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# The European Capital of Culture Program

Can Culture Contribute to the Revival of Declining Regions? The Case  
of Matera/Basilicata in Italy

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# The European Capital of Culture Program

1. The European Capital of Culture Program: Its Purpose and History
2. Matera and the Region of Basilicata: Location, History, Economy and Demographics
3. Matera's Journey: From National "Shame" of Italy to European Capital of Culture in 2019
4. The Program: Concept and Impact
5. What Lessons to be Learned from Matera?



# The European Capital of Culture Program: Its Purpose and History:



EUROPEAN CAPITAL  
OF CULTURE

Source: European  
Commission OCoC  
(HP)

Highlight	Highlight the richness and diversity of cultures in Europe
Celebrate	Celebrate the cultural features Europeans share
Increase	Increase European citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural area
Foster	Foster the contribution of culture to the development of cities

# The European Capital of Culture Program: Its Purpose and History

Regenerating	Regenerating cities
Raising	Raising the international profile of cities
Enhancing	Enhancing the image of cities in the eyes of their own inhabitants
Breathing	Breathing new life into a city's culture
Boosting	Boosting tourism



Source: European Commission OCoC (HP)

# The European Capital of Culture Program: Its Purpose and History

A: Contribution to the long-term cultural strategy - strengthen capacity of cultural and creative sectors, and developing long-term links between the cultural, economic and social sectors

B: Cultural and artistic content - involvement of local artists and cultural organisations in the conception and implementation of the cultural programme

C: European dimension - scope and quality of activities promoting the cultural diversity of Europe

D: Outreach – involvement of the local population and civil society

E: Management - feasibility of the fund-raising strategy and proposed budget

1.F: Capacity to deliver - broad and strong political support and sustainable commitment from the local, regional and national authorities

# The European Capital of Culture Program: Its Purpose and History

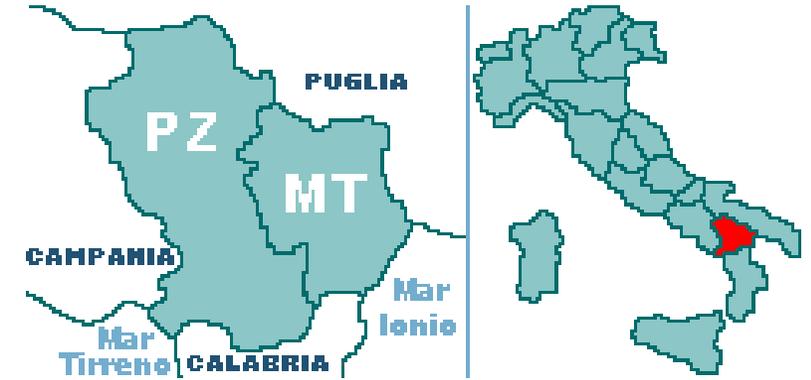
- The program was initiated by Melina Mercouri, Greek Minister of Culture, in 1985. In the same year Athens was the first “European City of Culture”
- From 1999 the program was renamed “European Capital of Culture”
- Initially the program was entirely cultural, however, due to a 2004 impact report for the Commission (Palmer Report) on the impact of the program on city and regional transformation, socio-economic aspects gained importance in the evaluation process.
- In the early years until 2000, it were mainly the capital cities that applied and were awarded the title European City of Culture
- Since 2000 more and more “regional capitals” like Graz, Linz, Avignon, Bruges and Genova were chosen
- Finally, also cities applied for representing a whole region like for instance Essen representing the Ruhr Area or the Marseilles-Provence Area
- In 2000 nine cities have been selected as Capitals of Culture to celebrate the new millennium including three Non-EU member states cities (Krakow and Prague as well as Bergen)
- From 2005 a rotating system was introduced that regulates the order of countries eligible for nominating cities for the competition

# The European Capital of Culture Program: Its Purpose and History

- In a first step, member states select appropriate cities on the national level
- The selection process is divided into two steps. Preselection and final selection. Each time the candidate cities have to hand in a "bid-book" and to answer detailed questions
- National authorities assist and observe the process, but the decision is made by an independent committee
- Financial frame depends on city size and geographical location. On average 37% financed by state, 34% by region and the rest by private sponsors and fund-raising
- Direct EU support is very limited, however regional development funds maybe accessed, if applicable. The Melina Mercouri Prize (1.5 million €) is conditional. (Payment after completion of the program)
- Matera in 2019 was the first town in a highly disadvantageous economic region, suffering from shrinking population over a long period of time that was awarded the honor of being a European Capital of Culture

