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CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF THE MEGA EVENTS LEGACY AND DIRECTIONS FOR UPCOMING WORLD EXHIBITIONS (EXPO)

Kritički pregled nasleđa mega događaja i budući
pravci za naredne Svetske (EXPO) izložbe

Abstract

Mega events are changing host destinations in various aspects since they became a strong business-oriented eco-system that creates a strong legacy impact on the host destination. The paper provides an extensive literature review of the legacy concept in the meetings and events industry, research if after organizing a mega event there is always a legacy that remains for the hosting destination, and research in what directions legacy should be managed. Unfortunately, due to an inconsistent approach to measuring and reporting, it is not possible to compare the success of previous EXPOs. That is the reason why host destination should develop their own approach based on the entire urban development strategy and destination management development strategy, where EXPO is only one important milestone to reach. Special focus has been given to the EXPO financial cost-benefit impacts analysis for the period 2010-2021. Based on the extensive literature review, in the process of understanding and implementing the EXPO legacy framework, there are three major legacy areas identified: destination marketing and branding, urban development and urbanization process, and monitoring and measuring economic impact. Available funds for destination marketing should be joined from the public and private sectors in order to reach a long-lasting and sustainable brand and image of a destination. A customized economic impact model needs to be based on the macro-economic data that has been monitored for at least 10 years, on the local, regional and national levels, while the destination should have a clear urban development strategy, in which EXPO is an important milestone to reach.

Keywords: EXPO, world exhibitions, legacy, mega-events, event, MICE

Sažetak

Mega događaji menjaju destinacije kroz različite aspekte, jer su postali snažan poslovno orijentisan sistem koji ima snažan uticaj kroz nasleđe koje kreira na destinaciji. Rad sadrži opsežan pregled literature o konceptu nasleđa u industriji događaja, te da li organizovanje mega događaja uvek kreira nasleđe za destinaciju, i istražuje u kojim pravcima nasleđem mega događaja treba upravljati. Nažalost, zbog nekonzistentnost pristupa merenju i izveštavanju, nije moguće porediti uspeh prethodno organizovanih EKSPPO događaja. To je razlog zašto destinacija domaćin treba da razvije sopstveni pristup zasnovan na strategiji urbanog razvoja i upravljanja destinacijom, u kojima je EKSPPO samo jedna važna prekretnica do koje treba doći. Poseban fokus je stavljen na analizu uticaja finansijskih troškova i koristi EKSPPO-a za period 2010-2021. Na osnovu obimnog pregleda literature, u procesu razumevanja i implementacije nasleđa EKSPPO-a, identifikovane su tri glavne oblasti nasleđa: marketing i brendiranje destinacije, urbani razvoj i proces urbanizacije, i praćenje i merenje ekonomskog uticaja. Sredstva za marketing destinacije treba udružiti iz javnog i privatnog sektora kako bi se došlo do dugotrajnog i održivog brenda i imidža destinacije. Prilagođeni model ekonomskog uticaja treba da se zasniva na makroekonomskim podacima koji se prate najmanje 10 godina, na lokalnom, regionalnom i nacionalnom nivou, dok destinacija treba da ima jasnu strategiju urbanog razvoja, u kojoj EKSPPO predstavlja jednu od važnih prekretnica koje treba dostići.

Ključne reči: EXPO, svetska izložba, nasleđe, mega događaji, događaj, MICE

Introduction

Olympic Games, FIFA World Cups, and World Exhibitions are a category of mega-events, events that are changing the host destination through various aspects, especially keeping in mind that they have become a strong business-oriented eco-system that are worth billions of euros emphasizing long-term legacy impact on the host destination (city, region, country). Event management as a practice requires strategic development and delivery of value creation spanning diverse stakeholder needs from governmental to organizational objectives [73]. While mega events have been organized in this fashion for over a century, we need to be aware that the global change of mankind influenced changes in the core values and concepts of these events, putting business-driven values more important in comparison to social-driven values such as soft power, peace, diplomacy and similar creates increasing complexity in delivering on the promises of legacy. With the bigger and more expansive organization of events, the business-driven legacies centered on global impacts including GDP and international economic development become more important for the organizing destination [43]. This is the same for all other categories of events, including corporate events and association events, as the main events format within the meetings and events industry.

