doha, thanks to its strategy of opening to the world, materialized in the *Qatar National Vision 2030*, has specialized exclusively in hosting international sporting events: AFC Champions League final (2020), ATP Master 250, Qatar F1 Grand Prix, 2015 Handball World Cup, 2016 Cycling World Cup or World Cup of Athletics of 2019, among others. The celebration of this type of cultural events has allowed all these cities to specialize in a type of cultural offer, strengthening their international image and being recongnized for its capacity of hosting them.

Conclusions. – The theoretical discourse of this work has maintained that cultural components, represented through the celebration of cultural events and festivals, constitute new bases of urban competition and are, in our opinion, totally necessary for a complete understanding not only of the global urban system, but also of globalization, by defending a conceptualization of it that also affects spheres that are intangible within the framework of the “new economy” and “cognitive cultural capitalism” (Scott, 2008).

Although it is accepted that the results could be altered depending on the type of variables considered and the methodological limitation of quantifying events held during a specific period of time (2010-2028) is recognized, it is considered that the initial hypothesis has been empirically validated, by demonstrating that the reputation of a city derives not only from its strictly economic-productive character, but that other parallel functions act that give meaning to the multidimensional perspective. The results have also highlighted the need to focus not only on global cities, as usually occurs in urban competitiveness work, but also on other secondary cities characterized by a greater degree of functional specialization. Although the projection of these does not reach the levels achieved by the former, they contribute to shaping a global urban system that is more complex and varied than initially expected.

Among these secondary cities, the so-called “Big Five Secondary-Eventful Cities” stand out greatly, which, without achieving “global” status from an economic-productive point of view (GaWC, 2020),

constitute the great cultural capitals of their respective countries and regions of influence. This is the case of Montreal, Munich, Rio de Janeiro, Melbourne and Doha, which are making a decisive commitment to culture in their strategic plans, with a marked specialization in the celebration of events and festivals, even above their closest economic rivals.

In conclusion, these events are considered appropriate in an empirical approach to the cultural dimension of cities because, in addition to being a determining factor in the process of cultural globalization, they also contribute intangible capital to the headquarters based on their symbolic and experiential nature, in leisure and in consumption; necessary attributes to compete successfully in the current “cognitive cultural capitalism”.

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Eventi e festival nella promozione delle città secondarie da una prospettiva cognitivo-culturale: le grandi cinque città secondarie di eventi. – Nell’attuale contesto della New Economy e del Capitalismo Culturale Cognitivo, le città non competono esclusivamente per l’attrazione di flussi economici, ma sono piuttosto necessarie particolari forme di capitale culturale strettamente legate al turismo e al tempo libero, che ne enfatizzino prestigio,

reputazione e identità. Si ritiene che eventi e festival culturali siano diventati indicatori statistici rappresentativi per valutare il sistema urbano globale da una prospettiva cognitivo-culturale. Seguendo una metodologia quantitativa implementata nella ricerca precedente, anche se ora ampliata e perfezionata, i risultati corroborano alcuni fatti significativi: i) la necessità di studiare il sistema urbano globale da una prospettiva multidimensionale, al di là dei criteri economici; ii) la necessità di concentrarsi non solo sulle principali città globali ma anche su quelle secondarie con particolare attenzione alle cosiddette “Big Five Secondary-Eventful Cities” che, grazie a questi eventi, sono culturalmente radicate nel panorama globale palcoscenico; iii) si conferma l’efficacia degli eventi sportivi e culturali in termini di posizionamento per le città ospitanti in una prospettiva cognitivo-culturale.

Keywords. – Sistema urbano mondiale, Città secondarie, Città degli eventi

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