

THE ITALIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND THE 2030 AGENDA: A BEST PRACTICE EVENT

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Abstract. *The aim of this paper is to describe and analyze a best practice event organized and managed by the Italian Public Administration concerning the achievement of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, we are going to answer the following research questions: RQ1, Which approach is the most appropriate for the management of highly complex events and inter-institutional projects?; RQ2, Which is the connection between 2030 Agenda and great events? Large-scale events, which are characterized by a dynamic complexity involving different national public administrations and institutional levels, require a special attention in selecting an adequate event management system. For this reason, after a detailed literature review on event management, this paper explores the concept of sustainable development and focuses on the traditional elements of social, environmental and economic pillars within the context of planned events. Given the objective of this work, the analysis of a best practice event will be useful to identify the main variables, in terms of sustainable strategic planning, execution and control, required to achieve the greatest level of efficiency in terms of cost optimization and quality of service delivery, also exhorting the Italian public sector to look for a structural renewal, to better use its available resources, as well as to foster a global sustainable growth. From this point of view, a relevant experience is the case of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, coordinated by the Prefect of Rome. Indeed, the latter, decided to adopt actions consistent with sustainability standards, thanks to the design of an inter-institutional network and the engagement of institutions at different levels. The Prefect of Rome achieved, in a very short term, three main results: coordination of the activities of the working groups (SDG 17); integration of internal and external surveillance and communication systems (SDG 9); collaboration with higher education institutions to acquire and disseminate knowledge (SDG 4). To systemize and combine the outcomes of these processes, as well as to analyze their consistency with sustainable development, the System Thinking technique was used.*

Keywords: *Event management; 2030 Agenda; Sustainable Development Goals; Sustainable events; Italian Public Administration*

Introduction

Events, especially the large-scale ones, produce several impacts on the territory, which cannot be exclusively related to an economic nature. The evaluation of the environmental and social effects (according to a triple bottom line approach) of an event is very complex, not only because the effects are often indirect and intangible, and

therefore difficult to be perceived and measured in time, but also because the variables which affect the outcomes are actually manifold. Moreover, because of the wide range of the goals pursued and of the heterogeneity of the subjects involved both directly and indirectly (stakeholders), it appears very difficult to single out the parameters according to which measure the success of an event. Several scholars, indeed, state that “the performances measures are different according to the subjects involved in the valuation (promoters, organizers, communities, sponsors, public...) and to the goals pursued” (Bowdin et al., 2011; Gartner & Lime, 2000; Richards & Palmer, 2010).

Consequently, the organizational efficiency needs to pivot on the specific competencies of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The visitors' hospitality will result attentive, inclusive and relished inasmuch as the institutions will be able to work in synergy and harmony.

Interesting theoretical inputs can also be obtained from the analysis of the case study of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, co-designed and co-organized by two national governments (Italy and the Vatican State) and involving the Catholic Church “as a recognized universal international institution” (Meneguzzo, Fiorani & Frondizi, 2017). According to what has just been written, in the last Jubilee, a sort of “responsible cooperation” among the several stakeholders has been enacted, with the activation of bidirectional relations between all the involved subjects and of concrete steps in a long-term vision, keeping in mind what the event will leave to the territory, the so-called legacy (Allen et al., 2011).

This paper highlights some initiatives and operations carried out during the 2016 Jubilee of Mercy which might steer the sustainable growth of the City of Rome if implemented in the long run. To this aim, this analysis focuses on some of the Sustainable Development Goals which constitute the most ambitious challenge for the international community until 2030.

Our contribution starts from the analysis of this event, in which the authors have been directly involved as participants to the inter-institutional task force in charge of managing the event (led by the Technical Secretariat for the Jubilee). The paper is divided into three sections: the first one is dedicated to a thorough analysis of the existing literature on event management, with a focus on the sustainable theories of the planning, implementation, and evaluation of large-scale events. In the second section, the case of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy is examined, with reference to the management and organizational decisions taken by the Italian institutions. In the end, section three presents a conclusive evaluation of the issue.

Theoretical event management framework

As Thomas et al. point out, event management “comprises the coordination of all of the tasks and activities necessary for the execution of an event regarding its strategy, planning, implementation and control” (Thomas, Hermes. & Loos, 2008). Starting from some pioneering studies (Getz, 1991; Hall, 1992), event management has been rapidly rising and recognized as a profession and a formal discipline, reflecting the “need within all societies for the professional management of events in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors” (Getz, 2005).

