

Perceived Impacts of the European Youth Capital 2012¹

Impactes Percebidos da Capital Europeia da Juventude 2012

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Abstract/Resumo

This paper examines the economic and sociocultural impacts perceived by participants and residents of the hosting of the European Youth Capital 2012 (EYC 2012) by Braga, Portugal. During the EYC 2012, a survey was applied to 512 individuals, complemented by the implementation of a focus group. Several statistical procedures, including principal components analysis, were carried out in order to identify the impacts of the event. From the results obtained, we could conclude that the hosting of the EYC did not attract a large amount of visitors to the city. The younger respondents, predominant in the sample, tended to keep a more positive assessment of the impacts of the EYC 2012, as well as women when compared to men.

Keywords: European Youth Capital; Braga 2012; mega-events; perceptions; participants; residents

JEL Codes: O1, O2

O presente artigo analisa os impactes económicos e socioculturais percebidos pelos participantes e residentes em Braga da realização da Braga Capital Europeia da Juventude 2012 (EYC 2012). Durante a EYC 2012, um inquérito foi aplicado a 512 indivíduos, complementado pela realização de um grupo focal. Vários procedimentos estatísticos, incluindo a análise de componentes principais, foram realizados com o objetivo de identificar os impactes percebidos do evento. A partir dos resultados obtidos, podemos concluir que a realização da EYC 2012 não atraiu uma significativa quantidade de visitantes à cidade de Braga. Os inquiridos mais jovens, predominantes na amostra, revelaram uma avaliação mais positiva dos impactes da EYC 2012, bem como as mulheres, quando comparadas com os homens.

Palavras-chave: Capital Europeia da Juventude; Braga 2012; megaeventos; perceções; participantes; residentes

Códigos JEL: O1, O2

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1. INTRODUCTION

Every year since 2009, a European city hosts a European Youth Capital (EYC) event. In 2012, Braga, Portugal, received the fourth edition of this type of mega-event, which takes place for almost one year.

Given the fierce competition that is currently observed among cities to become more visible and attractive at national and international levels (Quinn, 2005; Van der Ark and Richards, 2006; Getz, 2012; Marujo, 2014), the title of European Youth Capital, assigned by the European Youth Forum, is an opportunity that certain medium-sized cities are trying to benefit from. Besides promoting their image, a goal envisaged by promoters of mega-events and special festivals (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Quinn, 2005; Getz, 2012; Marujo, 2014), hosting this particular event is an opportunity to reinforce their economic and sociocultural dynamism and promote youth involvement in the daily life of the city, at least during the year of the hosting of the EYC.

Taking into account the European Youth Forum goals (<http://www.youthforum.org/>, 2012), besides the above mentioned effects, cities expect that the hosting of this type of event may contribute to: i) the increase of the active participation of youth in society; ii) the implementation of public policy initiatives to value youth culture elites; iii) the adoption of new approaches to promote youth entrepreneurship; iv) the promotion of multiculturalism and the integration of ethnic minorities; v) the promotion of cooperation among international youth structures; and vi) the protection and promotion of the regional culture and heritage.

Either looking to the general impacts or to the specific ones, related to youth, the expected impacts from hosting an EYC can have either a positive or a negative nature (Dimmock and Tiyce, 2001; Humphreys and Prokopowicz, 2007; Ritchie and Hudson, 2009; Quinn, 2013; Remoaldo et al., 2014).

The present paper tries to assess a number of economic and sociocultural impacts related to the hosting of the European Youth Capital 2012 by Braga, Portugal, using the perception of participants regarding the shows and other organised events as well as the perception of the residents. Thereafter, we will try to check if the results perceived are in line with what is expected from the hosting of a common mega-event, and which level of maturity was attained

by this new European cultural initiative.

The novelty of this investigation results, at first, from the fact that no consistent studies were published to date on the impacts of a European Youth Capital. Having in mind that we are dealing with an event organised only for a few years, we will also try to check at what level it is following the path of other more consolidated mega-events, like the European Capitals of Culture, namely in what regards its ability to attract external visitors and to promote the image of the hosting destinations.

The present paper is organised as follows: Introduction (section 1), followed by section 2, which provides a literature review on European Youth Capitals as mega-events and addresses the impacts that the hosting of an European Youth Capital can cause; section 3 deals with the analytical methods used; in section 4, we present and discuss the results obtained from the surveys applied; finally, we will have the concluding remarks and a few policy recommendations.

2. THE EUROPEAN YOUTH CAPITAL AS A CULTURAL MEGA-EVENT AND ITS PERCEIVED IMPACTS

While there is extensive literature on the impacts of European Capitals of Culture (e.g., Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004; García et al., 2010; Richards, 2014), the European Youth Capitals have not attracted yet the attention of the researchers due to its recent implementation.

