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European Capital of Culture: What are Opportunities for Ravenna

Collini, D.*
University of Bologna (Italy)

Introduction

Big challenges and many opportunities, this is what “European Capital of Culture” means. Significant challenges not only for a city, but for a whole country which is in the position to show its best values and proposals.

This title was created in 1985 to bring Europeans closer together by highlighting the richness and diversity of their cultures and raising awareness of their common history and values. It is also an occasion of regeneration for the cities, too. They can improve their image to reach a higher international profile, breathing new life into tourism and culture.

The idea of designating a “European City of Culture” (this was the initial title) came up to light thanks to Melina Mercouri, former Greece’s Minister of Culture, and her French counterpart Jack Lang, in the lounge of Athens’ airport in January 1985.

On June 13th 1985, the project called “City of Culture” was launched and since the beginning it has been a growing success among citizens having a strong cultural, social and economic impact on the many visitors it attracted.

Since 1985 to 2004 the designation of the European Capitals of Culture was operated by the ministers of culture of European Union, basing on the criteria fixed by the Council on November 12th 1992.

In 1990, the “European Cultural Month” was launched by the European Ministers of Culture as a collateral cultural event. It takes place every year and it has been conceived as a benefit for Central and Eastern European countries in a special era of their history. Both the events have always been economically supported by the European Commission.

* E-mail address: daniela.collini@studio.unibo.it

In the following chart are listed the European Capitals of Culture since 1985 (chart1) and the hosting cities of the European Cultural Month (chart2):

Chart 1: European Capitals of culture from the very beginning

1985	Athens	1997	Thessaloniki
1986	Florence	1998	Stockholm
1987	Amsterdam	1999	Weimar
1988	Berlin	2000	Avignon, Bergen, Bologna, Brussels, Helsinki, Krakow, Reykjavik, Prague, Santiago de Compostela
1989	Paris	2001	Porto and Rotterdam
1990	Glasgow	2002	Bruges and Salamanca
1991	Dublin	2003	Graz
1992	Madrid	2004	Genoa and Lille
1993	Antwerp	2005	Cork
1994	Lisbon	2006	Patras
1995	Luxembourg	2007	Luxembourg and Sibiu
1996	Copenhagen	2008	Liverpool and Stavanger

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc2485_en.htm

Chart 2: European cultural Month from the very beginning

1992	Krakow	1998	Linz and Valetta
1993	Graz	1999	Plovdiv
1994	Budapest	2000	----
1995	Nicosia	2001	Basel and Riga
1996	St. Petersburg	2002	----
1997	Ljubljana	2003	St. Petersburg

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc2485_en.htm

European Capital of culture: what does it mean?

The title European Capital of Culture has to be considered as a starting point for the designated city: it does not consider the status of the city at the moment is applied, but the plans that has for a future development.

It is a challenge, first of all for the community involvement. Suvi Innilä Project Manager for the candidature of the Finnish city of Turku as European Capital of Europe in 2011, declared that 100% of citizens and 96% of Finns were aware of the meaning of “European Capital of Culture” thanks to a widespread communication.

The candidate city would take into consideration the whole city-life, every place would have a special importance and it would be animated and make part of the process. It is necessary to recover the cultural heritage and the creative dimension of the city, starting from the past, in order to create international and, especially, intercultural projects through the promotion of intercultural dialogue and wide cooperation. The work and the commitment involved in the application will be evaluated even if the city would not be designated. The efforts will be a motivation for new projects and for a refurbishment of the city. Whatever the result is, the application process can be an opportunity for the candidate city to change and improve.

Selection process of the city

Through the years, the title has evolved, as well as the selection process.

Applications are evaluated and a city is chosen following fixed procedures which have evolved, improved and developed in time.

Between 2005 and 2012, capital cities have been selected basing on the guidelines of the Decision 1419/1999/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council. This decision determined the Countries and the order they would have been designated; it has also declared that candidate cities would have been evaluated by an international panel of examiners following specific criteria. (chart 3)

This process has shown some weak points, such as the lack of competition or the abandonment of the projects realized during the year as Capital of Culture. For this reason a new procedure 1622/2006/EC has been developed, and the Capitals between 2013 and 2019 have been selected through a contest involving cities from different hosting countries. (chart 4)

An international panel of 13 examiners members evaluated the application following specific criteria.