# Matera and the Region of Basilicata: Location, History, Economy and Demographics

- Matera is part of the Basilicata region located in the poorer South of Italy (Mezzogiorno) in a mountainous region (Apennine mountains)
- It was already populated in the Paleolithic era, making it one of the oldest human settlements on Earth
- During the Roman empire the region was called Lucania and flourished due to its location at the Via Appia, connecting Rome with the port town of Brindisi
- After the fall of the West Roman Empire, the regions was successively conquered and ruled by the Lombards, the Langobards and later the Normans (11<sup>th</sup> cent.) and finally the house of Anjou (13<sup>th</sup> cent.)
- From the 15<sup>th</sup> cent. on the regions was coming under the control of Naples and became part of the Neapolitan republic in the 17<sup>th</sup> cent.



# Matera and the Region of Basilicata: Location, History, Economy and Demographics



Old Postcard of Matera

- In the 18<sup>th</sup> cent Basilicata was dominated by the house of Bourbons, before voluntarily joining the new Kingdom of Italy on August 15<sup>th</sup> of 1860.
- After foundation of Italy, the state confiscated much of the land from the Church and sold it to aristocrats, that continued to exploit the peasants.
- Between 1880 and 1924 continuous emigration to the USA mainly from Southern Italy, increased the economic North-South divide
- After the fascist under Mussolini seized power in 1922, particular in the 1930s the remote and difficult to access region became the location for deportation of political prisoners and opposition forces against Mussolini.

# Matera and the Region of Basilicata: Location, History, Economy and Demographics



Painting: Carlo Levi, *Il vicinato*, 1954

- One of the deported persons was Carlo Levi, who who lived in Grassano and Aliano, 1935-1940
- After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, a land reform in 1952 improved the living conditions of the peasants slightly
- Simultaneously, the government fostered the relocation of people because of hygienic reasons. (Other programs intended to strengthen the unification of Italy)
- Many people left the region after the war for better employment chances in the North of Italy and in the 1960s for employment in Germany and other high growth economies (guest worker schemes)

# Matera and the Region of Basilicata: Location, History, Economy and Demographics

- Economically, Basilicata has always been a region dominated by agriculture, particular in the Metaponto area at the Ionian sea, and by goats and sheep breeding in the arid mountain regions (milk and cheese)
- After WW2 development policies shifted towards:
- Environmental policies: hydrogeological river works; reforestation; irrigation networks.
- Socio-economic policies: land reform (1952); retraining of agricultural labourers; higher levels of education.
- Urban planning: setting up industrial hubs especially in the chemical industry; research and development