A European Youth Capital has characteristics of a mega-event, as it is a relatively large-scale planned event of about one year of duration (Ritchie, 1984; Roche 1994; 2000; Liu, 2012) and it contains a meaning and international importance (Jago and Shaw, 1998; Roche, 2000; Varrel and Kennedy, 2011; Liu, 2012) or, at least, intends to.

Mega-events can be viewed as being public goods, and one should bear in mind the massive investment that is normally made (Getz, 2012). Like other types of festivals and events, whose number has highly increased in urban spaces in the last two decades (Quinn, 2005), they must be viewed as a potentially homogenising effect of globalisation. Their hosting also indicates a change in the approaches to urban management as well as structural chan-

ges in economic production that have been taking place in alignment with the increasing use of culture as a means of creating wealth and jobs. The hosting of this type of events is increasingly seen as a useful strategy for the cities to reposition and differentiate themselves in today's competitive world (Quinn, 2005).

In the specific case of large-scale events, they can be instruments of public policy and country branding (Getz, 2012), but they can also serve political ambitions, that is, they can be used for the personal and political promotion of certain agents or political forces. As a consequence, those who oppose hosting them are, sometimes, considered as not being patriotic enough or even as being mean-spirited (Getz, 2012).

Having in mind all their common impacts, mega-events are generally seen as privileged ways of enhancing the development of the hosting cities, as well as means of encouraging social cohesion (Getz, 2012). Their many symbolic meanings also cannot be forgotten and they can be looked as "essential building blocks of civilization" (Getz, 2012: 171).

Hosting mega-events can also draw important tourism revenue and international media recognition for the hosting destination (Lee et al., 2013), as well as the opportunity for giving large external visibility and promoting the city (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Kim et al., 2006; Strauf and Schere, 2010). Taking all this into account, it is not surprising that, generally speaking, there is great enthusiasm around hosting certain large-scale events and, consequently, a fierce competition among cities to organise them (Getz, 2012).

Regardless of the concept used or the type of event we are considering (sports event, cultural event or economic large-scale exhibition), its impacts are of different types and not all of them have a positive nature (Humphreys and Prokopowicz, 2007; Quinn, 2013). Regarding the types of impacts, one can consider the economic (the most studied - Ritchie and Hudson, 2009), the sociocultural and the environmental (which have attracted less attention - Remoaldo et al., 2011; Raj et al., 2013), the urban (related to the restructuration of cities or the renewal of parts of them - Langen and Garcia, 2009) or the political ones (Getz, 2012), as mentioned.

In what regards mega-events of a cultural nature, only recently there have been attempts to assess the impacts they entail. Before, since

the 1980s, there was a predominance for studies dealing with sports, e.g., mega-sports events, namely the Olympic Games, the Football World Cup and the European Football Championship (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Ritchie et al., 2009; Lepp and Gibson, 2011).

Donald Getz is one of the authors that have been working on the field of events and festivals and tourism events since the beginning of the 1990s. Particularly important are his publications dated from 1991, 2000, 2007, 2008 and 2012. In answering the question "Why are planned events such important?", he emphasises the commonly felt need for economic and social exchanges (Getz, 2012).

The humanities and social sciences have led the study of such events, especially Sociology, Geography (Human), Anthropology (Moeran and Pedersen, 2009), Management, Philosophy, Psychology and Political Science (Getz, 2012).

With regard to the expected positive economic impacts of hosting a mega-event, the most mentioned used to be the increase of revenue, of employment opportunities and of investment in new equipment and infrastructures, as well as the promotion of the city and, this way, the attraction of tourists and of the related opportunity for driving revenue and employment (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Kim et al., 2006; Ritchie et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2013).

Sometimes, these schedules and the financial resources linked to the events are also used to proceed to the renewal or the restructuring of the urban tissue or of a few blocks of it located in the core of the event (Langen and Garcia, 2009; Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009). The price increase of goods and services and the consequent higher cost of living are negative factors that stand out (Remoaldo et al., 2014).

Regarding the positive sociocultural impacts, those which used to acquire more relevance are the enhancement of social cohesion, and the raising of pride and self-esteem on the part of the receiving community, the improvement in the standards of living and the increasing levels of social and cultural interaction driven by the hosting of the events (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Waitt, 2003; Ritchie et al., 2009; Marujo, 2014). As highlighted by Quinn (2013), social impacts can contribute to understand the social benefits or social value of an event and can be seen as more important than

the economic ones.