The first step to understand the meaning and scope of event management is the definition of the event itself. Etymologically, the term event derives from the Latin *eventus*, which directly translates as “occurrence, issue”. Today, events form an integral part of all societies (Ferdinand & Kitchin, 2012) and the recognition, by practitioners and researchers, of their role as an ‘industry’ has gained importance in recent times, also because of the quantitative and qualitative growth forecasts for their market (Thomas, Hermes & Loos, 2008). In the academic literature, many authors from different disciplines have discussed the meaning and definition of events and related concepts, failing to reach a unanimous consensus on standardized terms, definitions or categories.

According to Shone and Perry, an event is “that phenomenon arising from those non-routine occasions which have leisure, cultural, personal or organizational objectives set apart from the normal activity of daily life, whose purpose is to enlighten, celebrate, entertain or challenge the experience of a group of a people” (Shone & Parry, 2004). Getz defines events as “temporary occurrences, either planned or unplanned” (Getz, 1997). In order to emphasize the difference between unplanned and planned events, the term ‘event’ is preceded by the word ‘special’. A special event could be a “one-time or infrequently occurring event outside normal programs or activities of the sponsoring or organizing body”, as well as “an opportunity for a leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience” (Getz, 2005).

All the above definitions stress the unique and temporary nature of events, a feature also highlighted in the definition by Silvers, who considers an event as “the gathering of people at a specified time and place for the purpose of celebration, commemoration, communication, education, reunion and/or leisure” (Silvers, 2008).

Other authors, such as Jago and Shaw, focus on the tourism context, defining a special event as “a one-time or infrequently occurring event of limited duration that provides the consumer with a leisure and social opportunity beyond everyday experience”, often held “to raise the profile, image or awareness of a region” (Jago & Shaw, 1998).

Summarizing these definitions, we can define an event as a unique or infrequently occurring happening that occurs at a given place and time outside normal activities for individuals or groups of people.

Concerning typologies, events are often classified according to different criteria. In terms of size, it is possible to identify four different types of events (Bowdin et al., 2011; Jackson, 2013): local or community events, which are generally small and linked to a particular geography; major events, which attract significant numbers of visitors and media coverage; hallmark events, which are not automatically bigger than major events, but are synonymous with a particular place; mega-events, which are global and can influence the host country’s economy.

In terms of form, while Bowdin et al. identify only three types of events – cultural, sports and business events (Bowdin et al., 2001) – Getz (2005) distinguishes ten categories – cultural celebrations, religious events, political and state events, arts and entertainment, business and trade events, education and scientific events, sports events, recreational events, private events, events at the margin. Lastly, Raj and Musgrave (2009) differentiate between the following forms: religious events, cultural events, musical events, sporting events, personal and private events, political and governmental events,

commercial and business events, corporate events, special events, leisure events (Jackson, 2013).

Sustainable, effective, accountable and transparent events

In the evaluation of the impact of events, it is fundamental to keep into account, besides the immediate effects, also those arising in the medium-long term which, especially in the case of large-scale events, have a multi-dimensional impact, interesting many aspects of the life in the hosting community area. "Such events might even deeply and permanently affect the local welfare and lifestyle" (Mount & Leroux, 1994).

In recent times, the attention for the sustainability of the event has increased. By sustainable is defined "a development that satisfies the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

By approaching the event evaluation in terms of sustainability, it is necessary to examine different points of view: it is the case of the environmental, cultural, economic, political and social sustainability. Thus, "for an event to be sustainable, it should be part of a larger strategic project of cultural, social and economic development" (Richards & Palmer, 2010).

The capacity to organize and manage events based on the principle of sustainable development implies the existence of strong and cooperative institutions able to initiate inclusive, representative and reactive decision-making processes (target 16.7), involving all the stakeholders according to the "quintuple helix scheme" theorized by Carayannis and Campbell (2010). In this model, the government, businesses, universities and civil society cooperate toward the sustainable development, sharing of resources, instruments and especially, know how. The virtuous circles initiated by the cooperative approach stimulate, indeed, the crossed fertilization of sustainable ideas and projects (innovation) able to overcome the limitations of the "mental models" (knowledge mix, expertise, capacity) of the single subjects and of the limited resources available. In this way, large-scale events cannot be clustered within the boundaries of a single public administration or agency, but are characterized by a dynamic complexity that involves several offices and institutional levels (central/federal; regional; metropolitan/local). Moreover, in times of economic crisis and expenditure cuts, institutions arise as solid only when they manage to operate soundly in terms effectiveness, responsibility and transparency (target 16.6 "Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels") but also with economy and efficiency.

