

CULTURAL MEGA-EVENTS AS AN INTERNATIONAL, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL TOOL

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Abstract: *This article is an attempt to offer a conceptual understanding of various kinds of mega-events and to determine their significance as an instrument of the official international cultural policy. The article examines scientific approaches to understanding and classification of mega-events. The case studies focus on such mega-events as international cross-cultural years and cultural forums. The fact that the official foreign policy often defines and shapes the goals of mega-events proves their value in establishing and promoting a positive international image of the country. Recent Russian experience in organizing cross-cultural years is examined to discuss positive and negative socio-cultural impact.*

Keywords: *Mega-event, international cultural politics, international exchange, cultural relations, political tool, image of the country*

Rezumat: *Mega-evenimentele culturale ca instrument internațional, cultural și politic. Acest articol este o încercare de a oferi o înțelegere conceptuală a diferitelor tipuri de mega-evenimente și de a determina semnificația lor ca instrument al politicii culturale internaționale oficiale. Articolul examinează abordările științifice privind înțelegerea și clasificarea mega-evenimentelor. Studiile de caz se concentrează pe astfel de mega-evenimente precum anii interculturali internaționali și forumurile culturale. Faptul că, adesea, politica externă oficială definește și modelează scopurile mega-evenimentelor demonstrează valoarea acestora în stabilirea și promovarea unei imagini internaționale pozitive a țării. Experiența recentă a Rusiei în organizarea anilor interculturali este examinată pentru a discuta impactul socio-cultural pozitiv și negativ a unor asemenea evenimente.*

Résumé : Les méga-événements culturels comme instrument international, culturel et politique. L'article ci-joint représente un essai d'offrir une compréhension conceptuelle des différents types de méga-événements et de déterminer leur signification comme instrument de la politique culturelle internationale officielle. L'article examine les abords scientifiques concernant la compréhension et la classification des méga-événements. Les études de cas se concentrent sur des méga-événements semblables, tels les années interculturelles internationales et les forums culturels. Le fait que, souvent, la politique externe officielle définit et modèle les buts des méga-événements démontre leur valeur dans l'établissement et la promotion d'une image internationale positive du pays. L'expérience récente de la Russie dans l'organisation des années interculturelles est examinée pour discuter l'impact socio-culturel positif et négatif des événements semblables.

INTRODUCTION

An increased interest of researchers to large-scale events with a great number of participants and huge publicity is a recent trend of cultural studies that define such events as “mega-events.” Even a simple statistic points to a growing popularity of mega-events. During 2000-2008, there were 47 world mega-events: 33 sports events, 7 business and 7 cultural mega-events. 25 out of 47 mentioned mega-events had positive impact for a host: 79% countries experienced export growth, 77% – import growth, 55% – attracted more investments, 64% – increased a number of Internet users, 56% – increased a number of mobile service users, and majority of counties saw a drop in the unemployment rate.

Successful mega-events increase the attractiveness of the host country as they serve as both an advertising and publicity tool and attract public attention on domestic and global levels. The mega-event creates an opportunity for a host country to show its achievements, to make important political and cultural statements, to promote its image on international arena, and to engage and attract partners and investors.

Even though the image of a country is rather an intangible asset, it has a certain monetary value because it can secure a desirable economic effect in the form of investments and influx of tourists as well as strong international reputation of the country. The mega-event creates favorable conditions for cultural influence of the country and promotes its products to the world markets. These are only a few reasons why countries and cities fiercely compete for the right to host a mega-event.

Despite existing literature on mega-events, there is still a gap in its conceptual understanding as an international cultural phenomenon. The complicated

dynamics between mega-events and media as well as the whole range of the negative and positive effects have yet to be determined and classified. At present, even defining the mega-event is under discussion, let alone the set of exact dimensions or classification.