On the opposite side, one cannot also forget the possibility of facing increased delinquency and crime levels, increased car traffic and parking congestion, higher levels of litter and noise, as well as the possible emergence of some sort of conflict between visitors and residents when the hosting population or part of it does not identify itself with the organised event or with the behaviour of the visitors (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Ritchie et al., 2009; Remoaldo et al., 2014).

Of course, the level and nature of the impacts has a lot to do with the mega-event addressed, its magnitude and, in relation to that, the resources involved. In this regard, the financial resources allocated to hosting a European Youth Capital have been quite scarce, even when compared with those assigned to the European Capitals of Culture, events that are also organised annually in the European Union.

Having in mind the novelty of the initiative and the lack of attention from research to the European Youth Capitals until now, we have decided to address its perceived impacts in the context of the hosting of this mega-event by the city of Braga, in Northern Portugal, which occurred in 2012 (Braga 2012).

3. ANALYTICAL METHODS

The opportunity for carrying out a study about Braga 2012, that is, the European Youth Capital 2012, came after the decision of the *Bracara Augusta* Foundation, the organising institution, commissioning a study of its impacts to a research team from the University of Minho (Portugal). The research was conducted in the last semester of 2012 and in the beginning of the first months of 2013, trying to shed light on the major achievements of the event. It was envisaged, namely, to capture the perceptions of various agents (stakeholders) and city residents towards its perceived impacts and the way they participate in this cultural mega-event.

Due to the need to obtain data from primary sources during the celebration of the EYC, the effort of the evaluation team was first focused on designing and implementing a survey to apply to participants in a few shows or youth forums and to city residents. That survey was applied between October and December 2012, from which we obtained 512 full filled in questionnaires.

The sample was collected using a non-probabilistic method, that is, we dealt with a convenience sample. As the participants were moving around the places where the events were taking place and were either city residents or visitors, there was no way of building a sample based on an inquiring universe. In such a situation, as claimed by Esu and Arrey (2009), namely, using this kind of sample seems to be well justified.

The questionnaire was structured into 23 questions, 16 of them being directed to the reasons for visiting Braga and to the participation in the EYC 2012 events and 7 other referring to the respondent's profile (e.g., gender, age, education level, employment status and total monthly net household income). Most of the questions were categorised and structured according to a five-point agree-disagree Likert scale, ranging from the 'completely disagree' option to the 'completely agree' one.

A preliminary test was performed on the 2nd of October 2012 to 10 university students of University of Minho (Braga), from where we could check that the response to the survey would not take more than 10 minutes and that the questions raised were easy to understand. A few minor adjustments were made following the results obtained from the preliminary test.

As the research team used as universe the residents and the participants in the events that were planned for the period from October to December 2012, it was decided to select five events occurring in different geographical areas of the city and forums or shows of different nature, with the objective of reaching different target audiences, even though more focused on young people than on other population age groups. In addition to the participants of the selected events, the common local population that could be found at that time in the places around the locations where the events were taking place was also questioned.

The chosen events were those with the greatest potential for community participation (e.g., the musical show *Semibreve* and the Closing Ceremony of the EYC 2012).

The five events chosen are featured in summary form in Table 1. They all took place at night time, except the Closing Ceremony, which started in the daytime and lasted throughout the night of the 22nd of December 2012.

Regarding the questionnaires filled in, we obtained a greater number on the Closing Ce-

Table 1. List of selected events and their main features

Name of the event	Place	Date	Summary	Number of participants
<i>Semibreve</i>	Theatro Circo	6 th of October	Festival putting together different types of electronic music and workshops; this festival was organised for the first time in 2011	2,000
<i>Halloween Circle Night</i>	Parque de São João da Ponte	31 st of October	Celebration of Halloween	300
12 th National Meeting of Youth Associations (ENAJ)	Parque de Exposições de Braga	24 th and 25 th of November	National Meeting of Youth Associations, aiming to contribute to the definition of the Portuguese Youth Public Policies	1,600
<i>World Drums</i>	Theatro Circo	24 th of November	Braga musical project aiming to establish bridges among different cultural and musical heritages, aiming to promote multiculturalism	896
European Youth Capital Closing Ceremony	Several places in the city	22 nd of December	Event that took place during the evening and the night, including several cultural and musical initiatives	60,000

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on data provided by the *Bracara Augusta* Foundation, collected from <http://bragacej2012.com/news/details.php?id=106&type=2> (retrieved on 26/02/2013) and from <http://www.theatrocirco.com/agenda/evento.php?id=940> (retrieved on 26/02/2013).

emony (22nd of December) and fewer on the Halloween event (31st of October). The lower participation in the latter had to do with the weather conditions of that day, and because of, at the same time, numerous parallel private initiatives (private parties) were taking place throughout the city.