Chart 3: Calendar of hosting countries 2005-2012

2005	Ireland	Cork
2006	Greece	Patrasso
2007	Luxembourg	Romania
2008	United Kingdom	
2009	Austria	Lithuania
2010	Germany	Hungary
2011	Finland	Estonia
2012	Portugal	Slovenia

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc481_en.htm

Chart 4: Calendar of hosting countries 2013-2019

2013	France	Slovakia
2014	Sweden	Latvia
2015	Belgium	Czech Republic
2016	Spain	Poland
2017	Denmark	Cyprus
2018	Netherlands	Malta
2019	Italy	Bulgaria

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc481_en.htm

When a city intends to apply for the title of European Capital of Culture, it must follow a specific path which officially starts with the submission of the application. Actually, the way process begins a long time before that, with the previous interest of the city in the title, through actions and initiatives supporting its commitment.

Six years before the title will be designated, authorities release a national request for proposals (RFP) for the cities interested to apply. Italy will host the title of European Capital of Culture in 2019, the RFP was released at the end of 2012 and the cities have about 10 months to submit their application.

A panel of 13 independent experts is responsible for assessing the proposals, visiting the cities and creating a shortlist. Six of them are chosen by the Member State and seven by the European Institutions.

Preselected cities will adapt their programs basing on the guidelines of the panel which will re-examine them and designate the new European Capital of Culture. (chart 5)

Chart 5: Selection Procedure for Capitals of Culture

Timeline (in years, n being the year of the event starting 1 January)	Stage in the procedure	Body Responsible
n-6 (end of 2012)	Call for applications	Member State
n-6+10 months	Deadline for responding to the call for applications	Candidate Cities
n-5 (end of 2013)	Meeting of the panel for a pre-selection in the MS concerned => list of pre-selected cities (13 experts)	Member State
n-5 + 9 months	Meeting of the panel for the final selection in the MS concerned (13 experts)	Member State
n-4 (e.g. end of 2008 for the 2013 title)	Notification of the application from a city to the European Institutions	Member State
n-4 + 3 months	Opinion of the European Parliament on this application	European Parliament
	Designation of the European Capital of Culture	EU Council of Ministers

Source: European Commission guideline for candidate cities

The Program

One fundamental step in the application process is represented by the program which is meant to be exceptional.

The programs of candidate cities are unique, they are different in scale, scope, length, contents and partners, a pre-fixed formula does not exist (Palmer-Rae Associates 2004: 14).

The title European Capitals of Culture can equally make a valuable contribution to social inclusion and intercultural dialogue, increasing cultural cooperation at European level, improving the sense of community; for this reason the program cannot be national but must have a European aim.

Candidate cities will have to describe their own role in the European culture, their links to Europe and their identity. They also have to demonstrate their current involvement in European artistic and cultural life and it is important to

create relations and cooperations among the cities which will host the event the same year (Palmer-Rae Associates 2004: 14).

Two main criteria must be accomplished within the programme:

1. The "European dimension" of the event
2. Criteria relating to "City and Citizens"

The European dimension concept presents two main aspects: themes and the way in which the events in the programme are organised.

The themes lay emphasis on the city's contribution to the European cultural sector.

The European Capital of Culture event is a platform suitable for promoting new artistic and cultural trends and movements which are not yet widely known; the themes can also refer to figures and events which have marked the history and culture of the city or to the identity and heritage which link the city to Europe. It can be a unique theme with possible sub-topics, or programmes based on key concepts or principles.

Some examples: Thessaloniki developed 31 different themes, Graz decided not to use specific themes but the culture as general theme.

Others European Capitals of culture have chosen a unique theme for their programme, i.e. Avignone used "Art and creativity", Porto had the "Bridge to the future, the theme for Genoa "the trip".