Globalization, industrial revolutions, economic and health crises and wars are all external, non-controllable factors impacting the events' core values and goals. In 2020, COVID-19 heavily impacted the meetings and events sector, including both business and entertainment segments, leading to the fact that the entire industry almost died during the year, and only in Q4 2021 we could see the increase in business. An important lesson learned is that the meetings and events industry is not fulfilling basic, survival needs and wants. Therefore, in the years after COVID-19, the events industry has changed towards an increased need for destination resilience [15]. One of the key destination resilience factors is the creation of a long-lasting events legacy for a host destination [7], the legacy that will improve the destination in multidisciplinary and multifaced ways.

Methodology and research questions

In this paper, we will provide an overview of the legacy concept in the meetings and events industry, and answer if after organizing a mega event, there is always a legacy that remains for the hosting destination, as well as in what directions legacy should lead. Focus is on the World Exhibitions (in further text: EXPO) events, due to increased interest in the topic from the side of professionals in the events industry, from the governments' side and the local citizens' side in the host destinations.

The legacy framework has been analyzed through an extensive literature review of the research papers on the topic of mega-events, and especially EXPOs. Research questions of the paper are: 1) to what extent the legacy of EXPOs has been part of the previous academic research, 2) if after organizing a mega event there is always a legacy that remains for the hosting destination and 3) what are the major legacy directions that future organizers need to implement within their organizational activities. In addition, a comparative analysis of the performances of EXPOs in the period 2010 - 2020 (2021) is being done for the paper, in order to understand the financial cost-benefit impacts for the host destination.

Mega-events and EXPO legacy framework

Mega-events generate significantly high costs that host destinations are hoping to cover due to the created platforms of the long-term sustainable impacts and legacy, while on the other side owners of the mega-events, like BIE of EXPO, IOC for the Olympics and others, do generate high revenues from the organization of events [32]. The volume of investments that national and local governments are putting into the mega-events, mostly investing public money is always followed by public political discussions and increased examination by, both, the professional public and general audience. Government statements and media coverage often highlight the enduring legacies of hosting large-scale events as positive outcomes for host cities [82, p. 112].

Due to highly politicized aspects of legacy [33], policymakers, in order to justify the high investment

needed to run a mega event, are heavily promoting potential economic, social and urban legacy effects [76]. They are justifying significant capital investment with the positive legacy promise [30, p. 30], although some of the research demonstrated that in the short-term period, the positive outcomes that have been promoted, anticipated, and/or promised have not been fulfilled [76]. In addition, there are examples of urban infrastructure projects that have not entered commercial and public usage after the mega event, due to high operational maintenance costs [34, p. 45]. Many destinations remained in significant debt from urbanization projects and event operations [81, p. 116]. To decrease the infrastructure cost, some of the organizers decide on the temporary infrastructure approach like in the case of the Beijing Olympics [39] and Qatar FIFA [82]. Activities of re-zoning and change in the city zones legislation, increased land values and increased rental prices are negative effects from the social aspects and are common after the mega-events [77].

In order to reach long-term legacy goals, especially from the urbanization point of view, mega events requirements need to be embedded within long-term urban plans [41]. Properly planned, coordinated and implemented tourism leveraging strategy, can increase events legacy as well [16], in addition to proper place marketing strategies [31, p. 32].

To support potential and future host destinations, owners of the mega-events are introducing various guides and supporting initiatives that will legitimize the increasing public investments, and increase the visibility of the (potential) positive legacy for host destinations [33]. The challenge is that the concept and term legacy are considered different depending on the language, cultural environment and destination organizational setting [64]. In most research papers legacy is mostly framed with urban development and infrastructure improvements, while intangible aspects and governance transformation have not been seen as equally important [55], as well as with economic impact [36]. The multidimensional aspect of legacy [63] needs to be seen from the dimension of time and space, as well as from the proportion among planned/unplanned results, tangible/intangible impacts and positive/negative effects [71].

