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Conference Paper

Perceptions of participants and residents of the impacts of the Braga 2012 European Youth Capital

55th Congress of the European Regional Science Association: "World Renaissance: Changing roles for people and places", 25-28 August 2015, Lisbon, Portugal

Provided in Cooperation with:

European Regional Science Association (ERSA)

Suggested Citation: Ribeiro, José Cadima; Remoaldo, Paula; Duque, Eduardo (2015) : Perceptions of participants and residents of the impacts of the Braga 2012 European Youth Capital, 55th Congress of the European Regional Science Association: "World Renaissance: Changing roles for people and places", 25-28 August 2015, Lisbon, Portugal, European Regional Science Association (ERSA), Louvain-la-Neuve

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Perceptions of participants and residents of the impacts of the Braga 2012 European Youth Capital

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Abstract

The European Youth Capital is an annual title awarded to a European city by the European Youth Forum, aiming to strengthen the relationship between the municipalities and the European Union institutions, with a particular focus on youth participation. Until now, little is known about the impacts of hosting a European Youth Capital, being the present investigation the first one dealing with this issue. The relative success of the Braga (Portugal) 2012 European Youth Capital (EYC 2012) is evaluated through the perception of the participants in five events performed. The aim of the questionnaires applied was inquiring the opinion of respondents on the activities of the EYC 2012, as well as the perceived impacts of the mega-event. Additionally, we envisaged to know what had been their participation in it by the time the questionnaire was implemented. A focus group was also implemented. This methodological approach was used to clarify and complement certain dimensions of the data collected through the survey applied to participants. We got a sample of 512 respondents, applying the questionnaires among October and December 2012. 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, who predominate in the sample used (59% between 10 and 29 years old), 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 of the participants and residents.

Introduction

Since 2009, a European city hosts each year a European Youth Capital (EYC). In 2012, Braga, Portugal, received the fourth edition of this type of mega-event, which takes place along around one year.

Given the fierce competition that currently is being kept among cities to become more visible and attractive at national and international level, mainly in order to capture an increasing amount of visitors and investment (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 size cities are trying to take profit from. Besides promoting their image, a goal envisaged by common promoters of mega-events and special festivals (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Quinn, 2005; Getz, 2012; Marujo, 2014), hosting this event is an opportunity to reinforce their economic and socio-cultural dynamism and promoting youth involvement in the daily life of the city, at least during the year of the hosting of the EYC (<http://www.youthforum.org/>, retrieved 10/02/2012).

Generally speaking, and taking into account the European Youth Forum, besides the above mentioned effects, cities expect the hosting of such kind of event may contribute to: i) the increase of the active participation of youth in society; ii) the implementation of public policy initiatives for valuing 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) promoting the cooperation among international youth structures; and vi) the protection and promotion of the regional culture and heritage (<http://www.youthforum.org/>, retrieved 10/02/2012). Either looking to the general impacts (Dimmock and Tiyce, 2001; Ritchie and Hudson, 2009; Remoaldo *et al.*, 2014) or to the specific ones, related to youth, the impacts to expect from hosting an EYC can have, both, a positive or negative nature (Humphreys and Prokopowicz, 2007; Quinn, 2013).

The present paper tries to evaluate a number of economic and socio-cultural impacts related to the hosting of the 2012 European Youth Capital by Braga, Portugal (Braga 2012), using the perception of participants in the shows and other events organized and the one of the residents of Braga. From there, 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 the level of maturity attained by this novel European cultural initiative.

The novelty of this investigation results, first, from the fact that, until present, no consistent studies were published on the impacts of a European Youth Capital. Having in mind we are dealing with an event organized just since a few years, we will try also checking at what level it is following the path of other more consolidate mega-events, like the European Capitals of Culture, namely in what regards its capability of attracting external visitors and promoting the image of the hosting destinations.

The present paper is organised as follows: section 1 provides a review of the literature on European Youth Capitals as mega-events; in section 2, we refer to the impacts that the hosting of an European Youth Capital can provide; 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.