Several statistical procedures were carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS, version 20.0). The expected positive and negative ECOC impacts were first organised according to their sociocultural or economic nature, following the literature review. In a second step, a principal components analysis was employed in order to identify the underlying dimensions associated to both of these groups of impacts.

In the immediate post-event period, a focus group was also implemented to assess the success of hosting the EYC. This methodological approach was used to clarify and complement certain dimensions of the data collected through the survey. In this paper, we will invoke briefly the results obtained. Its participants were seven residents with different profiles, differing namely in the level of education and technical training, age and gender and, also, distinct involvement in the preparation and organisation of the EYC 2012.

The meeting of this group took place after the end of the event, in January 2013. As explained to the participants of the focus group, a qualitative and comprehensive assessment of the relative success of Braga 2012 and its impacts was expected to arise from the discussion kept among the participants in that forum. They were supposed to feel completely free to express their perception and feelings towards the mega-event.

It should be recalled that a focus group is a methodological tool framed in group interviews. It is a carefully designed and planned conversation created to obtain information in a relatively relaxed context (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2014). The present investigation took place in a room of the University of Minho. Unlike most of the interviews, the focus group does not seek to reach a consensus.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sample profile

The structure of the sample collected can be seen in Table 2. It enables us to characterise the audience of the selected events of the European Youth Capital and, by extension, the

largest of the initiatives performed in the scope of the mega-event.

The proportion of respondents showed to be balanced among genders (52.7% females versus 47.3% males). In 13 questionnaires, the sex of the respondent was not registered. The majority of respondents were residents of the municipality of Braga (63.5%) and only in the

12th National Meeting of the Youth Associations there was a predominance of visitors among the respondents, as expected. This result seems to indicate that the attractiveness or external visibility given to the events performed was not large, so they were able to capture, mainly, the participation of local residents.

Table 2. Profile of the respondents

	%
Gender	
Male	47.3
Female	52.7
Age	
15-29	60.8
30-49	27.9
50 and more	11.3
Education	
Up to four years	5.4
Up to nine years	14
Secondary	31.3
University	37.5
Postgraduate, Master or Doctorate	11.8
Income	
Less than €500	9.4
Between €500 and €1000	27.9
Between €1001 and €2500	33.4
More than €2500	9
No answer	20.3
Respondents (total)	512

Source: Authors' own survey data (collected from October to December 2012).

Not surprisingly, having in mind the nature of this mega-event, youth participants comprised the largest group of the sample respondents (60.8%). We can also verify that the individuals with a higher level of education (at least a university degree) were also more represented among the survey respondents (49.3%).

Among the features of the sample, it is worth underlining the occupational status of the respondents. Those employed accounted for 42.2%, against 39.3% of students and 13.3% of unemployed. That can be seen as showing that the organisation of the EYC 2012 was able of capturing participants with different personal and professional backgrounds to the events offered.

In fact, most of the events organised were free of charge. This circumstance may have

allowed the participation of a large amount of people that, otherwise, would be excluded.

The features presented in Table 2 seem to portray those of a population belonging to medium and medium-low social classes.

Survey results

Taking into account the set of indicators used to identify the sociocultural and economic impacts of hosting the European Youth Capital 2012 derived from the literature review, we decided to follow an exploratory factor analysis using principal components as the extraction method, with varimax rotation, to assess the number of underlying factors and to identify the items associated with each factor.

As a criteria for the extraction of factors, the Kaiser criteria has been adopted, as well as Horn (1965) analysis principle and the inter-

pretation of the extracted factors made by Garson (2015). In turn, we based ourselves in Matsunaga (2010) to make the cut off point of the loading factor in 0.40. If the items receive loading factor in more than one factor, we choose the factor on which the item presents a higher load.

In a first step, this analysis was applied to the 13 indicators collected in the survey classified as having a sociocultural nature. This was done after having normalised the variables that were kept, in a preparatory step.

Two main factors emerged explaining, together, 62.09% of the total variance of the original data, as presented in Table 3. The first

factor, accounting for 38.13% of the variance, grouped 9 indicators which, in a certain way, are mainly related to the results of the mega-event (Table 3). With this in mind, we decided to label it as the *EYC Sociocultural Results*.