The most common theme is "The city", which is considered as a possible integration.

For example, Bruxelles has chosen it as general theme and developing 6 sub-topic as "Celebrating the City" and "Re-imag(in)ing the City".

Thanks to several meetings with authors, artists, philosophers, intellectuals, cultural stakeholders and European experts, Ravenna has identified the themes for the application, called "Cinque Tracce":

Di soglia in soglia, for the intercultural communication.

La danza dei contrari, art and culture as a common strength

Verso il mare aperto, water protagonist in the city

Immaginare l'immaginario, as citizens see their city

Trasformo, dunque siamo, from the past for a future change



Referring to the organization of the event, useful co operations for the development of the projects are needed. They can involve artists, organizations, European partners, local institutions, etc.

The program must take into consideration the promotion of the transnational mobility of people working in the cultural sector, the support for the transnational circulation of artistic and cultural works and products and the support for intercultural dialogue.

Ravenna has already considered the cooperation of cultural operators to detect the themes and to implement the program.

According to the second criteria, related to “city and citizens”, popular participations is fundamental for the realization of the program and to foster the projects.

Citizens can actively take part in the event suggesting new ideas during the application process and, once the city will be declared Capital of culture, they can be part of the practical realization of their suggestions.

This is an opportunity for citizens to obtain a new perception of their city and to strengthen their connection to it.

The theme “CinqueTracce” could offer the opportunity to young people to work as volunteers in promotion and support activities during the application process, moreover a voluntary association called V!RA 2019 has been created with the aim to manage activities related to the events, following the example of Lille, with 17000 volunteers in 2004 (Besson & Sutherland, 2007).

The attractiveness of the city plays a major role for a Capital of Culture, it is important to understand how to reach this objective in order to attract as more visitors as possible, not only local visitors but also people living far away (i.e. a Scandinavian city should be able to interest Italian or Portuguese citizens).

The program refers to the year the city is entitled as Capital of Culture, but it has long-lasting effects because this year is considered as a starting point for a long term development of the city.

The title European Capital of Culture represents an opportunity for a future and long-lasting development. The candidate cities must be aware of these effects and of the high costs it involves, it cannot be considered as a temporary event but as a long-term investment.

But after spending one year as Capital of Culture, many cities could not take full advantage of the opportunity the title offered.

The event represents the starting point for the development of the city, increasing and enhancing its cultural life. This may be possible only through the preservation of pre-established co operations and networks, and if previous results will be kept in force even after the event. Moreover, urban regeneration policies are requested.

To achieve these results, the selection of good European partners is fundamental; quality projects must be elaborated taking into account the international dimension of the event, involving cultural stakeholders, social-

economical operators and citizens, combining different needs, from artistic ones to the requests of local population.

A bottom up process is required, through previous meetings and planned events with operators of different fields of action.

Lille is a good example of the relationships that a Capital of Culture can create with social-economical operators. It could achieve this objective involving several sponsors in different fields like transports, making possible the connection between Lille and other cities in France and abroad thanks to convenient fares, mostly during the event "Lille 2004" (Besson & Sutherland, 2007).

The realization of the event has to start from the past of the city, from its "roots" and local traditions, to reach an international level working for a comparison between different cultures.

The temptation for some cities is to focus on international cultural eccentricities at the expense of local artists and traditional cultural expressions (Besson & Sutherland, 2007).

From the very beginning, Ravenna committed itself for the establishment of relationships and international cooperations with some of the former as well as future Capitals of Culture, like Lille (2004), Luxembourg (2007), Liverpool (2008), Linz (2009), Istanbul (2010), Pecs (2010), Kosice (2013), Riga (2014), Marseille (2013) and Mons (2015), through meetings focused on sharing experiences, suggestions and advices about the application process.

The event should be characterized by innovation, giving the opportunity to local and international artists to be part of it. For this reason, operative directors have to balance different or, sometimes, opposite factors for the implementation of a tailor-made program based on the city's specific needs.

It is necessary to remember that the project must be equal, it must combine local specific elements and international elements, making the city attractive for both local and European population.