1. The European Capital of Youth as a cultural mega-event

While there is an extensive literature on European Capitals of Culture impacts [e.g., Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004; García *et al.*, 2010; Richards, 2014], which have been organized since 1985, due to its recent implementation the European Youth Capitals have not attracted the attention of the researchers yet.

A European Youth Capital has characteristics of a mega-event as it is a planned event of a relative large scale and of about one year of duration (Ritchie, 1984, Roche 1994, 2000; Liu, 2012). It contains a meaning and international importance (Jago and Shaw, 1998; Roche, 2000; Varrel and Kennedy, 2011; Liu, 2012) or, at least, envisages to have. Referring to the same issue, other authors, namely Santos (2002), Quinn (2005, 2013) and Getz (2012), prefer using, instead, the term “festival” and “event” (Quinn, 2005, 2013; Getz, 2012) or big event (Santos, 2002).

Mega-events can be faced as being public goods, and one cannot forget the huge investment normally made (Getz, 2012). Like other kind of festivals and events which amount has highly increased in urban spaces in the last two decades (Quinn, 2005), it must be faced as a potentially homogenising effect of globalisation. Their hosting also indicates a changing in the approaches to urban management and the structural changes in economic production that have been taking place in alignment with the increasing use of culture as a mean of wealth and job creation. Putting other way, the hosting of this

kind of events is increasingly looked as a useful strategy for the cities to reposition and differentiate themselves in the today competitive world (Quinn, 2005).

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

Having in mind all its common impacts, mega-events are generally taken as privileged ways of enhancing the development of the host cities, as well as means of encourage social cohesion (Getz, 2012). Their many symbolic meanings cannot, either, be forget and they can be faced as “essential building blocks of civilization” (Getz, 2012: 171). Hosting mega-events can also draw important tourism revenue and international media recognition for the host destination (Lee *et al.*, 2013) as well as the opportunity for giving large external visibility and promoting the city (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Kim, Gursoy and Lee, 2006; Strauf and Schere, 2010). Taking all this into account, it is not surprising that there is great enthusiasm around hosting certain large scale events and, consequently, a fierce completion among cities to organize them (Getz, 2012).

No matter the concept used or the kind of event we are considering (sport event, cultural event or economic large scale exhibition), its impacts are of various kinds and not all of them have a positive nature (Humphreys and Prokopowicz, 2007; Quinn, 2013). Regarding the kind of impacts, one can consider the economic (the most studied - Ritchie and Hudson, 2009), the socio-cultural 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 invoked above.

In what regards mega-event of a cultural nature, since only recently there have been attempts to assess the impacts their entail. Before, since the 1980s, there was a predominance of studies dealing with sports, e.g., mega-sport events, namely, the Olympic World Games and World and European Football Championships (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 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. Particular important are his publications dated from 1991, 2000, 2007, 2008 and 2012. Answering to the

question “why are planned events such important?”, the answer given by him emphasizes the need common felt for economic and social exchanges (Getz, 2012).

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

2. The impacts of a European Capital of Youth

With regard to the expected positive economic impacts of hosting a mega-event, the most mentioned use to be the increases of revenue, employment opportunities and investment in new equipment and infrastructures, as well as promoting the city and, this way, attracting tourists and the associate opportunity for driving revenue and employment (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Kim, Gursoy and Lee, 2006; Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009; Lee *et al.*, 2013).

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

Regarding the positive socio-cultural impacts, those which use 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, Shipway and Cleeve, 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 faced as more important as the economic ones.

On the reverse 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 eventual emergence of any sort of conflict between visitors and residents when the hosting population or part of it do not identify with the event organized or with the behaviour of the visitors (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009; Remoaldo *et al.*, 2014).

Of course, the level and nature of the impacts as a lot to do with the mega-event approached, its magnitude and, in relation with that, the resources involved in. In this regard, the financial resources committed to the hosting of a European Youth Capital have been quite scarce, even when compared with those devoted to the European Capitals of Culture, also yearly organized in the European Union.

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

3. Analytical methods

The opportunity for going ahead with a study about Braga 2012, that is, the 2012 European Youth Capital, came after the decision of the *Bracara Augusta* Foundation, the organizing institution, to commission 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 the year 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 on 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 addressed to the design and implementation of a survey to apply to participants in a few shows or youth forums implemented and city residents. That survey was applied between October and December 2012, from where we got 512 full complete questionnaires filled in.

