

“Portuguese newspapers’ front-page and the coverage of European Cultural Capital, Porto 2001 and Guimarães 2012” na International Conference on Culture and Cultural Policies organizada pelo Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Humanities de Zagreb, Hotel Le Meridien, Vienna, Áustria, no dia 25 de abril de 2014.

Portugal hosted in the last thirteen years, two editions of the event European Cultural Capital; this paper intends to illustrate the coverage that Portuguese newspapers (daily newspapers Público, Diário de Notícias, Correio da Manhã and Jornal de Notícias, a weekly newsmagazine Visão and a weekly newspaper Expresso) made, through referrals in front-page and respective developments within the editions, to each of the events and that allows us to define the main moments that marked each of them, patterns of action, the major players, planning and programming types.

The European Cultural Capital project elects, from year to year, cities of different EU member states with the main goal of “contributing to bring together the Europe’s people” (words of Méliina Mercouri, Greek Minister of Culture who, in 1985, proposed the launch of this initiative) and encouraging the elected urban space to present new cultural paradigms. In the genesis of this model is the cultural decentralization’s vector, a possibility to medium-sized cities of funding public works, restoring heritage and promoting themselves in touristic terms, of giving visibility to cities away from cultural and creative industries’ major distribution centers.

A crucial factor to achieve this goal is media coverage. This paper outline the information that the Portuguese press ran over the two years that elapsed the latest editions of the European Cultural Capital in Portugal, namely that media coverage have deviated from the disclosure of the events’ schedule to suggest itineraries of visit and little or not even question the role that cities, promoting such initiatives, have as places of innovation in terms of cultural policies, artistic production and innovation, in urban and environmental regeneration, in economic revitalization, in training and creating new artists and new audiences and in boosting the confidence of local communities.

The content analysis performed to articles shows how press is essential to the promotion of cities as cultural/touristic destinations as it stimulates consumption among residents and attracts visitors, with the possible dire consequence of turning the cultural journalist into an agent of touristic instead of cultural promotion.

*Keywords:* newspaper coverage, cultural events, cultural destinations

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