For these reasons, it is important to examine, in the upcoming section, the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, an example of best practice of the Italian public administration. The need for achieving extraordinary objectives with ordinary resources led the Prefect of Rome, through the Technical Secretariat for the Jubilee to single out modern, innovative, shared and long-lasting solutions for the management of the event, based on the synergies between all the subjects involved and in line with the SDGs (Fiorani & Di Gerio, 2016).

Case study: the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

We are going to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. Which approach is the most appropriate for the management of highly complex events and inter-institutional projects?;

RQ2. Which is the connection between 2030 Agenda and great events?

In the Catholic tradition, the Jubilee is a major religious event which dates back to the XIV century with Pope Boniface VII. The 2016 Holy Year was defined “extraordinary” not only because it does not fall within the traditional 25-year timeframe, but also because it was the first “thematic” – dedicated to the Mercy – and “decentralized” Jubilee in the history of Christianity. With an unprecedented decision made by Pope Francis, the Holy Doors have opened also in the cathedrals and sanctuaries in all the Dioceses of the world, including 91 States and 560 Doors of Mercy. In line with this “globalist spirit”, the first Holy Door was opened in Bangui, Central African Republic, on the 29th November 2015. The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, announced by Pope Francis on the 11th April 2015 and formally inaugurated on the 8th December 2015, ended on the 20th November. More than 21 million people arrived in Rome during 2016 from 36 different countries. Such an exceptional inflow of visitors and notable personalities determined important implications for the hospitality system in general, and for the mobility services, infrastructures, and national security.

As Morcellini (2016) said, “the Jubilee of Mercy set a milestone in Rome’s capacity to organize large-scale events, offering a very different image of the Capital from the one pictured by the media”. In this way, the strategic management of the event was assigned by the Italian and the Vatican State governments to the Prefect of Rome. The Prefect was in charge of defining the planning framework for managing the event and of ensuring that the whole information and communication systems worked. In view of these objectives, the Italian government (DPCM, the 4th September 2015) resorted to an innovative instrument: the Prefect of Rome was supported by the Technical Secretariat for the Jubilee (TSJ)¹⁴, a task force aimed at fostering the cooperation among the several local administrations and the integration of their operations. Under the management of the TSJ, the Prefect created eight thematic working groups, with the task of linking the different areas, and invited all interested institutions to participate (Figure 1).

All parties involved were proactive and accepted to share their resources, their information, and competencies: this led to the creation of a new concept of the large-scale event, which capitalizes on the synergies between all institutions involved, both at the intra-institutional and at the inter-institutional and inter-governmental levels, and between the eight working groups.

A thorough evaluation of the direct and indirect effects, both on the short and medium-long term, is an essential part in the reviewing phase of the event management. Similarly, the social and environmental impact needs to be assessed, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

¹⁴ The ‘Technical Secretariat for the Jubilee’ included 10 experts representing public administrations and territorial institutions (Ministry of the Interior, Lazio Region, Municipality of Rome), as well as delegates from Civil Protection, Carabinieri Corps and Fire Corps.