Sheeps grazing in Basilicata

# Matera and the Region of Basilicata: Location, History, Economy and Demographics

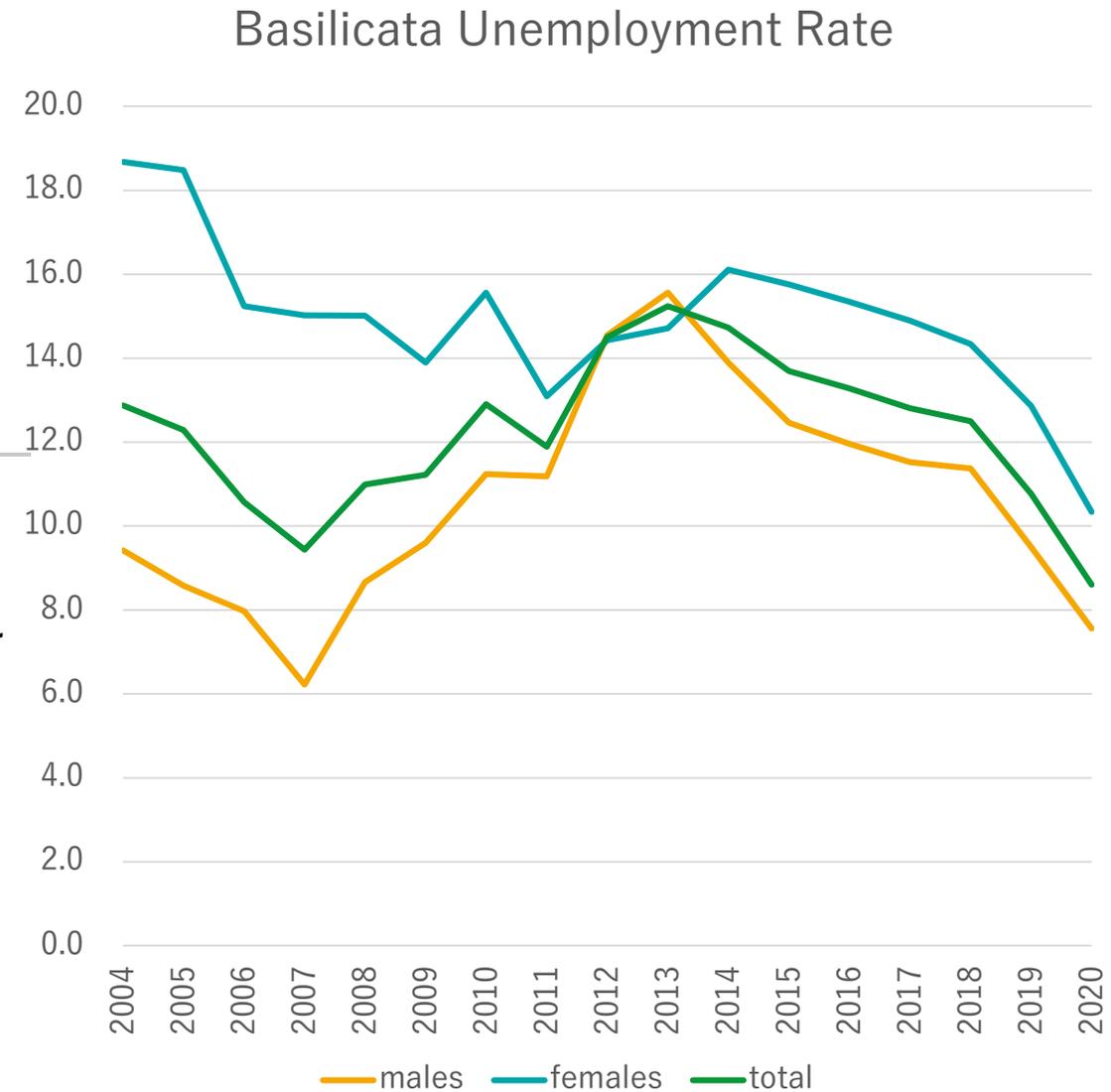


Car assembly at the FIAT plant in Melfi

- Much investments went into infrastructure development (co-financed by the EU), from which in particular urban areas profited.
- Besides the petrol-chemical industry, there is some food processing industries (pasta, olive-oil, wine) and some textile production (wool mills)
- A major investment was done by FIAT in 1993 establishing an assembly plant in Melfi, employing 7300 people (4000 of which in car assembly)
- As a result, also a number of supply part manufacturers (Magneti Marelli, Lear etc.) also invested in production facilities
- Finally, tourism is a major source of income, particular at the Ionian and Tyrrhenian coasts

# Matera and the Region of Basilicata: Location, History, Economy and Demographics

- Employment levels and GDP per capita in Basilicata are the highest in the South of Italy, however, both are considerably lower than in the North or compared with EU average
- Unemployment in 2020 was 9.1%, but youth unemployment (15-24 years) is 30% (statistica)
- GDP per capita in 2017 was 71% of the Italian average (Euro-stat)



Data: ISTAT

# Matera and the Region of Basilicata: Location, History, Economy and Demographics

Year	Pop. Basilicata	Change ± %
1861	509,000	
1871	524,000	2.9%
1881	539,000	2.9%
1901	492,000	-8.7%
1911	486,000	-1.2%
1921	492,000	1.2%
1931	514,000	4.5%
1936	543,000	5.6%
1951	628,000	15.7%
1961	644,000	2.5%
1971	603,000	-6.4%
1981	610,000	1.2%
1991	611,000	0.2%
2001	598,000	-2.1%
2011	578,000	-1.8%
2021	547,579	-5.8%