The second factor grouped 4 indicators, namely: “The programme of the EYC is not reaching my expectations”; “The programme of the EYC is not reaching youth expectations”; “The events performed are not having a big impact on the city (Braga)”; “The programme of the EYC could have been more diversified” (Table 3). Having in mind that

Table 3. Factor analysis of the sociocultural impacts of the EYC

EYC sociocultural impact factors	F1 (Loadings)	F2 (Loadings)
I am enjoying the general programme of the EYC.	0.651	
The programme of the EYC is not reaching my expectations.		0.825
The programme of the EYC is not reaching youth expectations.		0.804
The events performed are not having a big impact on the city (Braga).		0.728
The programme of the EYC could have been more diversified.		0.695
The hosting of EYC made it possible to organise events that, otherwise, I would not have the possibility to participate in.	0.675	
The city should host more mega-events like the EYC.	0.691	
The hosting of the EYC provided added value to the city of Braga.	0.752	
The events performed allowed to open new cultural perspectives to many youth residents and visitors.	0.793	
By hosting the EYC, Braga became a more dynamic city in what regards culture.	0.747	
The hosting of the EYC helped in the integration of social minorities and in creating receptivity to other cultural expressions of our society.	0.699	
The economic and social impacts of hosting the EYC will be relevant after 2012.	0.694	
The main social impacts of the EYC after 2012 will be the incremented international visibility the city will get and the increased self-esteem experienced by the residents of Braga.	0.753	
Explained variance (%)	38.13	23.96

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.

The pairwise method for deletion of missing values was used.

KMO = 0.93; p < 0.001; rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Source: Authors’ own survey data (collected from October to December 2012).

those indicators are related to the way the activities of the EYC were planned and organised, we have decided to label this factor as the *EYC Programme*.

The internal consistency of the items within each dimension was measured by examining the Cronbach reliability alphas, considering the

values greater than 0.70 appropriate (Nunnally, 1978).

Factor 1 has shown to have a very good consistency level (0.91), which means that respondents rely on the same principle to base their answers to the several questions related to the indicators that integrate the *EYC Sociocul-*

tural Results. Factor 2, related to the *EYC Programme*, has shown to have a smaller value (0.80). Even so, both factors should be considered as having satisfactory internal consistency. As Nunnally (1978) suggests, the reliability of alphas close to 0.70 indicates a high level of internal consistency between the individual scale items and the related factors.

In the analysis of the *Economic Impacts*, we followed the same approach. Applying the Principal Components Analysis, we obtained just one relevant factor, explaining 63.29% of the variance of the original indicators taken, which presents loadings varying from 0.621 (“The hosting of the EYC represented a misuse of public money”) to 0.881 (“The main economic impact to be expected in the near future from hosting the EYC will be felt by the retail sector”). The reliability of the alpha has shown to be satisfactory (0.70).

As expected, the correlation coefficients between the 3 factors identified above showed that the impacts of hosting a mega-event are a complex phenomenon. No matter the interpretation made of the causal relationship among the several impact components, it is expectable that they show to be correlated, that is, if the programme established is felt as being good, the expected sociocultural and economic impacts should be relevant, and vice-versa.

In a way, our empirical analysis seems to give consistency to this idea, mainly when we address the relationship between the *Results of the Event* and the *Economic Impacts*, where we obtain a strong correlation coefficient ($r = 0.79, p < 0.001$), even if the correlation between the *EYC Programme* and the *Economic Impacts* has shown to be weak ($r = 0.30; p < 0.001$).

Table 4. Factorial analysis of the economic impacts of the EYC

EYC economic impact factors	F1 (Loadings)
The hosting of the EYC represented a misuse of public money.	0.621
The hosting of the EYC will have major economic and social impacts in the city after 2012.	0.859
The main economic impact to be expected in the near future from hosting the EYC will be felt by the retail sector, which will experience a greater dynamic. In addition, the growth of employment is also expected.	0.881
Explained variance (%)	63.29

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.
 The pairwise method for deletion of missing values was used.
 KMO = 0.59; $p < 0.001$; rotation converged in 1 iteration.
 Source: Authors’ own survey data (collected from October to December 2012).