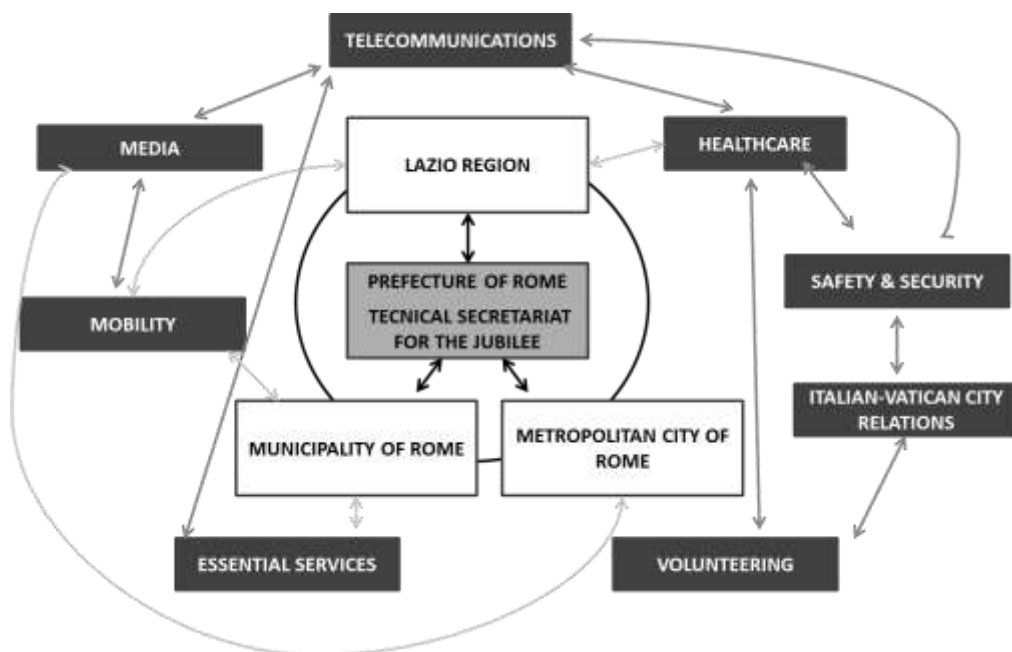


Figure 1. Inter-institutional synergies
(Di Gerio C., Fiorani G.)

The System Thinking map (Figure 2) shows some of the effects related to the Jubilee.

As Figure 2 shows, the partnerships (SDG 17, “Partnership for the goals”), i.e. the inter-institutional collaborations between public administrations, nonprofits institutions and enterprises, through the eight thematic working groups coordinated by the Technical Secretariat, together with the presence of strong institutions (SDG 16, “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”), are the key success factors of the last Jubilee.

The cooperation with university proved to be paramount (SDG 4, “Quality Education”). This goal, which underlines the link between primary education and professional training, was achieved through a memorandum of understanding between the Prefecture and the three State universities of Rome (La Sapienza, Tor Vergata, Roma Tre) which ensured a scientific and organizational support to the planning, management, communication, and post-event evaluation activities. In the “Third Mission” field, the three public universities contributed significantly to the success of the event, sharing their know-how and resources (teachers, recent graduates, spaces, and equipment) and offering to students the opportunity to serve an internship, with the aim to let them put into practice what they learned.