A model of standardized interview was followed, applying it to residents and individuals who travelled to Braga to watch five of the selected events. The survey was applied even to those who did not participate in the event but were in Braga on the day it took place.

The collected sample used was convenience one, being the respondents a chosen using a random criterion. As the participants were moving around the places where the events were taking place and were either city`s residents either 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 participation in the 2012 EYC events and 7 other referred to the respondent 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 pre-text was performed on 2nd 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 the questions raised were easy to understand. A few minor adjustments were made following the results obtained from the pre-text.

A focus group was also implemented. It had as participants seven residents endowed with different profile, namely differing in the level of education and technical training, age and gender and, also, distinct involvement in the preparation and organization of the 2012 EYC.

The meeting of this group took place after the close of the event, in January 2013. As explained to the participants on the focus group, a qualitative and comprehensive evaluation of the relative success of Braga 2012 and its impacts was expected to arise from the discussion to be kept among the participants in that forum. They were supposed to fill completely free to express their perception and feelings towards the mega-event. One must remember that a focus group is a methodological tool framed in group interviews. It is a carefully designed and planned conversation designed to obtain information in a relatively relaxed context and not directed on aspects relevant to the object of study or evaluation (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2014). In the present investigation it took place in one room of the University of Minho. Unlike the case in most of the interviews, the focus group does not seek consensus.

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 selecting five events occurring in various geographical areas of the city and forums or shows of different nature, envisaging to reach diverse target audiences, even though more young people than other age population groups. Besides the participants in the selected events, common local population that could be met by that time in the places around the locations where the events would take place was also inquired.

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

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

Table 1 - List of events selected and their main features

Name of the event	Place it took place	Schedule	Summary	Number of participants
<i>Semibreve</i>	Teatro Circo	October, 6th	Festival putting together different types of electronic music and <i>workshops</i> ; this festival was organized for the first time in 2011	2.000
<i>Halloween Circle Night</i>	Parque de São João da Ponte	October, 31st	Celebration of <i>Halloween</i>	300
12° National Meeting of Youth Associations (ENAJ)	Parque de Exposições de Braga	November, 24 th and 25 th	National Meeting of Youth Associations, aiming to contribute to the definition of the Portuguese Youth Public Policies	1.600
<i>World Drums</i>	Teatro Circo	November, 24th	Braga musical project aiming to establish bridges among different cultural and musical heritages, envisaging to promote multiculturalism	896
European Youth Capital Closure Session	Several places within the city	December, 22sd	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 *Bracara Augusta* Foundation, collected from <http://bragacej2012.com/news/details.php?id=106&type=2> (accessed the 26th of February 2013), and from <http://www.theatrocirco.com/agenda/evento.php?id=940> (accessed the 26th of February 2013).

Regarding the questionnaires filled in, we got more from the Closing Ceremony (22 December) and least from the Halloween event (31 October). The lower participation in the last mentioned event had to do with the weather conditions which occurred that day, besides the circumstance 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 organized according to their socio-cultural or economic nature, following the literature review. In a second step, the principal components factor analysis was employed in order to identify the underlying dimensions associated to, both, these groups of impacts. Finally, the components found were statistically related with some features of the participants' profile, namely age, gender, education level, geographical origin (residents or visitors), occupational status and average family budgets, in order to examine eventual

differences in the way the events and their impacts were perceived by different population cohorts.

As mentioned, in the immediate post-event period, a focus group was also implemented to evaluate the success of the hosting of the EYC. This methodological approach was used to clarify and complement certain dimensions of the data collected through the survey applied to participants. In this paper, we will invoke the results attained that way only marginally.

4. Empirical results and discussion

4.1. Sample profile

The structure of the sample collected (512 respondents) can be seen in Table 2. It allows characterizing the audience of the selected events of the European Youth Capital and, by extension, the one of most of the initiatives performed in the aim of the mega-event. The proportion of respondents showed to be balanced among genders (52.7% females versus 47.3% males). In the case of 13 questionnaires, the sex of the respondent was not registered.