Critical points and dilemmas must be faced by candidate cities in their program. One of the biggest problems for the development of the programme is the high number of stakeholders and the satisfaction of all the operators.

The cultural program can be implemented within the city (i.e. Santiago) or within a whole region (Lille).

Up to now, all European Capitals of Culture have developed their programs within the city limits, but the majority included areas around the city and the region too; some of them also included the whole country, as Luxembourg and Stockholm.

Therefore, a major role for the application is played by supporting cities. Ravenna is supported by the surrounding territory, which would possibly benefit of the title. On the top of the list is Faenza and the neighboring area, Brisighella, Casola Valsenio, Riolo Terme, Castelbolognese, Solarolo, Lugo and

lower Romagna Region, but also the bordering provinces of Forlì-Cesena and Rimini.

All these cities have created Artistic and Organizing Committees aiming to involve citizens and cultural situations in the territory.

Therefore, communication and promotion should not focus only on the specific city, but it should take into consideration the whole region or area, marking a determining score for the success of the Capital of Culture.

Why Ravenna?



Ravenna results from the meeting of different cultures and populations which have contributed to the growth of the city over the centuries.

Culture does not belong only to the past, but it still represents the basis for future development and for a social and economical growth. The challenge now is innovation and integration, leaning towards new cultures and horizons, opening to exchange and dialogue.

Why should Ravenna become European Capital of Culture?

Is a multifaceted city, it is known all over the world for its precious mosaics preserved in ancient Byzantine and Early Christian buildings.

In its long history, allied with Rome against Gaul, it became the capital city of the Roman Empire when Onorio, Theodosio's son, moved there from Mediolanum for its strategic position near the sea. In short time, changed from a province city into a global city, the centre of political, cultural and religious life. Since then, is a meeting point fully harmonized with its surroundings; its important history did not overtake on the city but it was an inspiration for a continuous development towards the future.

Ravenna is culture, its complete heritage includes history, art, environment, tourism, food and wine tradition, and much more. It is not stuck in its past, but re-considers it through a contemporary vision to keep alive its growing process.

Is a monumental city, it is the city with the highest presence in UNESCO World Heritage List, eight different monuments are part of this list since 1996; it also hosts national and international museums. Last but not least, it is a touristic town, as shown in the chart below.

Chart. Accommodation capacity – City of Ravenna

ESERCIZI YEARS	Accommodation facilities				Accommodation facilities			
	2010		2011		2012			
	Facilities	Bed spaces	Facilities	Bed spaces	Facilities	Bedrooms	Bed spaces	Toilets
5* hotels	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4* hotels	8	1.362	8	1.371	9	718	1.569	718
3* hotels	83	7.655	83	7.711	81	3.413	7.391	3.406
2* hotels	13	591	13	554	12	255	515	242
1* hotels	7	225	7	218	7	107	232	102
Res Turistiche Alberghiere	14	2.467	15	2.509	14	743	1.873	638
Hotels total amount	125	12.300	126	12.363	123	5.236	11.580	5.106
Campsites	14	21.226	14	21.157	14	6.115	21.226	962
Agriturismo (Farm house)	16	172	22	207	18	90	193	88
Youth hostels	2	207	2	191	2	73	207	64
Holiday houses	1	21	1	21	1	15	21	9
Bed & Breakfast	138	594	162	687	150	335	653	280
Alloggi Rec	556	2.992	51	2.580	51	724	2.454	600
Private accommodation	3.949	17.630	3.949	17.630	3.949	7.314	17.630	4.130
Other – total amount	4.676	42.842	4.201	42.473	4.185	14.666	42.384	6.133
Grand total	4.801	55.142	4.327	54.836	4.308	19.902	53.964	11.239

Source: Tourism Office - City of Ravenna

In the municipality of Ravenna there are hotels ranging from 1 star to 4 stars hotels, the peak is registered for 3 stars hotels, with the highest presence and the highest number of bed spaces.