Legacy should be seen not as a structural change, but as a consequence of the change. In that sense, legacy affects various stakeholders and the environment, creating positive, negative or neutral outcomes [70], no matter if it is tangible legacy (i.e., new infrastructure) or intangible legacy (i.e., know-how transfer, improvement of international visibility) [31].

It is important to understand that there is a lack of mega events legacy research in a period of 5 or more years after the event. Also, there is a lack of appropriate key performance indicators and a lack of proper methods that will measure the intangible legacy effect [75]. Furthermore, there are clear opportunities and needs for cross-cultural and cross-destination research projects that can differentiate specific outcomes of events from mere generalizations [5]. Therefore, in measuring legacies, it is important to take into consideration the time span for the legacy measurement, stakeholders and space, structural changes and the consequences of a structural change for the stakeholder [70, p.114].

Certainly, EXPO is one of the most intriguing formats of the mega-event. The Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) recognizes several types of EXPO exhibitions [13]: World EXPO, Specialized EXPO, Horticultural EXPO, and Triennale de Milano EXPO. Each type of EXPO must adhere to specific criteria regarding the size of the EXPO grounds and the duration of the event. According to the BIE, a “Registered EXPO” or World EXPO, is held every five years for a maximum duration of six months. Participants have the option to design and construct their own pavilions or rent space from the organizers, with no limit on the size of the EXPO site. On the other hand, a “Recognized EXPO” or International EXPO occurs between two World EXPOs, lasting a maximum of three months. Participants are only allowed to rent space from the organizers, and the EXPO plot size is limited to 25 hectares. And, according to the BIE Paris Convention, a world exhibition needs to be seen as the public platform for education and increased visibility of tools and solutions that improve human development and social wellbeing [14].

The BIE Exhibition, commonly referred to as EXPO, has been a longstanding tradition since its inception in 1851. EXPO has positioned itself as the platform for

supporting processes of industrialization (1851-1938), culturalization (1939-1987) and national branding (since 1988) [61]. In addition, the interesting aspect of EXPO is to be a platform for reaching and proofing international reputation and global status [78], as well as promoting economic diversification and urban improvement [79]. By hosting an EXPO, as a mega-event, destinations are implementing changes to the urban landscape and urban functions [43], while upgrading the brand in order to reach better international recognition, tourist visitation and media coverage [87]. EXPO is seen by the destination policymakers as a platform to promote reconciliation, self-esteem, national pride, and patriotism [89; 28], and to provide a sense of social inclusion of local citizens.

However, host destination branding goals cannot be effectively achieved by a single high-profile mega-event, such as EXPO [86]. EXPO even might have a negative impact by undermining natural resources, changing land usage, increasing waste and pollution, and affecting microclimate [4]. Recent attention has been drawn to the growing environmental impact of EXPOs, influencing the actual perceptions of local residents and the inconsistency between the government's promotion of the benefits of hosting EXPO and citizens' lived experiences, which ultimately diminishes the true impact of these events [57], since actual perceptions of locals are beyond any officially defined strategies regarding mega events branding strategies [46]. EXPO can initiate conflict among locals and visitors due to different purchasing power [83] and may cause increased costs of living, traffic congestions, and restricted access to public facilities [57], therefore adversely affecting the life quality of local residents.

According to available data from BIE, an average of 3 competing destinations are participating in the bidding process for the EXPO. This demonstrates that the bidding to host EXPO, as the mega-event, is very competitive [47]. Literature review shows that there is a difference in how potential destinations promote their bids, due to differences in governance and public administration structure [3]. Bids initiated by the USA destination are led by the local growth coalition and bids reflect the interests of key players in urban regimes [79, p. 159] whose actions are not driven by the political officials [8, p. 194]. In bids

initiated by countries in Western Europe, local government structures form cooperation models and partnerships with private business sectors, in order to reach wider community and political consensus and pursue higher government investments [18]. In bids initiated by the World EXPO 2010 destination, local government and national governments are playing dominant roles [79, p. 159]. This dominant role of the government, both local and national, is also evident in the process of winning bids for World EXPO 2020, Specialized EXPO 2027 and World EXPO 2030. The case of World EXPO 2025 won for Osaka, Japan, demonstrates a more similar approach as to USA destinations.