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).

The majority of respondents use to live in the municipality of Braga (63.5%) and only in the *12th National Meeting of the Youth Associations*, as expected, there was a predominance of visitors among the respondents. This result seems to indicate that the attractiveness or external visibility given to the events performed was not large, so, being able of capturing, mainly, the participation of local residents.

Not surprisingly having in mind the nature of the mega-event, youth participants were the large cohort of the sample respondents (60.8%), followed by those aged between 30 and 49 years old (27.9%). We can also verify that the individuals endowed of a higher education level (at least a university degree) are also the cohorts more represented among the survey respondents (49.3%).

Other features of the sample it is worthy underlining regard the occupational status of the respondents. Those employed accounted for 42.2%, against 39.3% that were students and 13.3% that were unemployed. That can be looked as showing that the organization of the EYC 2012 has been able of capturing to the events offered participants endowed with different personal and professional situations. In fact, most of the events organized were free of any financial charge.

This circumstance may have allowed the participation of a large amount of people that, other way, would be excluded as the family budgets of the participants identified showed not to be large, going from 1,001€ and 2,500€ (33.4%) and from 500€ to 1,000€ (27.9%).

The features represented in Table 2 seem to portrait the ones of a population belonging to the medium and medium-low social classes.

4.2. Survey results

Taking the all set of indicators used to identify the sociocultural and economic impacts of hosting the 2012 European Youth Capital derived from the literature review, in a first move, using factorial analysis, we tried to check if we could get an easily interpretable structure of the data collected. The results attained did not accommodate to the usual classification of the impacts listed by the literature and so, instead, we decided approaching the issue accommodating the analysis closely to the before mentioned typology of effects.

According to the alternative approach, we have opted 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. This analysis was applied to the 13 indicators collected in the survey classified as having a sociocultural nature. This was done after having normalized the variables 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, joined 9 indicators which, in a certain way, are mainly related to the results of the mega-event (Table 3). Having this in mind, we decided to label it the *EYC Sociocultural Results*.

Table 3 - Factor analysis of the socio-cultural 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 feeling in 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 possible to organize events that, otherwise, I had not the possibility to participate in.	0.675	
The city should host more mega-events like the EYC.	0.691	
The hosting of the EYC was an add-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 in the post 2012 years.	0.694	
The main social impacts of the EYC in the years post 2012 will be the incremented international visibility the city will get and the increased self-esteem experienced by the residents of Braga.	0.753	
<i>Explained variance (%)</i>	38.13	23.96

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

It was used the pairwise method for deletion of missing values.

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

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

By its turn, the second factor joined 4 indicators, namely: The programme of the EYC is not feeling in 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 those indicators are related to the way the activities of EYC were planned and organized, 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. Factor 1 has shown to have a very good consistency level (0.91), meaning that respondents rely on the same principle to base their answers to the several questions related to the indicators that integrate the *EYC Sociocultural Results*. Factor 2, related to the *EYC Programme*, has shown to have a lesser 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 indicate 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 used in the one of the *Sociocultural Impacts*. Applying the Principal Components Analysis we got just one relevant factor, explaining 63.29% of the variance of the original indicators taken, which present 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 next future from hosting the will be felt by the retail sector, that will experience a greater dynamic. Besides, the growth of employment it is also expected). The reliability of the alpha has shown to be satisfactory (0.70).

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 in the period post-2012.	0.859
The main economic impact to be expected in the next future from hosting the will be felt by the retail sector, that will experience a greater dynamic. Besides, the growth of employment it is also expected.	0.881

<i>Explained variance (%)</i>	63,29
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. It was used the pairwise method for deletion of missing values. KMO = 0.59; p < 0.001; rotation converged in 1 iteration.	