The main research method applied in the article is an institutional analysis with some tools borrowed from event analysis, comparative analysis, case studies and cross-case analysis of mega-events. The hypothesis suggests that the cultural mega-events perform a significant function in official foreign cultural politics because they have direct impact on the country's image and reputation. A brief contrastive analysis of the events and some official foreign policy documents in the paper proves the hypothesis.

MEGA-EVENTS IN SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE

A Sociology Professor of the Sheffield University Morris Roche^{1,2} offers a widely used definition of mega-events. He describes them as “parades” and “shows”, “large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance.” Another fitting definition is offered by a Sociology Professor of the University of Northern Colorado George Sage³, who characterizes mega-events as global events in the sphere of politics, economy, culture and sport, which act as an integral part of globalization.

Mega-events can be examined from different perspectives with variety of methodological tools. In the context of marketing, Professor of the Tartu University Andrei Makarychev⁴ introduces the term “global mega-event” and explains it as an island of “globalization” processes, a product of expanding international market for promotion of regional and city brands”. Professor of the Kazan Federal University A. V. Yatsyk⁵ studies mega-events in the context of neoliberal theory as an element

¹ M. Roche, *Mega-Events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture*, London, Routledge, 2000.

² Idem, *Mega-events and modernity revisited: globalization and the case of Olympics. Sports Mega-Events: Social Scientific Analyses of a Global Phenomenon*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2006.

³ G. H. Sage, *Globalizing Sport. How Organizations, Corporations, Media, and Politics are Changing Sports*, Boulder, London, Paradigm Publishers, 2010.

⁴ A. Makarychev, *The Politics of Sports Mega-Events in Russia: Kazan, Sochi, and Beyond*, in “PONARS: New approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia”, 2013, no. 9, p. 1-6.

⁵ A. В. Яцик, *Спортивные мегасобытия и популярная культура: глобальное и локальное в ландшафтах Универсиады 2013 в Казани* [Sport mega-events and popular

of global culture and public diplomacy. He defines it as “a part of national narrative in the nation-building process that contains cultural and geopolitical meaningful messages about the host country or city”. Yet another approach is cultivated by Harry Hiller⁶, a Sociology Professor of the Calgary University in Canada. He is interested in mega-events and studies to what extent the event was a success and what its failures were. He focuses on the output side of mega-events.

A commonly agreed-on definition belongs to Martin Müller⁷, a Senior Research Fellow at the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Science of the University of Birmingham. His definition lists the following qualifiers for mega-event: “Mega-events are one-time occasions of a fixed duration that attract a large number of visitors and have worldwide reach. They come with significant costs and long-term impacts on the built environment and the population of the host countries or cities.” Basically, he offers four constitutive dimensions of mega-events: visitor attractiveness, media scope, costs, and transformative impact.

To develop existing terminology⁶, M. Müller⁷ has introduced a category of “giga-event” for mega-events with maximum indicators at least in three above-mentioned dimensions. He lists the following as mega-events: 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, 2012 Olympic Games in London, and 2014 Football World Cup in Brazil⁸.

The literature review on mega-events suggests that there is still a place for discussions on the unified approach to the definition and dimensions. Most researchers agree that publicity and scale are the most important characteristics of mega-events. As the rest remains fluid, the question of definition remains open. What criteria qualify an event as a mega-event? In our opinion, the major criteria

culture: global and local in the landscapes of the Universiade 2013 in Kazan], Москва, Новое литературное обозрение, 2015.

⁶ H. Hiller, *Toward an urban sociology of mega-events*, in “Research in Urban Sociology”, 2000, no. 5, p. 182-183; L. K. Jago, R. N. Shaw, *Special events: A conceptual and definitional framework*, in “Festival Management and Event Tourism”, 1998, Vol. 5, no. 1-2, p. 21-32; B. M. Mills, M. S. Rosentraub, *Hosting mega-events: a guide to the evaluation of development effects in integrated metropolitan regions*, in “Tourism Management”, 2013, no. 34, p. 238-246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.03.011> (Accessed on 02.08.2017).