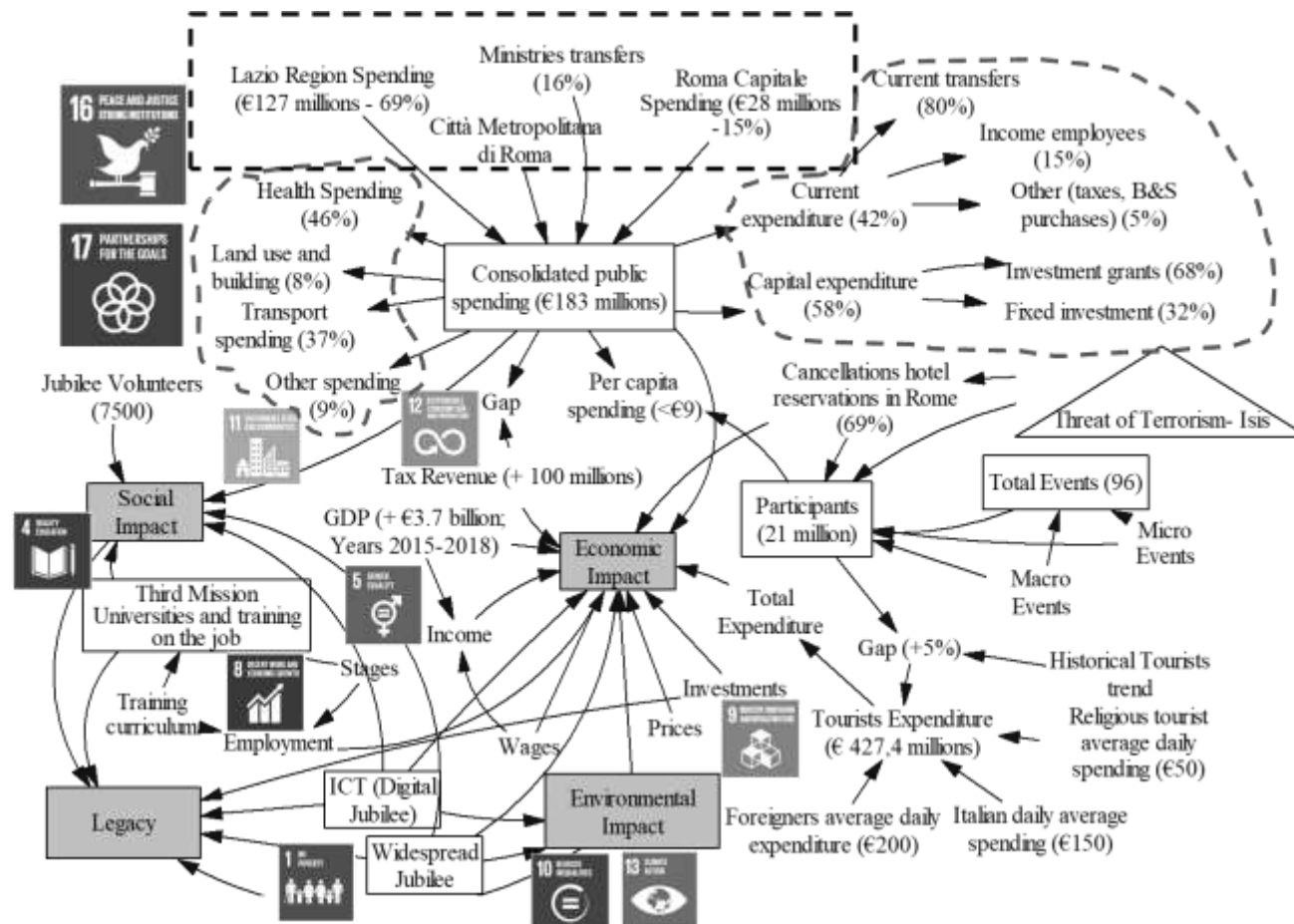


Figure 2. Multi-dimensional impacts: a sustainable Jubilee (Di Gerio C., Fiorani G.)

Many technological (product and process) innovations (SDG 9, “Industry, innovation, and infrastructure”) realized during the Jubilee had a relevant positive impact on the responsible production and consumption models (SDG 12, “Responsible Consumption and Production”). A bright example is the inter-institutional centralized Jubilee Management Room (JMR), hosted by the System Room of the Rome Local Police forces, which played a major role in coordinating the Jubilee-related operations on the field, in monitoring the unfolding of events and assessing the different scenarios in real time. The JMR took advantage of an innovative shared cartographic system so to support the operations of all the Authorities watching the Jubilee events and flank the operation rooms of the single national and local police corps. Within the JMR, the creation of an integrated communication system based on TETRA radio allowed the numerous security forces on the field to share information through a single radio frequency. The JMR also had control on a comprehensive video-surveillance system based on the feed of the single local administrations with the aim to ensure a high degree of security for both the pilgrims and the local community. Thanks to the software and hardware sharing, the numerous entities involved through inter-institutional and public-private partnerships managed to rationalize their projects and intervention policies.

The JMR and the coordination activity of the Prefecture allowed to create public value and to initiate an “intelligent” management process, through a sound use of the resources available on the territory and constituting a best practice model to be applied to future complex events. It is noteworthy that the planning carried out by the TSJ during the Holy Year was characterized by a particular attention to maximizing savings and making the spending more efficient (SDG 12). The short timing (with an advanced notification coming just eight before the inauguration of the event) and the scarcity of financial resources demanded to resort to innovative solutions, including zero cost measures, considerable private capitals contributions, and the exploitation of the equipment already in possession of the national and local administrations.

This Jubilee was also modern, digital and built on a network basis. The 2016 Holy Year was, in fact, the first in the age of social networks, tablets, and smartphones, in the era of the continuous connection to the Internet. The Jubilee website and App provided information on monuments and churches, jubilee on foot itineraries, and mobility services. Communication was coordinated by the Italian institutions through the creation of a single website dedicated to the Jubilee called “Roma per il Giubileo” and a physical single Press Point from which all relevant information was conveyed.

The JMR and the single Press Point constituted the brightest examples of the integration of the several entities and administrations which, going beyond their identities and traditions, were called upon to joining their forces within a single operations room, under the same supervision and with a shared “Roma per il Giubileo” logo.

In order to explain more exhaustively the success of this large-scale religious event and the efforts made by the governmental institutions, it is noteworthy to address the link between the Jubilee and the other SDGs.

The interventions to make the City of Rome more inclusive, safe, flexible and sustainable during the event were manifold (SDG 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities”). Concerning the mobility aspect, the public transport service was strengthened so to meet the high demand peaks in the celebration days and to guarantee the social and

environmental sustainability of the event. Moreover, thanks to a single direction of the mobility information¹⁵, it was possible to harmonize the messages about eventual service disruptions or delays and to convey urban and extra-urban mobility updates in case of necessity. The development of public transport made the City of Rome more sustainable in terms of the road system, emissions reduction, and livability. The positive environmental impact (SDG 13 “Climate Action”) of the Jubilee is also related to its global and widespread character, which minimized the movement of pilgrims allowing them to obtain the indulgence even in their own countries.