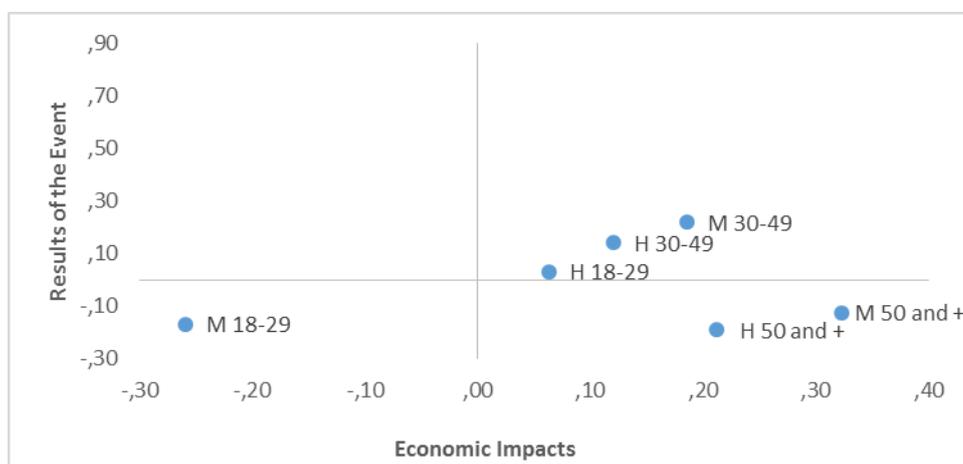
Source: Authors' own survey data (collected from October to December 2012).

As expected, the correlation coefficients between the 3 factors identified above show that the impacts a hosting such kind of mega-event is 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 certain way, our empirical analysis seems to give consistency to this idea, mainly when we approach the relationship of the *Results of the Event* and of the *Economic Impacts*, where we got 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 ($r = 0.30$; $p < 0.001$).

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

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

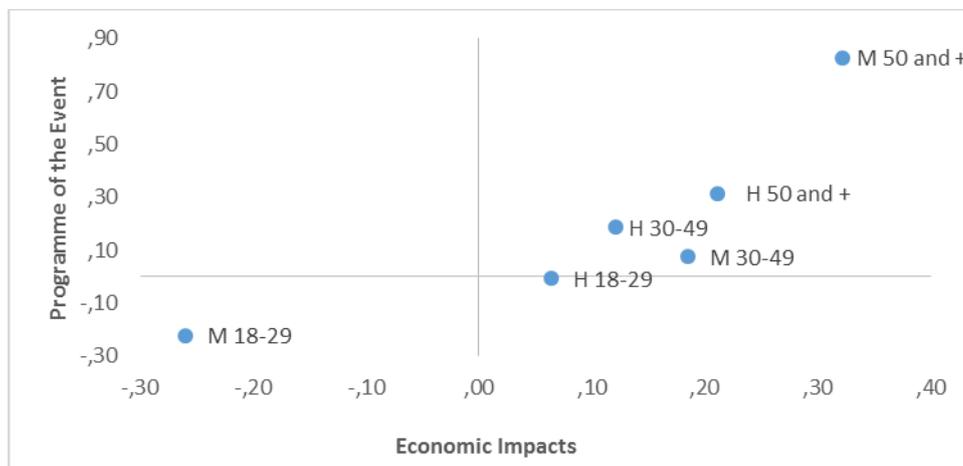


[H – Men; M – Women]

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

From Figure 2, which presents the average values of *EYC Programme* and of *Economic Impacts*, we can check that there are statistical significant differences in what regards the way individuals have valued the EYC Programme implemented. Indeed, the older women enjoyed it more than the younger ones [$F(5,262) = 2.765, p < 0.005$] (Figure 2).