⁷ M. Müller, *What makes an event a mega-event? Definitions and sizes*, in “Leisure Studies”, 2015, Vol. 34, no. 6, p. 627-642.

⁸ В. В. Пасынкова, *Олимпийские игры в процессе глобальной спортизации: сравнительный анализ мега-событий* [Olympic Games in the global sportization process: a comparative analysis of mega-events], in “Журнал социологии и социальной антропологии”, 2013, Том 16, вып. 5, с. 56.

are its global significance and scale that can be measured by number of involved participants, spectators and organizers, by political and economic impact, by growth of domestic and international tourism, by mediated reach and coverage, by cost, investments, budgets for construction and infrastructure projects. Other criteria can reflect its scope and level, long-term impact, economic profitability and media popularity. One more criteria should measure impact on political, cultural, social, and economic areas of a host and improvements of its international standing with other acting partners.

Thus, any mega-event has two levels: internal dimensions (duration and scale that depend on the number of participants and complexity of event organization) and external ones (media, tourist attractiveness, the impact on the development of the host).



Picture 1. The plenary session of the 21st St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on June 2, 2017 (Russia, St. Petersburg).

Source: <http://forumspb.tassphoto.com/album/814##photo%2F12538>

As mega-events vary in nature, it is common to distinguish political, economic, business, sports, and cultural types of mega-events. Summits G8, G20, BRICS are exemplary political mega-events. Petersburg's Economic Forum, and forums of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Economic Forum and Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation are examples of economic mega-events. Among sports mega-

events one can list the Olympic Games, World and Europe Football Championship, Universiades, Formula 1, Asian Games, Francophone Games, and other world and regional sports games⁹.

As the environmental situation in the world worsens, the attention to the mega-events with ecological agenda grows, for example, to international climate conference in Paris (December, 2014) or so-called “Tiger’s Summit” in Petersburg (2010). The examples of scientific mega-events are the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony and Fields Medal Award Ceremony.



Picture 2. Famous American actor Leonardo DiCaprio was a participant of “Tiger’s Summit” in Petersburg (2010).

Source: <http://www.tigerforum2010.ru/results/gallery/>

In the classification of mega-events, cultural mega-events hold a special place for their high value and positive impact for society and culture in general. A

⁹ М. Товкайло, *Олимпиада-2014 и Чемпионат мира по футболу 2018 г. вряд ли окупят* [Olympics-2014 and the 2018 FIFA World Cup are unlikely to pay off], “Ведомости”, 2011, Вып. 2961 (Октябрь 17), с. 4; Т. Absalyamov, *The Influence of Cultural and Sport Mega-events on Sustainable Development of the City*, in “Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences”, 2015, no. 188, p. 197-201; W. Jennings, *Olympic Risks*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

significant number of research papers on cultural mega-events is focused on a project “The European Capital of Culture”¹⁰. All above-mentioned scientists assign important social and economic significance to cultural mega-events. For example, focused on experience of Guimarães as European Capital of Culture in 2012, Portuguese scientists José de Freitas Santos, Laurentina Vareiro, Paula Remoaldo & José Cadima Ribeiro¹¹ points out to the consistent long-term positive effect of cultural mega-events. Having examined the sports mega-events in Kazan, we can also make a conclusion that business mega-events have only limited impact on socio-economic development of the region compared to sports, cultural and entertainment international events. A recognized authority in the field of mega-event studies, Liverpool University professor Beatrice Garcia and her colleagues¹² describe mega-events as a driving force of cultural economy and production.