EXPO events have been held regularly up to EXPO 2020 in Dubai, which took place from 2021 to 2022 [84, p. 130]. Furthermore, three upcoming destinations have been confirmed as hosts for future events: Osaka, Japan in 2025, Belgrade, Serbia in 2027, and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia in 2030 [11]. During the bidding process, bidding destinations need to show the process of how the theme of the EXPO will be successfully delivered to the visitors so they can accurately understand the purpose of the EXPO and the broader goal of the theme [38]. In defining themes EXPO organizers need to be driven by implementing experience economy pillars that include entertainment, education, escape and aesthetic experience [69]. In this way, organizers support visitors to fully recognize the objectives of the EXPO and experience the theme [6]. For the host to be successful in EXPO implementation it is advisable to possess advanced communication and brand strategy, convenient geopolitical and geographical location, and further improvement plans for the local urban and hospitality infrastructure [61, p. 908].

Although EXPOs take place on a regular basis, each EXPO needs to be considered a one-time event since, except for the general concept, all other event management aspects are different and host destinations have different approaches to the organization. In the process of creating a bid document, and later recognition dossier of the host destination, an important part is an estimation of visits and visitor numbers [54]. These estimates of mega-event attendance are based on the assumption that all visitors who have planned potential visits have actually attended

the event in 100% of cases [53, p.168]. Before the forecasting process, organizers need to understand that the high attendance figures and visitor satisfaction levels of prior EXPOs do not have any impact on the number of guests for the upcoming EXPO [38]. That is why visitor demand prediction is the critical step in defining the capacities of the venues and supporting infrastructure [53, p.169].

Overview of EXPO costs, visitation and economic effects in the period 2010-2021

In the following section, an overview of the main performances of EXPO in the period 2010–2020 will be made, including different EXPO event formats (Table 1). The BIE reports that 79 million people attended EXPO 2010 in Shanghai overall. Previous research indicated that the anticipated number of visitors is projected to reach 70 million visits [27, p.11]. According to the available data, EXPO 2010, categorized as the World EXPO, was developed at a project cost of \$20 billion (RMB 121 billion) and has generated \$260 million in direct income, \$2.5 billion in tourism income, and \$420 million in increased business volume [56]. Other sources indicate that the total costs, including infrastructure and urban revitalization, have reached \$48 billion [56].

According to BIE data, 8.2 million visitors attended the specialized EXPO 2012. For the Yeosu EXPO 2010, a national survey has been implemented to determine intention to visit and predict visitor numbers, based on the 3,000 respondents in 16 statistically defined areas of the country [53]. Before the survey, additional forecasting was made by combining quantitative techniques with willingness-to-visit (WTV) obtained from survey data, according to which the total predicted number of visitors was 8.9 million, while a panel of experts through Delphi

method predicted 6.8 million visitors to the EXPO 2010 [54]. Although the final figures are different, a combination of field research and expert panel provides policymakers with proper insights that allow information to guide investment and planning direction for the EXPO [52]. According to the available data, EXPO 2010, categorized as the specialized EXPO, was developed at a project cost of \$2 billion, has generated an economic impact of \$5.3 billion and created 80,000 jobs, with 8.2 million visitors, including 400,000 foreign visitors [38, p. 1268]. Data on economic impact and generated revenue has not been identified.

According to BIE data, the total number of EXPO 2015 is 21.5 million visitors. According to the available data, EXPO 2015, categorized as the World EXPO, was developed at a project cost of \$5.5 billion and has generated economic income of \$6.6 billion, including increased export of \$3.6 billion and tourism income of \$1.7 billion [26]. However, another source indicates that when adding costs of metro lines and roads, the initial investment rises to \$14 billion [17].