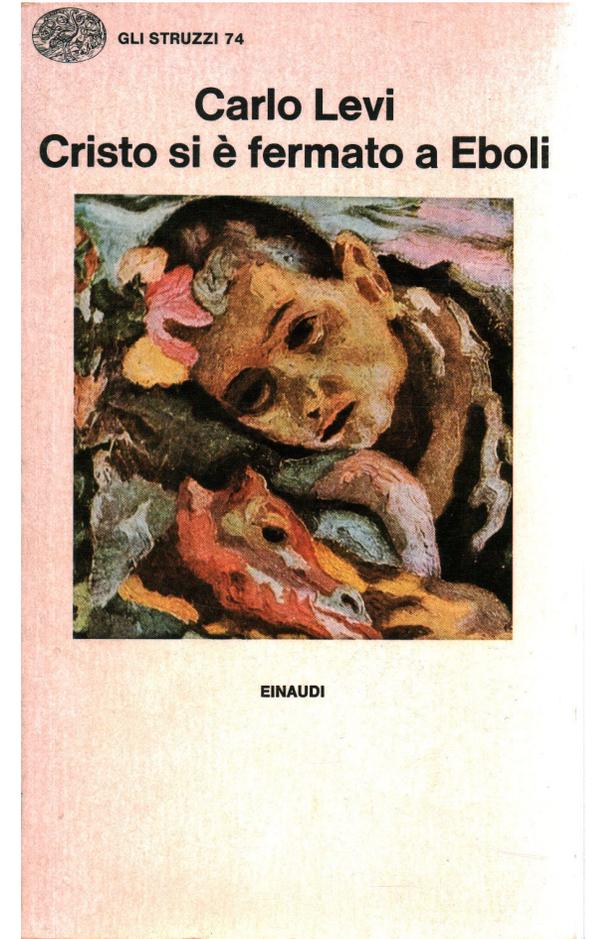
Data: ISTAT

	1991	2001	2011	2021
Basilicata	610,528	597,768	578,036	547,579
Matera	208,985	204,239	200,101	193,457
Potenza	401,543	393,529	377,935	354,122

- Historically, Italy, particular the South, experienced dramatic decline in population between 1880 and 1924 as more than 4 million people emigrated just to the USA (2 million between 1900 and 1910)
- During the fascist era, emigration decreased considerably, but the policy of “Industrialized North – Agricultural South” did not help develop the region
- Population increase after the war (baby boom) also affected the South of Italy, however since the 1960 the region is in constant population decline
- Population density in Basilicata: 54.8 persons km<sup>2</sup> (Average in Italy: 209 persons km<sup>2</sup> )

# Matera's Journey: From National "Shame" of Italy to European Capital of Culture in 2019

- There were three decisive points that brought Matera and the Basilicata region back into the ordinary peoples' consciousness
  1. The Book "Christ Stopped at Eboli (Christo si e fermato a Eboli)"
- The book not only helped implementing land reforms in the 1950s, it brought the huge North-South divide to the consciousness of people across Italy
- Exceeding the book, in 1979 the motion picture by director Francesco Rosi, who in many films addressed social injustice in Italy and organized crime (Mafia), reached an even larger audience in Europe and elsewhere.
- Only in the 1970s clean water and sewage system, electricity, and de-humidifying systems were installed at Matera.
- With that finally 'civilization' arrived in the Basilicata