CULTURAL MEGA-EVENTS AS AN INTERNATIONAL MEGA-PROJECT

Unlike other mega-events, the cultural mega-events are able to produce a strong emotional appeal. Floris Langen and Beatriz Garcia¹³ characterize cultural mega-events as large-scale cultural festivals with established tradition and solid reputation built over years. Their list of cultural mega-events include international exhibitions (e.g. Manifesta, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art), book fairs (e.g. Paris Book Fair), big international festivals and contests like Cannes, Venice, Berlin Film Festivals, the International Tchaikovsky Competition, Verona Opera Festival, the Oscars and etc. Even though in their studies of mega-events researchers turn to many projects like “European capital of Culture”, international EXPOs, Eurovision, MTV Europe Music Awards, they tend to overlook a certain type of mega-events.

¹⁰ J. D. F. Santos, L. Vareiro, P. Remoaldo, J. C. Ribeiro, *Cultural mega-events and the enhancement of a city's image: differences between engaged participants and attendees*, in “Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events”, 2017, Vol. 9, no. 2, p. 129-151, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2016.1157598> (Accessed on 29.07.2017).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² N. A. Bergsgard, K. Josendal, B. Garcia, *A cultural mega event's impact on innovative capabilities in art production: the results of Stavanger being the European capital of culture in 2008*, in “International Journal of Innovation and Regional Development”, 2010, Vol. 2, no. 4, p. 353-371 <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJIRD.2010.03699> (Accessed on 27.07.2017).

¹³ F. Langen, B. Garcia, *Measuring the Impacts of Large Scale Cultural Events: A Literature Review*, Liverpool, University of Liverpool, 2009.



Picture 3. Pavilion “Nur Alem” at the Expo-2017 (Astana, Kazakhstan)

Source: <https://expo2017astana.com/>

Cultural mega-events differ from other mega-events by their goals, formats, designs, budgets and impact¹⁴. They also vary by genres of classical and modern cultures: music, theatre, arts, dance, literature, cuisine, film, fashion, design, photography and many others¹⁵. From this perspective, mega-events are usually multi-genre cultural festivals and often unfold as a chain of small-scale cultural events during a few days or several years. Moreover, a cultural mega-event can include educational, technological, scientific, industry and economic events. The formats for cultural events are also multiple: tours, concerts, presentations, exhibitions, film screening, conference, seminars, joint theatre and music performances, workshops, book fairs, all kinds of meetings and discussions.

The XXI century witnessed a significant increase in a number and variety of cultural mega-events. What kind of impact do they have? Majority of researchers

¹⁴ J. R. B. Ritchie, D. Beliveau, *Hallmark Events: An evaluation of a strategic response to seasonality in the travel market*, in “Journal of Travel Research”, 1974, Vol. 13, no. 2, p. 14-20.

¹⁵ V. Fokin, S. Shirin, J. Nikolaeva, N. Bogoliubova, E. Eltc, V. Baryshnikov, *Interaction of Cultures and Diplomacy of States*, in “Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences”, 2017, Vol. 38, no. 1, p. 45-49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2016.05.001> (Accessed on 29.07.2017).

agree that the most important economic impact of cultural event consists of attracting tourists and generating interest from investors. For host countries, regions and cities, a cultural mega-event creates an opportunity for better self-presentation, stronger competitiveness, more popularity and better recognition. Cultural mega-events can be used as a symbolic message to other countries about national achievements, cultural heritage, natural resources and other unique features of the host country. In this way, cultural mega-events give a competitive advantage for a host country by improving its image¹⁶.

It is hard to overemphasize the significance of cultural events as a “soft” instrument of diplomacy. It is often used as a means to strengthen cultural relations and encourage exchanges because it helps to generate attention, positive attitude and interest of a general audience. At the same time, cultural events are used as a PR tool to underline the attractiveness and uniqueness of the country. Wide media coverage offers a convenient way to promote a host country in the world. Despite the obvious positive impact of cultural mega-events, some critics express an opinion that they are beneficent and useful only for developed rather than developing countries.