The total number of again specialized EXPO 2017 visitors, according to BIE data, is 3.9 million visitors. Prior research showed that the expected number of visitors will be more than 5 million [61]. EXPO 2017 could be viewed as one of Kazakhstan's endeavors to showcase itself as a thriving nation, providing an attractive atmosphere for investments, securing a more prominent global standing, and as a great tourism destination [2]. According to the available data, EXPO 2017, categorized as the specialized EXPO, was developed at a project cost of \$1.2 billion. It has created 50,000 jobs and increased the number of hotels and restaurants by 16% and the total number of available rooms by 46% in the capital city [72]. The estimated number of visitors was 4 million, including 600,000 foreign visitors

Table 1: EXPO Comparison: 2010-2021

	EXPO 2010	EXPO 2012	EXPO 2015	EXPO 2017	EXPO 2020
Category	World	Specialized	World	Specialized	World
Destination	Shanghai	Yeosu	Milan	Astana	Dubai
Country	China	South Korea	Italy	Kazakhstan	UAE
When was bid won	December, 2003	November, 2007	March, 2008	November, 2012	November, 2013
Years to prepare	6.5	4.5	6.5	4.5	6.5
Project cost	\$48 billion	\$2 billion	\$14 billion	\$1.2 billion	\$7 billion
Number of visitors	79 million	8.2 million	21.5 million	3.9 million	24 million

Table 2: Overview of EXPO frequency in relation to the format

	2010	2012	2015	2016	2017	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2027
World	X		X				X*	X*			X	
Horticultural		X		X		X		X*	X*			X
Specialized		X			X				X**			X

Notes: X* - the EXPO duration expanded in two years; X** - EXPO was cancelled

and total international coverage towards 2.6 billion people [a24]. Data on economic impact and generated revenue has not been identified.

According to BIE data, the total number of EXPO 2020 visitors was 24 million visitors. According to the available data, in the pre-show phase, a total of 25 million visitors were expected, with over 70% of international guests [24]. According to the available data, EXPO 2020, categorized as the World EXPO, was developed at a project cost of \$4.9 billion [25], while other resources indicate a cost of up to \$7 billion [23]. According to the official report [12] the economic impact of the EXPO is expected to contribute a total of \$43 billion of gross value added (GVA) to the economy of the UAE in the period from 2013 to 2042. Dubai's method for assessing feasibility and strategic planning has enabled it to set new records and leverage the diverse advantages available, particularly in Dubai, renowned for its global connectivity and innovative advancements [42]. The Dubai EXPO 2020 provided an opportunity for Dubai and the entire UAE to showcase their global image and brand through top-notch infrastructure, captivating attractions, exceptional hotels, and convenient global and local access [40].

What also needs to be taken into account, is the organization of the EXPO in the format of the "Horticultural EXPO". Horticulture Expos focus on healthy and sustainable living, green economies and education and are being organized as a platform that endorses partnership and the sharing of know-how regarding horticulture and agricultural fields [10]. Horticultural EXPO enables horticultural practice exchange, promotion of science education and research and protection of the eco-friendly environment [29, p. 1].

According to the BIE, this type of exhibition may last up to 6 months and takes place Between two World EXPOs, with a gap of at least two years between each Horticultural Expo. However, it can be concluded that

it does not take into the account organization of the Specialized EXPOs and that COVID-19 impacted the frequency of organization of all formats of EXPO, as can be seen in the Table 2.

Based on the available data [9], it is important to note the following:

- Horticultural EXPO 2012 took place in the Netherlands in the period April - October and covered the entire period of Special EXPO 2012 in Yeosu, Korea.
- Argentina Specialized EXPO 2023 has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the short interval between EXPO 2020, since EXPO 2020 was postponed to 2021, and lasted until March 31st, 2022.
- Horticultural EXPO 2022 took place in the Netherlands, with the opening day just 2 weeks after EXPO Dubai closed its doors, and ended in October 2022
- Horticultural EXPO 2023 took place in Qatar and started only 1 year after the Horticultural EXPO 2022.
- Horticultural EXPO 2027 in Japan will last six months in the period from March to September 2027, and it is happening at the same time as the Specialized EXPO 2027 that takes place from May to August.
- Horticultural EXPOs and Specialized EXPOs after 2027 are not yet announced, while the host of the World EXPO 2030 is Saudi Arabia.