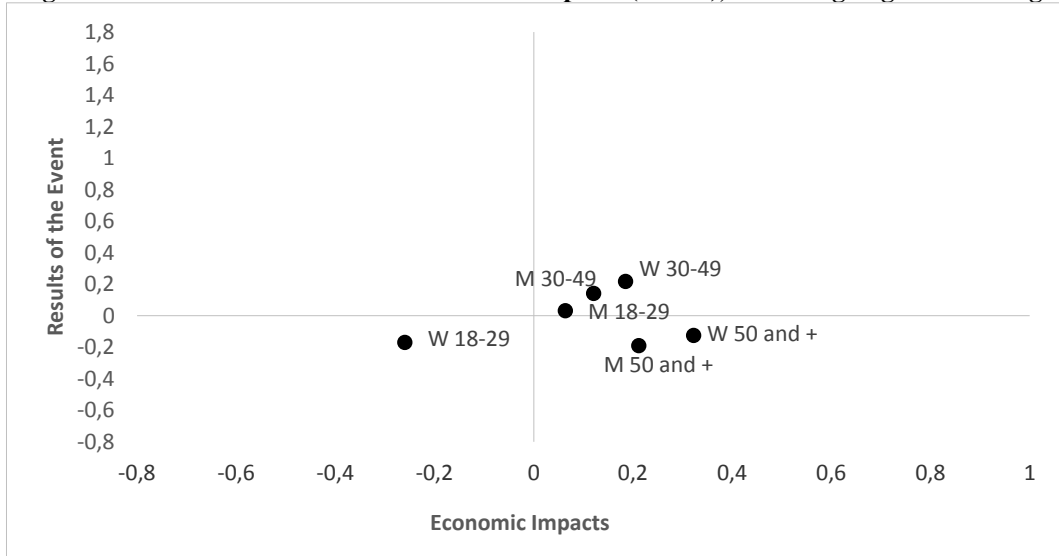
Cross-tabulating the *Results of the Event* and the *Economic Impacts* with the gender and age variables together, we could conclude that there were no relevant differences in the way men and women, regardless of their age, looked to the results of the event [$F(5,262) = 1.163, ns$ - no significant]. Something different was found regarding the economic impacts perceptions, where significant differences were identified [$F(5,312) = 2.487, p < 0.05$] (Figure 1).

From Figure 2, which presents the average values of the *EYC Programme* and the *Economic Impacts*, we can observe that there are statistical significant differences in what regards the way individuals have valued the implementation of the EYC Programme. Indeed,

older women enjoyed it more than younger ones [$F(5,262) = 2.765, p < 0.005$] (Figure 2).

Combining these two dimensions with gender, age and level of education, we obtained a result quite close to the one presented before. That is, in the same way, we do not find relevant differences of perceptions in what regards the *Results of the Event* based on gender, age or education level. Nevertheless, we found significant differences either in what concerns the *Economic Impacts* or the *EYC Programme* when addressing the perceptions kept by individuals organised in those three categories [$F_{Results} (17,261) = 0.671, ns$; $F_{Economic impacts} (17,310) = 1.621, p < 0,05$; $F_{programme} (17,261) = 1.632, p < 0.05$] (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 1. Results of the Event and Economic Impacts (means), according to gender and age



[H – Men; M – Women]

Figure 2. Programme of the Event and Economic Impacts (means), according to gender and age

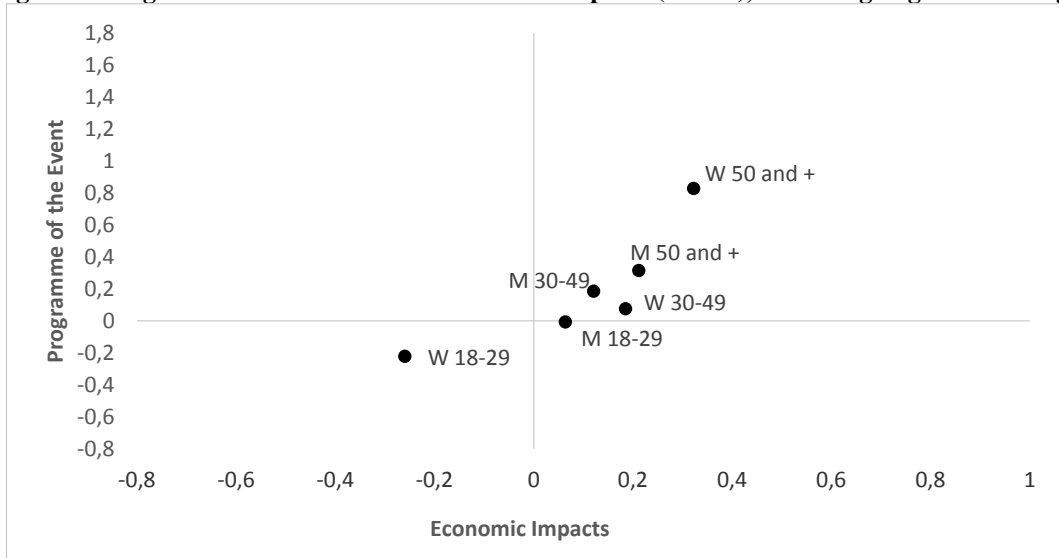


Figure 3. Results of the Event and Economic Impacts (means), according to gender, age and education level