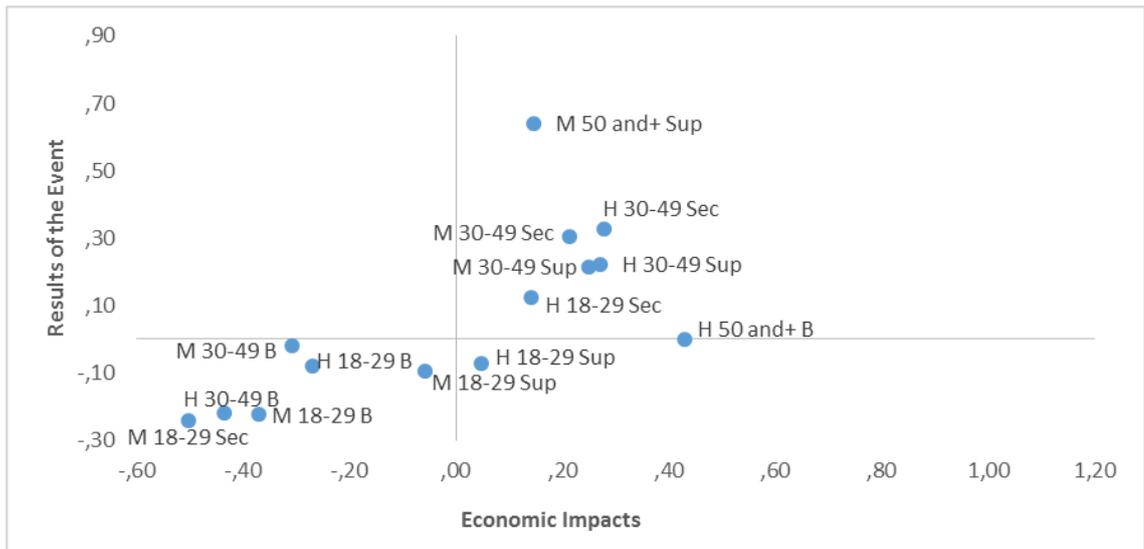
Figure 2 - Programme of the Event and Economic Impacts (means), according to gender and age



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

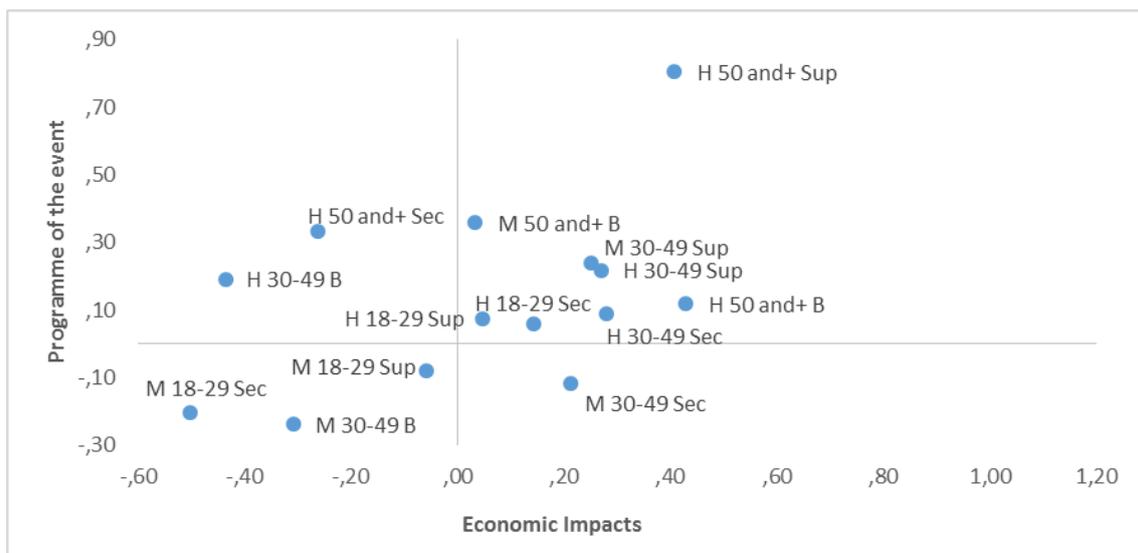
Relating this two dimensions with gender, age and level of education, taken together, we got a result quite close of the one presented before. That is, the same way, we do not find relevant differences of perceptions in what regards the *Results of the Event* based on gender, age or education level. Nevertheless, we found significant differences either in what refers to the *Economic Impacts* or the *EYC Programme* when approaching the perceptions kept by individuals organized 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 3 - Results of the Event and Economic Impacts (means), according to gender, age and education level



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

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



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

As a last demarche, trying to better understand the level in which certain variables influence the three dimensions found, we have also run a few linear regressions, using ordinary least squares. As exogenous variables we took again gender, age, level of education, and added the geographical origin of participants (residents or visitors), occupational status and average family budgets.