Key legacy directions for the future EXPO organizers

Based on the extensive literature review, in the process of understanding and implementing the EXPO legacy framework, there are three major legacy areas, that future organizers need to focus on in their organizational activities:

- Destination marketing and branding [86],[61], [78], [87], [60], [45], [35], [1], [56], [54], [20].
- Urban development and urbanization process [80], [43], [55], [40], [8], [37].

Table 3: Overview of EXPO financial cost-benefit announced impacts in the period 2025-2030

	EXPO 2025	EXPO 2027	EXPO 2027	EXPO 2030
Category	World	Specialized	Horticultural	World
Destination	Osaka	Belgrade	Yokohama	Riyadh
Country	Japan	Serbia	Japan	Saudi Arabia
When was bid won	November, 2018	June, 2023	June, 2022	November, 2023
Years to prepare	6.5	4	5	6.5
Project costs, as per available data	\$5.8 billion	\$2.5 billion	No data available	\$7.8 billion

Source: Data retrieved from the following websites on April 6th, 2027: [66], [68], [65]

- Monitoring and measuring economic impact [53], [54], [69], [36], [82], [26], [72], [85], [42].

These elements capture the complex legacy of the EXPO, highlighting the value of fostering tourism appeal, stimulating sustainable urban growth and carefully assessing the economic impact. Accepting these aspects ensures that an exhibition's legacy goes well beyond its immediate results, having a long-lasting influence on the host cities and surrounding areas.

The Table 3 shows future EXPO hosts.

Three listed areas of destination legacy development will be discussed in the next chapters.

Discussion regarding destination marketing and branding legacy directions for EXPO organizers

Host countries often use EXPO as a platform to upgrade and transform their destination marketing and branding strategies and operational activities, under the leadership of properly organized destination management organizations (DMOs). In practice, various countries have different organizational forms for tourism promotion (i.e., "tourism office" in the case of Serbia). In most cases, those promotion entities can serve as self-sustaining entities, even without fully executing their responsibilities and tasks in the realm of destination management [58, p. 234]. We can categorize DMO activities into three groups [49, p. 262]: destination stakeholder coordination, destination marketing, and destination sales.

These aspects are critical, and the time lag from winning the EXPO bid until the EXPO starts, which is on average 4–6.5 years, creates an opportunity for the host destination to transform from a traditional tourism office promotion approach to a proper destination management system. The key pillar is the creation of close cooperation

among private and public stakeholders around unified goals, as well as a complex destination product portfolio based on experiences. Every planning process, particularly after the EXPO, should incorporate a continuous system of market research on both international and domestic visitors, allowing for the analysis of behavioral and perception changes. This measuring platform is the inevitable step for creating, upgrading, and changing destination brands and images on the local, regional, and international levels.

Promoting EXPO as a one-time event should be integrated into more complex destination and national marketing processes. When there is a lack of cooperation and the EXPO interests take precedence over wider tourism interests, the potential for a long-term tourism legacy from the EXPO is limited. Key considerations for future EXPO hosts:

- The host destination has at least a 4-year time frame to work on destination marketing activities, start creating the destination brand and image, and then use EXPO as an added value to the process and as a booster for future destination positioning.
- In the most general sense, international travelers do not see EXPO as the primary reason to travel. Therefore, since BIE is not putting in any effort, host destinations should educate international travelers on the purpose and vision of EXPO as an event.
- In the process of forecasting both international and domestic visitor numbers, the destination should develop a scenario based on the current availability of rooms and beds in both hotels, along with supporting accommodation forms. They should also diligently register all grey market accommodations to accurately determine the actual status of available rooms and beds. This applies not only to the host destination but also to the neighboring destinations within a

1-hour driving distance. It makes sense that the majority of international visitors would prefer to stay in the host destination, but the accessibility of the EXPO site can significantly influence their choice of specific destination. This pertains specifically to tourists who cite the EXPO as their primary reason for traveling. During the EXPO period, the city will host other tourists, and a seasonal analysis of previous periods indicates a trend in international arrivals during this period. For this category, the EXPO is just another experience in a destination, and they will choose accommodation that allows them to experience the entire destination and not just the EXPO.