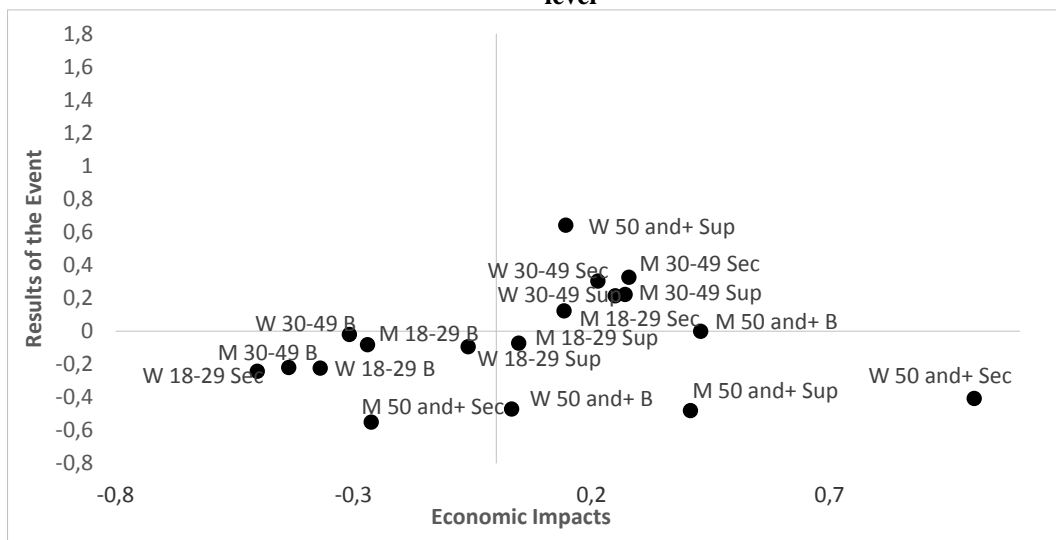
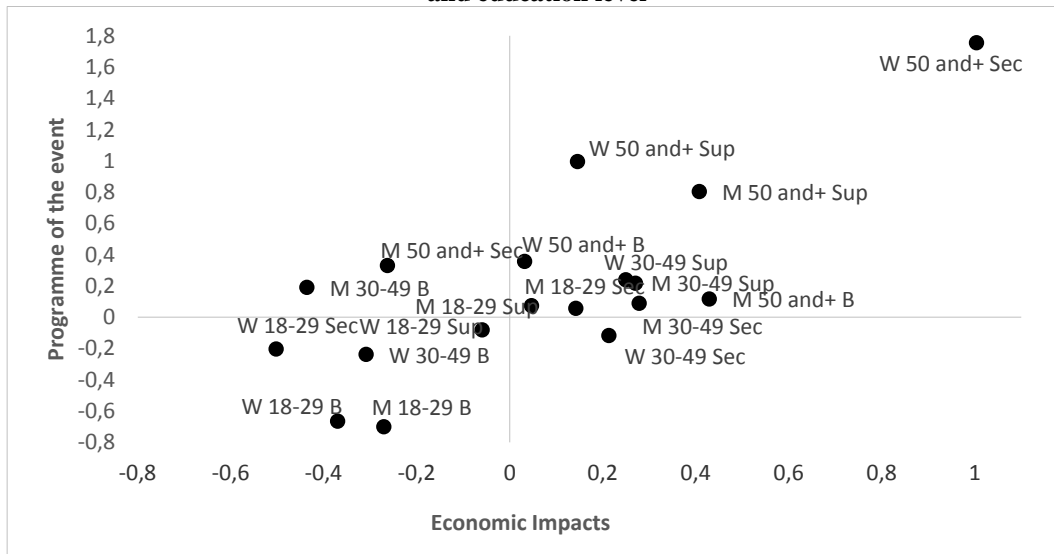


Figure 4. Programme of the Event and Economic Impacts (means), according to gender, age and education level



We will try now to look to the variables that most determine the three dimensions considered here. To do so, we will follow the procedures suggested by Aiken and West (1991) analysing the moderating effect using ordinary least square multiple regression. This technique was chosen because, as referred by Silva and Salina (2006), the regression technique allows describing the relationship between one

or more quantitative variables. In this context, we will use as dependent variables the dimensions mentioned and as independent variables gender, age, level of education and the geographical origin of the participants (residents or visitors), occupational status and average family budget.

Table 5. Determinants of Dimensions (Multiple linear regressions)

	Economic impacts	Results of the Event	Programme of the Event
Origin of the participants	-.11*	-.12*	ns
Gender	ns	ns	ns
Age	ns	ns	.17**
Level of education	ns	ns	ns
Occupational status	ns	ns	ns
Average family budget	ns	ns	ns

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.005$

Note: The matrix cells present the standardized regression coefficients (*betas*).

Source: Authors' own survey data (collected from October to December 2012).

The analysis has shown that only the origin of participants was able of predicting either the economic impacts or the results perceived regarding the EYC. Concerning the EYC programme, only the age has shown to be statistically significant.

In summary, we could conclude that the

residents of Braga were those that have valued most both the economic impacts and the results of hosting the European Youth Capital 2012. Regarding the programme of the EYC, the older participants were those that have claimed to have enjoyed it more.

