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Place branding in strategic spatial planning

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Place branding in strategic spatial planning

An analysis at the regional scale with special reference to Northern Portugal

PhD thesis

to obtain the degree of PhD at the
 University of Groningen
 on the authority of the
 Rector Magnificus Prof. E. Sterken
 and in accordance with
 the decision by the College of Deans.

This thesis will be defended in public on

Thursday 31 March 2016 at 16.15 hours

by

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Cover explanation

Own design. The cover and back cover photo was taken by Arezou Oliveira on 25 September 2015. The photo shows a part of the 18th century tile-work that decorate the entrance-walls of the Episcopal Palace of Braga, located in the Palace Square (Largo do Paço), Braga, northern Portugal. The “azulejo” or tile-work is an identitary art of Portugal. This building is, at present, the rectory of the University of Minho. This particular part of the tile-panel represents scenes of knowledge exchange, debate of ideas and the construction of visions of the future. In my personal perspective, this tile-work is a source of inspiration and motivation to never stop dreaming, thinking, questioning and wondering. To always envision better futures for ourselves, those around us and the world we live in.

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This Ph.D. thesis is dedicated to:

My breathtakingly intelligent and supportive wife, Arezou Oliveira. Arezou left her family in Iran to pursue her dreams, to follow her heart and passion and build a new family by my side. I am endlessly grateful for her love, her dedication, her effort and her patience, both during this Ph.D. programme and beyond. I feel humble and blessed to have her in my life: to have her smile filling my days with sunshine, to have her words fuelling my thoughts with inspiration, to have her love in every single minute, to listen her voice touching my heart and my mind with perseverance, values, knowledge, dedication and enthusiasm.

My mother, whose personality, character and the spirit she embraces daily to fight for better futures continue to inspire me, affecting my willingness and ability to understand and transform the world with firmness, generosity and grace.

My father, whose long career and professional dedication inspired my daily efforts for success, kindness and mutual support. His daily perseverance, dedication, endless energy and the search for perfection, positively impact my thoughts and actions.

My sister, whose critical thinking and energy in pursuit of new challenges has influenced me as a nuclear fusion, a nano-eruption of motivation to face the complexity and uncertainty that have always characterized the evolution of the Oliveira family. Her dedication to always fight for the respect of personal values, professional integrity, better labour conditions and living philosophies keep feeding my thoughts with alternative, and often radical, ideas and actions.

My gratitude and appreciation.

Eduardo

Acknowledgements have been included in the end of this Ph.D. thesis (page 237).

Preface

This Ph.D. thesis brings together the strategic spatial planning approach and place branding, specifically at the regional scale. It critically explores the actual or potential roles of place branding as an instrument for the attainment of strategic spatial planning goals. This discussion is gaining particular momentum at a time when the application of branding techniques and principles to places, such as cities and regions, has been firmly positioned on the agendas of local and regional governments. Place managers and policy-makers have been embracing place branding as a panacea for a bewildering assortment of deep-seated economic and social ailments, as well as a critical component to assist regional development strategies. However, and in spite of theoretical and empirical advancements, the debate on place branding often lacks any intellectual grounding or even positioning within wider spatial planning strategies, and is ripe for a rethinking in terms of its origins, theoretical underpinnings, conceptual development and practical applications.

Strategic spatial planning, which has been gaining in popularity in Europe, particularly at the regional level, was conceived as a means of overcoming the temporal and often spatial limitations and rigidities of traditional/statutory planning, by confronting the contemporary social, spatial and economic needs of a place and envisioning shared, realistic and desirable better futures for places and their citizens. Strategic spatial planning focuses on a limited number of strategic key issues and focuses on place-specific qualities and assets (whether tangible or intangible). In addition, strategic spatial planning involves relevant place actors and the specific activities of citizens, politicians and spatial planners. Proactive civic participation in a collective strategy and vision for a place (for instance, a region) may generate trust and legitimize spatial interventions, as participants in the process are likely to find that some visions present a future that certain individuals would like to inhabit; to work, study and play in; visit and develop leisure activities in, while other possible futures are considered highly undesirable. In this regard, place branding may be used in support of such visionary realignments and structural change; to foster economic restructuring, social inclusion and cohesion, political engagement and civic participation; as well as the reinforcement of place identification and the general well-being of citizens and communities.

The theoretical assumption postulated in this thesis is that place branding could and perhaps should be integrated into strategic spatial planning, independent of the geographical scale of application and whether the place branding initiatives are novel or a re-branding exercise. This thesis investigates the empirical significance of a regional branding strategy for northern Portugal (NUTS II), integrated into wider strategic spatial planning, and its ability to overcome the entrenched regional, economic and social difficulties and imbalances. To achieve this aim, a qualitative methodology was employed. Specifically, a content analysis of strategic spatial plans, development plans, strategic initiatives and online tourist-/traveller-generated content for Portugal and its northern region. In addition, 16 regional actors with a stake (and expertise) in the region were interviewed. By drawing the attention of scholars, practitioners and policy-makers towards place branding as a strategic spatial planning instrument, this thesis aims to contribute to theoretical underpinnings of place branding in order to make it effective, efficient, socially and environmentally responsible and more grounded in theory.