Following this approach, just the origin of participants has shown to be able of predicting either the economic impacts or the results perceived of the EYC. In what regards 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 the more either the economic impacts either the results of hosting the 2012 European Youth Capital. In what regards the programme of the EYC, were the older participants that have claimed to have enjoyed it more.

4.3. Discussion of the empirical results

If the literature keeps as a major goal of hosting any kind of mega-event the external marketing promotion of the city and the enhancement of its image as a tourism destination (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Kim, Gursoy and Lee, 2006; Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009; Getz, 2012; Lee *et al.*, 2013), one of the conclusions we could get from the data of the survey implemented was that Braga 2012 European Youth Capital was unable to fulfil that envisaged 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 centred in the youth, it is worthy to underline 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 a plus-value by them as it was looked as having contributed to open their minds. From the participation in the management of the event, many of them even got an experience they can take profit in future daily life.

Referring to this increased know and experience, in the focus group implemented to discuss the issue, one of the main ideas that emerged was that “the event succeeded changing somehow mentalities and succeed showing that youth do not envisage only to amuse itself but is also able to think and produce strategic thinking”.

Approaching the general issue of the impacts felt by the city of Braga, the perception kept is that an impact did verify. Namely, the majority of the respondents did claim that the 2012 EYC was not a case of misuse of public funding. Instead, allowed enhancing its cultural life and economy, mostly the retail and services sectors, besides constituting a plus-value in terms of getting a new experience and opening youth`s minds, as previously mentioned.

In the claim expressed of a positive result from the hosting of the EYC, its contribution to the increase of the social cohesion was also emphasized, together with the one that “there would be equipment which would remain as a heritage” of the EYC.

In what regards the eventual contribution of this kind of celebration to a better integration of social minorities and other cultural expressions, as the review of literature

also uses to emphasize and the European Youth Forum did identify as a main goal of the implementation of the European Youth Capitals (<http://www.youthforum.org/>, accessed 10/02/2012), the data we got did not allow confirming it.

Conclusion

Based on the data of a survey implement to participants of a few of the events of the programme of the 2012 European Youth Capital, we have tried to evaluate the economic and socio-cultural impacts of its hosting by Braga. From there, 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 to those impacts, from the perceptions kept by the survey respondents we should conclude that some impacts have verified, indeed. This general idea gets its base on the enhancement of the social cohesion that was perceived (synthetized 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 residents of Braga were the participants that have valued the more either the economic impacts either the results of hosting the 2012 European Youth Capital.

Beside 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). Inquiring on the success of the mega-event, those were also the ones that kept a more positive evaluation of it. The same way, women did a more positive evaluation then men.

Indeed, the programme of the EYC seems to have felt in the youth`s expectations, has evidenced by the answers of 60.8% of them, who declared to agree or full agree with a sentence claiming that. Even so, the older participants were the ones that seem to have enjoyed it the more.

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

Two dimensions that have attracted more criticism were the marketing promotion of the mega-event and its general programme. In this regard, the residents have shown to be more critics than visitors did. This issue emerged also in the aim of the focus group

implemented. From there, the main idea derived is that it was possible to do much better. Having said that, there is place to take profit from the acquired experience in future applications for hosting other mega-events or special events.

Derived from this approach to the successes and failures of the 2012 EYC, we can immediately drive a first policy comment. It has to do with the capability of learning from experience, the own experiences and the ones of others, that is, one can raise the doubt if certain of those failures in terms of planning, promotion and managing the event could not have been prevented if the principle of learning from good external practices had been followed. Of course, we should trust that, next time, things will go better.

In what regards the communication strategy, the claim is that planners and managers of future mega-events should be able of profiting better from the electronic networks available, namely the called 'social-networks'. According to the data of the survey implemented and other complementary sources, this was far from happening in the aim of the hosting of the EYC 2012.

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

The work performed in terms of evaluation of the impacts of hosting the 2012 Braga EYC was more deep and complex than what we show in this paper. Other agents were inquired and other analytical approaches were followed. This said, 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. Besides, it is worthy to underline that the global success of such kind of event only can be correctly evaluated following a medium-long term approach.

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