Unfortunately, mega-events have also negative sides. Mega-events could lead to an overpromising of benefits and an underestimation of costs, the unequal appropriation of resources, the violation of a citizen's rights and the rewriting of urban development priorities to serve the demands of the event. Such events represent an abrupt intervention from outside into host societies, a self-induced shock that reorders economic, political and social relations in a short period of time – often for the benefit of a select few¹⁷.

However, two points must immediately be made. Firstly, and quite evidently, events are not always promoted or staged for the economic benefits that they might generate, and nor can their negative consequences be measured simply in economic terms. Indeed, events may often be staged at an economic ‘loss’ when, for example, their costs are covered not by income from participants but by sponsorship or local government funding. In such cases, the desired benefits of the event might be overtly socio-cultural: strengthening community identity and pride, developing social capital, increasing local participation in community activities, revitalizing local culture, traditions, and so on. Equally,

¹⁶ V. Fokin, V. Baryshnikov, N. Bogoliubova, J. Nikolaeva, I. Ivannikov, M. Portnyagina, N. Ryazantseva, E. Eltc, I. Chernov, *Multiculturalism in the Modern World*, in “International Journal of Environmental and Science Education”, 2016, Vol. 11, no.18, p. 10777-10787.

¹⁷ M. Müller, *How mega-events capture their hosts: event seizure and the World Cup 2018 in Russia*, in “Urban Geography”, 2015, Vol. 38, no. 8, p. 1113-1132. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2015.1109951> (Accessed on 20.12.2017).

events may be staged for political purposes. Frequently, the hosting of international mega-events may be driven by the pursuit of international prestige or legitimacy whilst other events may seek to highlight specific political issues or causes (as an example “Live Aid” and “Live 8” concerts). Reference should also be made, of course, to the physical or environmental impacts, both positive and negative, of events. As discussed in the next chapter, not only may events provide an environmental benefit (for example, improved infrastructure), but also there is a pressing need to manage the environmental impacts of events within a sustainability framework¹⁸.

Secondly, the impacts of events are neither discrete nor necessarily hierarchical. That is, all events have a variety of impacts, both positive and negative, some being more immediately evident others, some being of potentially greater significance than the intended outcomes. For example, the sense of national pride engendered by the South Korean national team’s success at the 2002 FIFA World Cup hosted by that country far outweighed the event’s economic returns. Similarly, the annual London Marathon has a major economic impact in terms of the money that participants raise for charity whilst, for the runners themselves, taking part in (and, hopefully, completing) the marathon not only provides a sense of achievement but also is linked to social identity formation¹⁹.

It is also important to notice, that a poorly organized mega-event can become a reason of discontent in local population and have many negative effects like damage to image. For example, for residents of St. Petersburg, and first of all, the Vasiievsky Island, the holding of the International Economic Forum creates certain inconveniences: in the days of the forum, residents of this area, in order to get home, have to show a passport with a registration stamp. They have also the difficulties with the traffic jams and the detours. The holiday “Scarlet Sails”, which is organized for graduates every summer in St. Petersburg, often causes a lot of complaints from residents. The main reason of dissatisfaction is the fact that after the holiday there are the garbage mountains in the center of the city. Such consequences of mega-events have a negative impact on the image of the city as a cultural capital. It can discourage tourists and local residents who avoid visiting such events, considering them unsafe.

Thus, a key task for event managers is to not only identify and, as far as

¹⁸ P. R. Stone, R. Sharpley, *Socio-cultural impacts of events: meanings, authorized transgression and social capital* (Chapter 23), in S. Page, J. Connell, *The Routledge Handbook of Events*, London, Routledge, 2011.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

possible, predict the impacts of events, but to manage them in such a way that benefits are optimized and negative impacts are minimized so that, on balance the overall impact of the event is positive²⁰.