Voices of northern Portugal

Voices of northern Portugal, aims to bring together various perspectives over the northern region of Portugal (“O Norte”) from those that currently live there or have been there developing work, studies, visiting or for any other purpose. The collection of opinions was started on the 15th of March 2015 and finished on the 1st of July 2015. It was conducted through social media, specifically my own personal account on Facebook and an account administrated by me in the same social media platform called “The Northern Portugal”. My own twitter account was also used for this purpose. I have requested to my contacts and followers to write in one or two sentences (or 140 characters if shared via Twitter) their perspectives, thoughts, and feelings about northern Portugal. Their words were not analysed neither do they contribute to the findings discussed on the chapters that composed part B of this Ph.D. thesis. They do represent, despite that they are not any representative sample, an effective mode of involving and engaging with citizens, communities and a multiplicity of actors. As I widely argue throughout this thesis, the opinions of place actors and citizens must be taken at the heart of any place branding strategy, independently of the scale of application, as well as in strategic spatial planning processes. Place actors and citizens can act as co-creators of place brands (see chapter 4 of this thesis). Their involvement is also relevant in strategic spatial planning as they can co-produce process (see chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis). The portfolio of opinions is presented below.

“Northern Portugal is the most beautiful and true region of Portugal, with hospitable and friendly people.”
(Nuno Oliveira, March 2015)

“Galicia and Northern Portugal, the corner where the Atlantic meets Europe.”
(António Alves, March 2015)

“Northern Portugal is simply lovely, for its stunning landscape and welcoming people.”
(Thiago Brito, March 2015)

“Northern Portugal is the region where we can find the authentic Portugal. Is the region where we can hear people speaking loudly, see clothing drying at the balconies, neighbours requesting sugar to the next door neighbour, the bakery owner that knows our name. For me, these is what best represents northern Portugal, and for me these is our Portugal.”
(Andreia Amorim, March 2015)

“Northern Portugal a land of white wine and filled with traditions”
(Márcia Sousa, March 2015)

“Northern Portugal, a region with history, traditions and astonishing landscapes.”
(Miguel Correia, March 2015)

“Northern Portugal, the region where the people are hospitable and cheerful.”
(Sylvia Santos, March 2015)

“To speak about northern Portugal, it is necessary to fill the chest of a green and fresh pride, straighten your back and lift the chin. And, look ahead to the infinity with the confidence that in each northerner gesture focuses there is tradition and the purest beauty of our country.”
(Olga Pereira, March 2015)

“Northern Portugal, where the "green sounds" of nature, mix with a determined touch of peoples' northerner accent.”
(Mário Coelho, March 2015)

“Northern Portugal represents the joy of the colours of its hills; the joy of their sounds and the cheerful smells. Those who lived or visited northern Portugal probably will never forget it; they will leave with the desire of returning someday.”
(Silvia Fernandes, March 2015)

Northern Portuguese people are daily fighters in toil of wild land.
Northern Portugal is tough and strong with expressive people and landscapes which impact positively all those that interact with the region.
Is a tracery of natural and human landscapes that amazes in each corner.
Is a watching point, because in the wilderness of each hill one is able to observe all its charm.
(Sérgio Ferreira, April 2015)

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This thesis has been proofread in UK Standard English (except for quotations written in American English) following the Oxford Student's Dictionary and reflects modern academic trends. For instance, words have been spelled with an "ize", "izing" or "ization" suffix and some words, such as "analyse", are spelled in the traditional way. The word "chapter", when is not used at the beginning of a sentence, has not been capitalized. "%" appears as "per cent" when in a sentence. "Co-production" has been spelled as "co-production". However, the reader will also find "coproduction" but only when is part of a quotation.

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List of acronyms in English and Portuguese organized in alphabetical order

Acronym	English translation	Original name in Portuguese
ADRAVE	Regional Development Agency of the Ave Valley	Agência de Desenvolvimento Regional do Vale do Ave, S.A.
ATP	Textile and Clothing Association of Portugal	Associação Têxtil e Vestuário de Portugal
AICEP	AICEP Portugal Global - Trade & Investment Agency	Agência para o Investimento e Comércio Externo de Portugal
CCDRN	North Regional Coordination and Development Commission	Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte
DMO	Destination Marketing Organization	
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation	Agrupamento Europeu de Cooperação Territorial
EU	European Union	União Europeia
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective	
eWOM	Electronic Word of Mouth	
FCT	The Foundation for Science and Technology	Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia
GDP	Gross domestic product	Produto Interno Bruto
GNP	Galicia-northern Portugal also as Galicia north-Portugal	Galícia-Norte de Portugal
HCP	Health Cluster Portugal	Pólo de Competitividade da Saúde
ICT or ICTs	Information Communication Technologies	Tecnologias de Informação e Comunicação
IN	Regional actors and organizations interviewed	Atores regionais e organizações entrevistadas
INE	Statistics Portugal	Instituto Nacional de Estatística
IPM	The Institute of Place Management	

ITPD	Institute of Tourism Planning and Development	Instituto de Turismo
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics	Nomenclatura das Unidades Territoriais para Fins Estatísticos
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	Organização para a Cooperação e Desenvolvimento Económico
PB	Place Branding	
PSP	Portuguese Society of Propaganda	Sociedade de Propaganda de Portugal
SPP	Strategic Spatial Planning	Planeamento Territorial Estratégico
TPNP	Regional Entity of Tourism of Porto and Northern Portugal	Entidade Regional do Turismo do Porto e do Norte de Portugal
TTCI	Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index	
UM	University of Minho	Universidade do Minho
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization	
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council	

PART A:

**THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL
APPROACH**