Cover of Carlo Levi's Book



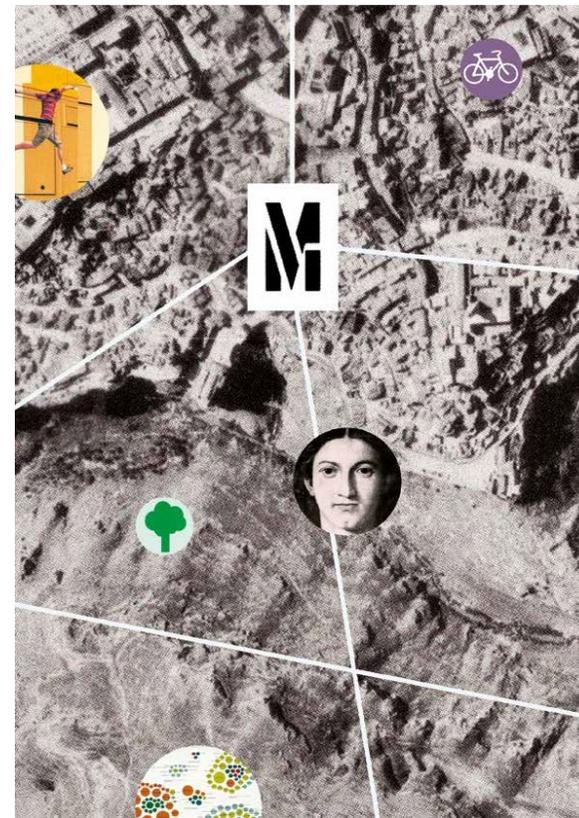
## Matera's Journey: From — National "Shame" of Italy to European Capital of Culture in 2019

2. In 1993, the Sassi and the Park of the Rupestrian Churches of Matera were assigned World Heritage by UNESCO
  - *This is the most outstanding, intact example of a troglodyte settlement in the Mediterranean region, perfectly adapted to its terrain and ecosystem. The first inhabited zone dates from the Palaeolithic, while later settlements illustrate a number of significant stages in human history. (Cited from UNESCO HP)*

# Matera's Journey: From National "Shame" of Italy to European Capital of Culture in 2019

## 3. European Capital of Culture in 2019

- In September 2014 Matera/Basilicata applied at the EU Commission to become ECoC in 2019.
- Competing candidates in Italy were: Perugia, Lecce, Cagliari, Ravenna, Siena
- The other host country was Bulgaria with Sofia, Plovdiv, Veliko Tarnovo, and Varna competing against each other
- One strong point of the Matera application was the intention to cooperate with all other candidate cities and organize common events



MATERA 2019  
OPEN FUTURE

Matera candidate city european capital  
of culture  
2019

# Matera European Capital of Culture 2019: The Program's Concept and Impact



Cavalleria Rusticana at Matera 2019

- The basic Idea was to transfer the Sassi into a continuous live amphitheater without any architectural alterations
- There were more than 100 events organized: Concerts, theater performances, exhibitions, site interventions etc.
- There were five main themes:
  1. “Ancient Future”
  2. “Continuity and Disruption“
  3. “Reflections and Connections“
  4. “Utopias and Dystopias
  5. “Roots and Routes”

# Matera European Capital of Culture 2019: The Program's Concept and Impact

## ➤ The topic: "Utopias and Dystopias"

*Starting from the irrepressible utopian tension in the history of Matera, the theme "Utopias and Dystopias" intends to test new innovative schemes that represent a challenge to preconceptions about the cities of the South including that tourism is the only way to achieve economic stability, technology is the only model of mediation possible for relationships, industrial monoculture is the only opportunity for development and that food and wine are the main identifiers of a territory.*