Picture 4. Center of St. Petersburg after the “Scarlet Sails” celebration (2007)

Source: https://shkolazhizni.ru/img/content/i15/15534_or.jpg

CROSS-CULTURAL YEARS AND INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL FORUMS AS A TYPE OF CULTURAL MEGA-EVENTS

Bilateral or even multilateral cross-cultural years became very popular at the beginning of XXI century. The goal of such a mega-event is to organize cultural events co-currently in two or several countries to establish and encourage a cultural dialogue.

As an international mega-event, cross-cultural years engage different art genres and encourage educational, technological, scientific, industrial and economic exchanges. The programs can be extremely rich and wide spread with hundreds of events. For example, the Russia-UK Year of Culture (2014) included more than 250 events in the fields of culture, science, education and sports.

²⁰ P. R. Stone, R. Sharpley, *Socio-cultural impacts of events: meanings, authorized transgression and social capital* (Chapter 23), in S. Page, J. Connell, *The Routledge Handbook of Events*, London, Routledge, 2011.

Bilateral cross-cultural years contribute to the cultural image and reputation of the country as well as to the better discussion of political and economic issues. Moreover, years of cultures popularize national culture and language of the participating countries, implementing their foreign cultural policy and developing cultural and public diplomacy. Such events promote understanding and cooperation between participating countries as they reconfirm their mutual interest in development of understanding and cooperation. For this purpose many countries organize the years of culture to boost their tourist, scientific, business potential and to improve national image²¹.

Cross-cultural years are regular events for many countries: France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Great Britain, China, Japan, India, Argentina, and Russia. In France, for example, such cultural events are very popular and are held almost every year: several mega-events can run for several years. For example, France-Japan Years took place in 1997-1998, France-China Year – in 2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2014-2015, France-Brazil – in 2009, and France- South Africa – in 2012-2013, France-South Korea – in 2015-2016, France-Columbia – in 2017²².

For the France-Colombia cross-cultural year, France defined its goals as "to update the picture of the cultural presence of France in Colombia", to modernize the image of France and to develop cooperation. French international cultural policy employs cultural mega-events in accordance with its official diplomatic tasks to promote French culture in the world; to promote works of French artists, musicians, writers etc.; to establish a strong connection among French and foreign cultures and to support cultural diversity²³. The modern French international cultural policy supports the cultural dialogue and exchange as a fundamental principle and the Years of Culture fits well into the official framework²¹.

Many countries follow a similar path. In 2007-2008, Spain-China Years of Culture were organized with the program including more than 250 cultural, economic, political, scientific and educational events. Spain-Japan Years of Culture took place in 2013-2014 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Foreign cultural policy of Spain aims to strengthen

²¹ J. Horne, *The four "knowns" of sports mega-events*, in "Leisure Studies", 2007, Vol. 26, no. 1, p. 81-82. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02614360500504628> (Accessed on 02.02.2017).

²² Н. М. Боголюбова, Ю. В. Николаева, *Культурные сезоны как форма внешней культурной политики (на примере России и Франции)* [Cultural seasons as the form of foreign cultural policy (on an example of Russia and France)], "Вестник Санкт-Петербургского государственного университета культуры и искусств", 2011, вып. 2, с. 30-35.

²³ R. Gruneau, J. Horne, *Mega-Events and Globalization: Capital and Spectacle in a Changing World Order (Routledge Research in Sport, Culture and Society)*, Routledge, 2016.

international cultural cooperation. In a way, the official Spanish foreign policy is not unique in its strong commitment to promote Spanish culture and arts in the world, to participate in cultural events, meetings and forums at the international level, and to support cultural tourism. The cross-cultural years organized by Spain reflect its official cultural foreign policy²⁴.