Discussion of the empirical results

If the literature maintains as a major goal of hosting any type of mega-event the external marketing promotion of the city and the improvement of its image as a tourism destination (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Kim et al., 2006; Ritchie et al., 2009; Getz, 2012; Lee et al., 2013), one of the conclusions to be drawn from the survey implemented was that European Youth Capital 2012 was unable to fulfil the envisioned result. In fact, during the year Braga hosted the mega-event, the number of visitors, namely foreigners, has shown to be quite low.

Being an event focused on youth, it is worth underlining that, according to the survey respondents, the programme implemented seems to have adequately addressed the youth needs and common expectations. More than that, it was perceived as an added value by them as it was seen as having contributed to open their minds. From the participation in the management of the event, many of them even gained an experience they can profit from in future daily life.

Referring to this increased knowledge and experience, in the focus group implemented to discuss the issue, one of the main ideas that emerged was that “the event succeeded in somehow changing mentalities and in showing that youth does not only seek to amuse itself but is also capable of thinking and producing strategic thinking”.

Addressing the general issue of the impacts felt, the perception kept is that there was indeed an impact. The majority of the respondents did claim, namely, that the EYC 2012 was not a case of misuse of public funding. Instead, it enhanced the cultural life and the economy of the city, mostly in the retail and services sectors, besides providing an added value in terms of obtaining a new experience and opening the minds of youth, as previously mentioned.

Among the claims on the positive results, its contribution to the increase of the social cohesion was also emphasised, together with the one that “there would be equipment which would remain as a heritage” of the EYC.

Regarding the contribution of this type of celebration to a better integration of social minorities and other cultural expressions, as the literature review emphasises and the Euro-

pean Youth Forum identifies as a main goal of the implementation of the European Youth Capitals, data obtained did not allow us to confirm it.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the data of a survey that was applied to those who went to Braga and took part in selected events of the programme of the European Youth Capital 2012, we have tried to assess the perceived economic and sociocultural impacts of its hosting by Braga. Thereafter, we tried to check if the results perceived were in line with what is expected from the hosting of a common mega-event, as usually identified by the empirical literature. A major interest of producing this research came from the novelty of this kind of European cultural initiative.

Looking at those impacts, based on the perceptions kept by the survey respondents, we can conclude that there were indeed some impacts. This general idea gets its base on the enhancement of the social cohesion that was perceived (synthesised in the slogan adopted “We are all Braga”), but also on the economic profit experienced by the retail and services sectors, and on the equipment that remained from the implementation of the EYC, even if that was residual. The conclusion drawn from the answers of those surveyed was that the residents of Braga were the participants who valued the most both the economic impacts and the results of hosting the mega-event.

Besides the conclusion that the majority of the participants have been the residents of the city/municipality, the sample collected has confirmed an over-representation of the youth generation (59% were 10 to 29 years old). When asked about the success of the mega-event, those were also the ones who kept a more positive assessment of it. In the same way, women had a more positive assessment than men.

Indeed, the programme of the EYC seems to have reached the expectations of youth (60.8% of the respondents have declared to agree or fully agree with this statement). Even so, the older participants were the ones that seem to have enjoyed it more.

Taking the respondents as a whole, the hosting of the EYC did not show to be a misuse of public money, having enhanced the cultural environment of Braga.

Two dimensions that have been most criticised were the marketing promotion of the mega-event and its general programme. This issue also emerged within the focus group carried out. Thereafter, taking into account the people surveyed and the position expressed in the focus group, the main idea was that it was possible to do much better. Having said that, there is place to take advantage from the acquired experience in future applications for other mega-events or special events.

From failures found, we can immediately drive a first policy comment. It has to do with the ability of learning from experience, from the own and the experiences of others, that is, one can raise the doubt if certain of those failures in terms of planning, promoting and managing the event could not have been prevented if the principle of learning from good external practices had been followed.

Regarding the communication strategy, the claim is that planners and managers of future

mega-events should be able to profit better from the electronic networks available, namely the so-called “social networks”.

The high unemployment rate verified in the country since 2011 and the economic austerity policies followed since then may have led some respondents to not better assess the economic and social impacts of the EYC. We do believe that.

The work performed in terms of assessment of the impacts of hosting the Braga EYC 2012 was deeper and more complex than what is shown in this paper. Other agents were asked and other analytical approaches were followed. Having said that, readers should not look to the data released in this paper as the final expression of the success or failure of the Braga EYC 2012, and of the policy suggestions we can extract from its hosting. In addition, it is worth underlining that the global success of this type of event can only be correctly assessed following a medium/long-term approach.

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