## — Matera European Capital of Culture 2019: The Program's Concept and Impact

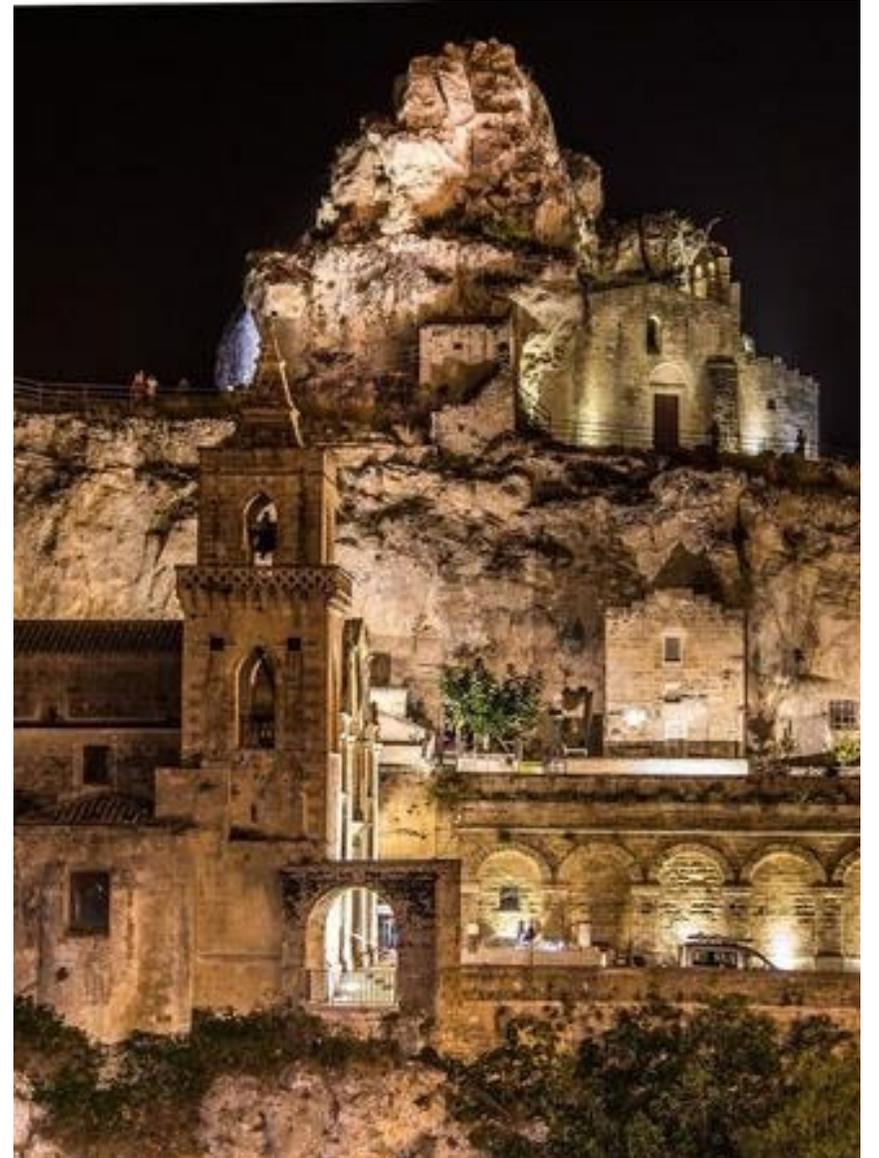
### ➤ The topic: “Roots and Routes”

*The “Roots and Routes” section precisely explores the extraordinary possibilities of the mobility culture that unites Europe. The instinct for movement is rooted in the daily life of Matera, ever since the tradition of “transhumance”, which every year sees the herds of cattle move across the Murgia plateau. Mobility is the lifeblood of the region: from Magna Graecia to Rome, or from the age of the Byzantines and Longobards, Arabs, Swabians or Angevins, Basilicata has always been a place of meeting and convergence. Recently, like many other rural regions of Europe, Matera has had to face devastating migratory diasporas, to then see the recent beginning of a return of a generation of young people, attracted by the values rooted in southern Italian culture.*

# Matera European Capital of Culture 2019: The Program's Concept and Impact

## ➤ Some Objectives: Perception of Matera

- By 2020, 70% of people will say that Matera is a city attractive to young people. (44% in 2014)
- By 2020, 90% of people will believe culture has a very important role in the economy of the future. (64% in 2014)
- By 2020, 70% of people will say that Matera is an innovative and creative city. (47% in 2014)