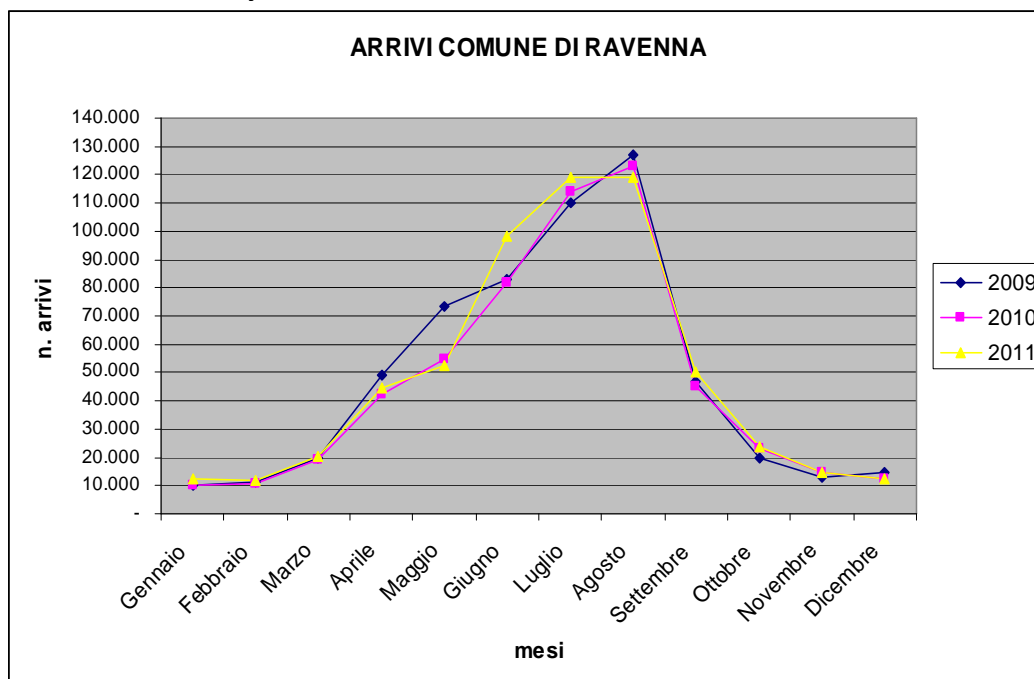
Over the last three years, the number of accommodation facilities has not considerably changed, but bed spaces have decreased from 12,363 in 2011 to 11,580 in 2012. In the surrounding area there are more structures like campsites, farm houses, youth hostels and bed & breakfast.

Over the last three years, the number of B&B has increased of 44 units between 2010 and 2011, from 138 to 162, decreasing to 150 in 2012.

The total amount shows a decreasing of 500 units, from 4,801 in 2010 to 4,308 in 2012, reducing available bed spaces of over 1,000 units.

Following are the arrivals in the last three years:

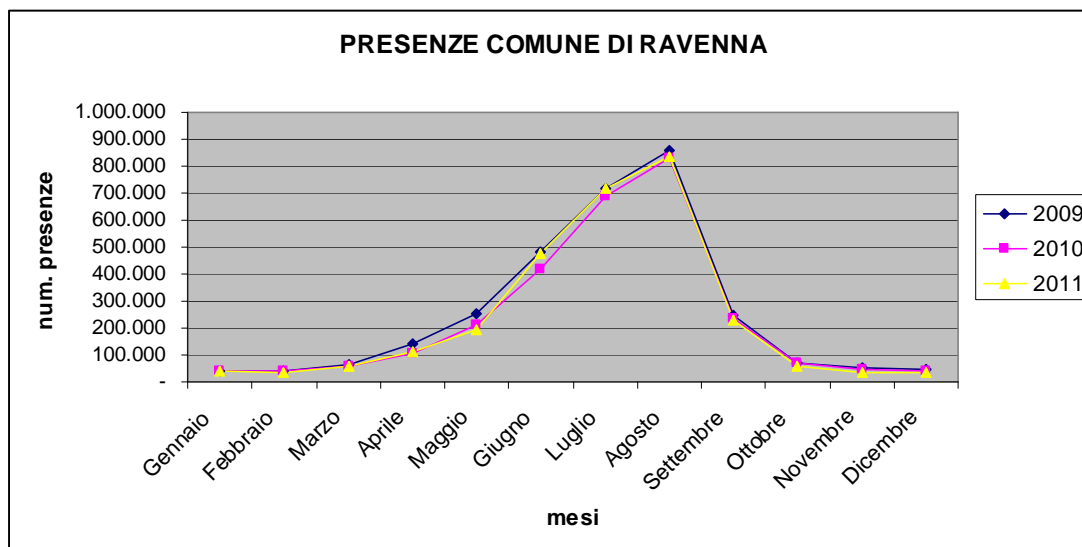
Chart. Arrival – City of Ravenna



Source: Collini 2012

Arrivals in the city had a little increase of about 1,000 units between 2009 and 2011, from 577,683 to 578,576, but a decrease was registered in 2010. Obviously the peak was registered in August, even if in 2011 the data for July and August are similar. The next chart shows the tourist number in the city:

Chart. Tourist number – City of Ravenna



Source: Collini 2012

Observing the tourist number in the city area, there has been a reduction over the last three years from 3,017,715 in 2009 to 2,777,376 in 2012, with a light increase in 2011. During the summer, tourist number is clearly higher with a peak of more of 800,000 in August, even if a decrease of 30,000 units was registered over the last three years. Here is an analysis of arrivals and tourist number in seaside resorts.

Chart. Arrivals Ravenna seaside resorts

ARRIVALS	2009	2010	2011
Ravenna City	228156	233629	238423
Ravenna seaside	349527	318164	340153
Casalborsetti	29577	32246	34843
Marina Romea	39886	36232	36830
Porto Corsini	579	423	1119
Marina di Ravenna	51910	45389	48462
Punta Marina	62087	43839	52306
Lido Adriano	24324	23229	27022
Lido di Dante	15590	16386	18264
Lido di Classe	31392	28143	28154
Lido di Savio	94182	92277	93153

Source: Tourist Office – City of Ravenna

Chart. Tourist number Ravenna seaside resorts

PRESENZE	2009	2010	2011
Ravenna Centro	492467	486722	510208
Ravenna Lidi	2525248	2290654	2325898
Casalborsetti	245300	243220	268486
Marina Romea	258919	246730	244410
Porto Corsini	2507	2739	7351
Marina di Ravenna	318946	312201	316349
Punta Marina	591514	424259	441133
Lido Adriano	287464	270635	236061
Lido di Dante	160806	158120	173329
Lido di Classe	156231	145095	135787
Lido di Savio	503561	487655	502992

Source: Tourist Office City of Ravenna

The bed-spaces offered by Ravenna is very high mostly in the seaside area, thanks to the big number of tourists. This is an added value for the city, since accommodation for a high number of incoming flows is needed just in case Ravenna would be designated as Capital of culture.

It is important to take into consideration the impact that a higher amount of tourists would mean for the city and its surrounding area, in order not to overcharge the facilities with the result of a bad effect over the long term.

The title European capital of culture has a strong impact on tourism as well, since the program has a strong influence in this field.

The analysis of the impact that the designation of the city can produce comes from the comparison between the number of visitors over that year and the visitors of the previous year.

This method offers an approximate view of the impact that visitors have on the city, but it is not enough to identify the specific influence of the event on incoming flows of visitors, on their behavior and expenses.

It is not possible to determine whether the variation of the number of visitors was influenced by a specific cultural event, whether they know the city is the European Capital of culture or whether they would have visited the city anyway. It happened that the number of tourists decreased after the designation: this is the case of Luxembourg and Prague (Palmer Study, 2004). It is difficult to determine whether this decline was due to the designation or to other reasons, many factors can influence the number of visitors over that specific year: they can only be identified through a deep monitoring and a market survey. Some cities, like Rotterdam, Salamanca and Graz implemented similar surveys, analyzing the behavior, motivation and expenses of the visitors (Palmer Study, 2004).