- Following an EXPO, it is anticipated that the event will significantly improve destination marketing and brand recognition, attracting a continuous stream of international travelers to the host destination. Otherwise, if the trend of foreign arrivals from winning the EXPO bid until at least ten years after the event does not show growth, it means that destination management activities were not proper, leading to adverse legacies. A decrease in the average occupancy of accommodation units, a drop in average daily rates, a reduction in the average duration of stay, and an increase in seasonality will manifest these negative outcomes. In this scenario, indirect negative effects could manifest as a decline in employment, a drop in average salaries, and a rise in talent departing from the hospitality sector.

To conclude, a proper joint public-private tourism destination management initiative can lead to the creation of a long-lasting destination brand, in which EXPO acts as the advocate for stronger destination development and the critical milestone to measure successfulness of the tourism and hospitality politics.

Discussion regarding urban development and urbanization legacy directions for EXPO organizers

When analyzing cost structures, it is critical to understand direct and indirect EXPO-related costs. EXPO direct

costs encompass the planning and construction of all EXPO infrastructure, along with EXPO operating costs, which are specific to the EXPO site. EXPO indirect costs primarily contribute to the urban development of the host destination, with a focus on the EXPO site. Those include all costs associated with the fields and locations outside of the EXPO site. This differentiation is not always clear, and the costs will overlap. Regardless of the cost, all planned project and operation costs must be integrated into the broader urban development process of the host destination. Not vice versa, i.e. EXPO should not be seen as a single investment project in one-time events, but rather as an amalgam of investment projects that allow the destination to fulfill urban development strategy regarding destination urbanization. In numerous cases, indirect EXPO costs are significantly higher than direct EXPO costs, taking into account the investment's structure. Simultaneously, it is crucial to consider the legacy of the EXPO site. The reason is that after the event, the EXPO site should add value to the destination's urban environment and economy.

It should be clear that EXPO as a one-time event should be part of the higher urban development destination strategy. Key considerations for future EXPO hosts:

- The destination should have a clear urban development strategy, with EXPO being an important milestone to reach.
- The public discussion of the EXPO as an urban development step should lead to a clear understanding and consensus among public, private, academic, and government stakeholders about the general vision, where and how the EXPO fits the vision, and what the long-term urban legacy of the entire process is.
- The legacy of the direct EXPO-related infrastructure (and consequently the project costs) should be planned well in advance to prevent: the construction of megastructures that don't meet market requirements; the construction of venues without a thorough understanding of the industry and a clear feasibility and market plan; and the formation of new public companies without a clear vision and mission.
- Planning for the EXPO site's legacy should take a much broader approach than urban development, taking into account the impact on the meetings and

events industry, the real estate sector, the creative industries, and the logistics sector.

Discussion regarding economic impact studies using cross-sectoral analysis for EXPO organizers

In measuring the economic impact of the events, challenges revolve around determining the comprehensive direct and indirect impact of the event on various sectors individually, and insufficient official statistics make the process of determining optimal economic multiplier level very hard [51, p. 285]. Therefore, each host destination is used to develop its own research methods, combining secondary data with available primary quantity and quality data. The question is what sector has the key influence on the organization of EXPO impact and in what period? Having in mind the key themes of the upcoming EXPOs, it is obvious that important primary businesses involved in delivering EXPO and visitor experience are creative industries, that can significantly contribute to economic development [50]. Certainly, creative industries should be part of the stakeholder structure, like the construction industry, meetings and events industry, tourism industry, FMCG industries, and many others.

It should be clear that EXPO, although a one-time event, involves various industries, no matter if they have primary or supporting functions. Key considerations for future EXPO impact analysis would be:

- Developing planning – performance measurement system. The above literature review shows no unified approach to measuring and reporting on the economic impact of EXPO on the national economy, especially not in continuous reporting periods of at least 5-10 years after the EXPO was organized.
- Developing an EXPO value chain for the specific host destination. Each destination will have a majority of the same involved industries, but we need to have in mind the different levels of current urban development, tourism performances and similar on one side, and on the other desired effects in periods before, during and after the event.
- Understanding of the importance of each industry along the value chain (up-the stream and down-the

stream) and its relevance on the impact on macro-economic aggregates of a destination.