# Matera European Capital of Culture 2019: The Program's Concept and Impact

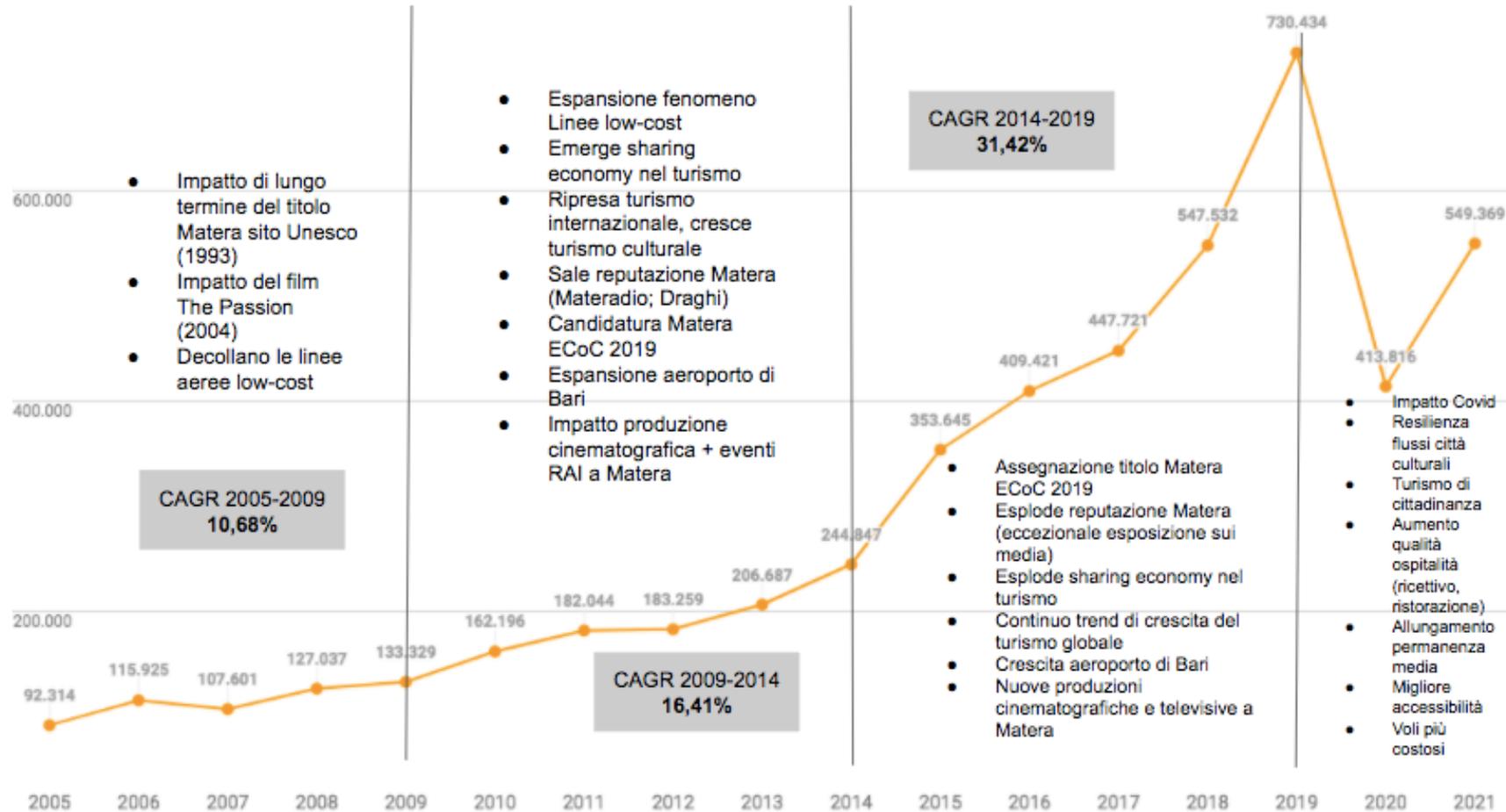
## ➤ Some Objectives: Tourism

- After 2019, achieve an annual inflow of 600,000 visitors to the city, of whom 50% from abroad. (30% in 2014)
- Increase the average time of visit by 30%
- Improve the accessibility between Bari and Matera from 2016 by means of a system of road and rail hourly public shuttles running between the two cities with a journey time of 45 minutes.
- Change how tourists get around by reducing dependence on private transport and encouraging the use of integrated public transport with a low environmental impact.



MATERA 2019  
OPEN FUTURE

# Development of Tourism





## What Lessons to be Learned from Matera?

### 1. What is unique about your region?

- Unlike Matera, not every place is a world heritage site. But every place has its unique features.

### 2. Only integrated concepts will work

- Regional revival has to be based on a sound economic, social, and cultural development approach

### 3. Only regional cooperation succeeds

- Regional rival is not a zero-sum game. Only cross-regional cooperation will be successful

passaporto  
per **matera**

2019

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