The development of the ability to be attractive for tourist is one of the main aims next to the cultural, social, economical and appearance ones.

The growth of touristic flow creates a bigger income for the Capital of culture and for the whole country, and it enhances the international profile of the city.

Copenhagen is the example of a city which mixed more techniques and obtained many positive results through deseasonalized tourism, a higher consciousness of the touristic sector, the development of new European markets, the creation of new touristic opportunities and the promotion of a different image of the city (Palmer Study, 2004).

From this point of view, the title European Capital of culture can offer many opportunities and increasing the value of the existing ones like seaside, thermal, naturalistic tourism.

A high level of attention must be kept on cultural tourism for the enhancement of the heritage of the city.

The itinerary is a possible way to understand the various types of tourism, it may have different features and involve more than one territory.

Touristic itinerary is an important product for the creation of the heritage and the common territory, it may also be a strategic point for the construction of the material and intangible heritage.

Themed tourism is becoming more and more popular because it is a possible way to diversify the product and to strengthen the identity of a single place (Dallari). The theme must be accurately chosen, it must be “appropriate”, forged on the needs of the tourist. Cultural itineraries are themed paths representing a cultural value or an element of the heritage combined with fun and learning.

The themes can refer to history, religion, industrialisation, the social or cultural heritage, an event, art, architecture, traditions, local products, a historic or artistic figure, etc.

They can also have geographical varieties: urban, local, regional, national, international. (Dallari) The paths can be developed with limited investment, they let the touristic demand to be varied and they spread the demand in time and space contributing to the touristic fruition of not-used resources and develop new demand for specific types of tourism.

Cultural itineraries and themed paths are good practice for the development of tourism and culture, for the cooperation of this two sectors and to positively influence high-peak seasons and the polarization of the demand in space. They can also develop theme-oriented products according to the economy of the territory for the enhancement of the cultural identity of local communities.

The project of an itinerary is very important, therefore the identification of some main elements is necessary: the territory (real, virtual), the shape (ring, linear, star), the theme (religious, cultural, naturalistic, sport, food and wine), the means (itineraries by car, by bike, walking, riding a horse), the area (excursion, local itinerary, part of the itinerary, historic path), the destination (single, stop over) and the organization (self-organized, touristic pack, individual, group) (Zabbini, 2012).

Therefore, it is important to add new opportunities to existing ones for this type of tourism, in order to indulge the demand and increase the request.

The city of Ravenna offers resources, experience and potentiality which lead to the dialogue among different cultures and people, obtaining a leading role in the world. After being capital city of the Roman Empire and Goth Empire, main characters in the history of Europe and in the creation of its culture, Ravenna intends now to become European Capital of culture. It was the cradle of our history, it keeps in mind our background but it is also projected into the future, giving priority to the communities of people who are a fundamental element in the creation of culture and traditions.

Conclusions

For a long time culture was put in the background in our society, but in the last few years we realized that cultural heritage is a founding element of society.

On culture we can find the development of our territory, raising awareness in the bases of the growth of our city, that is to say history, art, architecture, environment and archeological heritage.

This is the reason why the cooperation with stakeholders from different fields is essential, mostly social and cultural ones, but also political and economical players in order to reach common purposes. The creation of a net of systems to obtain the same results in the whole territory is necessary.

The starting point to achieve global development projects in a broad area is a detailed and cooperative work. Therefore, the title European Capital of Culture is a starting point for the renewal of the city and its surrounding area.

Even with an important and large history, Ravenna can reinvent its look, first of all for its citizens and, at the same time, at national and global level. It can start from the past, but with a vision towards the future.

This European title is a big opportunity for designated cities. It is an incentive for development and growth, from both a cultural and an economical point of view; the increase of touristic flows and job places have a good influence on society and on the wellbeing of all citizens.

Moreover, this can be considered as a good way for European citizens to get to know each other, highlighting common elements in different cultures but, at the same time, keeping in mind the importance of their differences.

The title offers the opportunity for the European Union to strengthen the relationships between citizens enhancing their own identities.

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