- Developing a customized model that can be replicated to various EXPO destinations (with certain contingencies due to destination specifics, that will be based on the continuous gathering of primary and secondary data on at least 3 levels: local, regional and national level.

Conclusions

The following text provides commentary on the research questions defined by this study. First, to what extent has previous academic research incorporated the legacy of EXPOs? Richards [72] confirms that the majority of papers in social sciences and management disciplines focus on 1) destination marketing and brand, 2) tourism and general economic impact measurements, and 3) urban development. The author's conclusions in this paper also indicate that these three directions are the most important for the future host of EXPOs.

The majority of scientific literature has focused on the World EXPO and specialized EXPO formats, leaving the Horticultural EXPO as an intriguing research topic for further investigation. However, scientific literature has not explored the potential cannibalistic effects that may arise when two EXPO events, regardless of their format, occur in the same year or at the same time, such as in the cases of 2012 (Horticultural EXPO 2012 in the Netherlands vs. specialized EXPO 2012 in Korea) and 2022 (Horticultural EXPO 2022 in the Netherlands vs. World EXPO in the UAE). Since the parallel EXPO event is taking place or is close in time, cannibalistic effects may lead to a decrease in legacy impacts for the host destinations. Organizers of the 2027 EXPOs should be aware of this situation.

The second research question relates to the dilemma of whether, after organizing a mega event, there is always a legacy that remains for the hosting destination. Taking into account available data and previous research, it is possible to conclude that the average pre-event time for EXPO preparation is 6.5 years for the World EXPO and 4.5 years for the Specialized EXPO. This pre-event time can be defined as a period for the EXPO organizers to

plan and initialize the key legacy directions discussed in this paper.

Historical data on the EXPOs reveals that neither the BIE nor the host destination organizers officially gather and analyze projected costs using a unified methodology. Therefore, there is neither a fully understandable and transparent methodology for understanding total project costs nor a clear proportion between the direct costs of EXPO infrastructure and event operations and the supporting infrastructure and urbanization costs of the destination. Furthermore, the lack of a clear methodology for measuring the final impact and determining the appropriate measurement period may lead to the conclusion that there is no clear correlation between the investment in EXPO projects and the economic impact they leave behind.

EXPO, although a one-off event and time-limited event, provides a great platform for reaching long-term legacy aspects. This long-term aspect is seen throughout the activities pre-, during and post the EXPO. Having in mind that the average pre-event time is 5 years, as per available data, and that the literature review suggests that the time-frame of analyzing economic impacts should at least be 5 years if not more, the entire process of defining, monitoring and reporting on legacy, should be at least years (since the moment host destination has been confirmed).

Unfortunately, due to an inconsistent approach to measuring and reporting, it is not possible to compare the success of the EXPO as an event. That is the reason why host destinations should develop their own approach based on the entire urban development strategy and destination management development strategy, where EXPO is only one important milestone to reach. Implementation of destination marketing and branding needs to be part of the EXPO planning activities through the multi-year operationalization of destination marketing and branding strategies. Urban development and urbanization processes have been a part of numerous studies due to their obvious long-term impact on the host destination. Economic impact studies through various models, such as cross-sectoral analysis, are being done in most EXPOs, as per the literature review, to demonstrate a positive impact on the nation's economy through direct, indirect, and induced effects.

The final research question relates to what major legacy directions future organizers should implement in their operations. The analysis of this century's mega events suggests crucial factors for future EXPO hosts:

- The integration of public and private sector funds for destination marketing is necessary in order to boost visibility and create a sustainable brand image for a destination beyond the EXPO.
- Development of the distinctive economic impact model based on macroeconomic data collected over the last ten years at the local, regional, and national levels and incorporating the notion of primary and supporting sectors throughout the EXPO-identified value chain.
- Formulating a clear urban development strategy with EXPO as a key milestone. This implies that development incorporates the EXPO rather than solely implementing it for the event's benefit. A crucial question is how the EXPO site will be managed in the post-event period to reach long-term legacy plans and further impact various aspects of development.

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