In order to crack down on illegal and unfair treatments to tourists and to raise the security perception of the Italian capital, Codacons, a network of associations for the consumer’s protection, realized a project called “Sportello del Pellegrino” aimed to provide legal assistance to pilgrims in more than 100 languages and fully managed by volunteers. Furthermore, several initiatives were achieved in favor of disabled pilgrims (SDG 10 “Reduced Inequalities”), in order to guarantee the righteous services. In this way, the App for urban mobility (Mapful) provided information on accessible routes for the disabled.

The Jubilee was the driver for the economic and employment growth in the City of Rome and its Province, in particular in the tertiary sector (SDG 8, “Decent Work and Economic Growth”). Nevertheless, the tourist inflow forecasted in 2015 was considerably reduced by the threat of ISIS terrorist attacks, the characterization of this event as a “widespread” Jubilee and the resort to unconventional staying options such as flat-sharing platforms and ecclesiastic structures.

Conclusions

The case study here analyzed shows that no one of the 17 2030 Agenda SGDs is feasible without the contribution of strong institutions. In this framework, the so-called quintuple helix cooperation, made up by governments, businesses, non-profit organizations, the civil society and the universities, emerged as paramount in order to ensure the success of the Jubilee.

Moreover, the issues of sustainable development are deeply rooted in an innovative, efficient, digital open and cooperative in public administrations. Based on this recent experience, the extraordinary spirit of sharing and cooperation which inspired the activity of all those involved in the success of the Jubilee of Mercy might constitute a valid example for all the future large-scale events in Italy and abroad. In fact, the challenge for great events is to think overdevelopment model in terms of sustainability and efficiency in favor of integration, cooperation, social innovation and ability to create inclusive networks; thus the engagement of several public actors is considered the rule rather than the exception.

In conclusion, the case of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, in our opinion, provides useful theoretical and empirical indications in the field of public management and governance and represents an important conceptual and operational challenge for the Italian public administration system. The integrated system for the management of the event, based on quintuple helix approach and integrated networks, could provide

¹⁵ Using ICT to support pilgrims and tourists’ mobility and transfer.

important indications for the future management of large events (sports, culture, promotion of the economy and the image of the country) and for the management of intervention policies facing environmental emergencies (such as recent earthquakes in Central Italy). This change of mind could be useful to turn a best practice into ordinary reality.

The other relevant aspect emerged from the paper concerns the introduction of a multidimensional assessment of the impact of the event. Short and medium-long term aspects should be taken into consideration, such as social and environmental impacts and legacy, in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 16 ("Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions") is definitely the one closer to a religious event like this and is the one which better meets the aims of the Jubilee: to promote pacific and inclusive communities and societies for the sustainable development. The extension of the event in the several countries (widespread Jubilee), the legal support provided by the Sportello del Pellegrino, the operations countering corruption and criminality, the public access to information, the promotion of initiatives to reduce inequalities, and the role played by the institutions for a representative, inclusive and reactive decision-making process are all examples of effectiveness, responsibility and transparency.

To conclude, we can answer the research questions stated.

For what concerns RQ1 (Which approach is the most appropriate for the management of highly complex events and inter-institutional projects?), the case of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy highlights the need to work towards a co-operative approach, developing collaborative networks among interested actors. The aforementioned procedures of coordination and centralization of the operations constitute a novelty in the field of large-scale event management, with the TSJ as a highly innovative solution for avoiding flaws among the different entities involved in the organization of complex events. Ready-to-use technologies, the employment of available equipment and the interaction among public and private administrations were the key factors for delivering a high degree of efficiency and quality.

Concerning RQ2 (Which is the connection between 2030 Agenda and great events?), the integration of economic, environmental and social measures allows us to obtain a holistic view of the impacts generated by an event and, at least, its real level of sustainability. Such, material and immaterial legacy is added, considered as the starting point for the creation of a sustainable and smart city attentive to improving the quality of life of its citizens, businesses and institutions and the general well-being of the community.

Additional governmental efforts are required over the next 12 years in order to lead the world countries to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda, also with respect to event management. The Italian government committed itself to this aim with resoluteness and resilience, as in the case of the Joint Italian-German-French Declaration on the US withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement, bearing in mind the outstanding results achieved in the organization of the Jubilee.

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