Russia is also very experienced and successful in organization of many cross-cultural years over the last decade. Russia-France year took place in 2010, followed by Russia-Italy and Russia-Spain year in 2011. The next 2012-2013 were devoted to cultural cooperation between Russia and Germany, while 2013 became the year of Russia-Netherlands and 2014 was the year of Russia-United Kingdom. The Russia-Argentina cross-cultural year was held in 2015. Unfortunately, due to political tension, scheduled for 2015 the cross-cultural years of Russia-Turkey and Russia-Poland were canceled. So far, 2018 is planned as a year of Russian and Japanese cultures, while the organization of a cross-cultural year of Russia-Bulgaria is being discussed. Russian foreign cultural policy sets high priority on the development of bilateral cultural ties as both its official documents and implemented projects indicate²⁵.

Lately, cross-cultural mega-events develop and embrace new ideas, methods and principles of organization. There is a trend to focus on a certain genre of arts and culture: e.g., the year of Russian and French literature and language (2012), the year of Russian-Chinese youth exchange (2014-2015), the year of Russian and Chinese media cooperation (2016). Participation of more than two partners also becomes common practice: e.g., Russia, France, Spain and Austria declared a year of tourism in 2017. Perhaps, the near future will see newer formats.

The benefits of cross-cultural years are difficult to overestimate. Cross-cultural years create "privileged cultural connections", contribute to the achievement of the specific goals of the official foreign cultural policy, promote national cultures, and facilitate cultural exchange and cooperation. Cross-cultural years support the policy of cultural diversity because they educate the general public, introduce and promote ideas of tolerance and international friendship, generate interest in foreign cultures. The cross-cultural years show the host countries and regions with emphasis on cultural dialogue, exchange of ideas and cultural cooperation. It is not a surprise that they have become popular projects of the official foreign cultural policy in many countries.

²⁴ N. Bogolyubova, Yu. Nikolaeva, *Actual tendencies of foreign cultural policy of Spain*, in "Latin America", 2013, no. 9, p. 47-57.

²⁵ *Foreign Cultural Policy of Russia – 2000. Conference abstracts*, in "Diplomatic Bulletin", 2000, no. 4, p. 76-84.

CONCLUSIONS

The overarching principle of methodology of event studies recognizes cultural plurality and uniqueness. Researchers advocate the principle of equal rights for all cultures: each culture has the right to independent existence and development. From this point of view, cross-cultural years and international cultural forums fit into the main trends of modern cultural exchange. They help to overcome the negative attitude and public prejudice towards foreign cultures and to develop cultural dialogue and exchange. The key tasks of the foreign cultural policy are to establish a positive image of a country on international arena, to strengthen mutual understanding with foreign countries and to actively participate in international cultural exchange. In this way, cross-cultural years and international cultural forums as mega-events certainly create opportunities for successful implementation of the official foreign cultural policy. They pave avenues for discussing and solving possible international issues and problems, they strengthen the cultural image of their country abroad and promote its status. Considering impacts of mega-events, experts usually tend to focus on economic effect. However, in case of cultural mega-events the intangible effect is much more prominent even though it is hard to express it in numbers. As long as cultural mega-events generate a "feel-good effect", they contribute to a positive and attractive image of the host country, attract attention to its culture and thus strengthen its international reputation.

The above-mentioned examples of cultural mega-events do not offer an exhaustive list to reflect their diversity but invite preliminary conclusions. It is obvious that mega-events due to their global nature can have a significant positive impact on the development on the hosting city or country. By attracting attention of mass audience through wide media coverage, mega-events promote their host countries as desirable destinations for traveling and studying, work or leisure. Cultural mega-events contribute to the development of society as they form a positive international image of a host city or country. The last explains the popularity of cultural mega-events as an efficient diplomatic tool. However, a poorly organized mega-event can become a reason of discontent in local population and have many negative effects like damage to image. Keeping the possibility of those risks in mind might help to avoid negative repercussions in the process of planning and organization.

Without a doubt, cultural mega-events can create both positive and negative consequences for host cities, regions and states. Yet, their main value is to serve as a vivid indicator of the country's success and stability and to be a sign of its strength and readiness to develop international dialogue. That is why many countries increasingly add mega-events in the arsenal of foreign cultural policies.