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Place branding in strategic spatial planning

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Chapter 7: Place branding in strategic spatial planning: cross-border cooperation in a regional branding strategy with reference to Northern Portugal and Galicia

Chapter overview

This chapter adopts a strategic spatial planning approach to think strategically about potential joint place-branding initiatives between cross-border regions. The case study focuses on the Euroregion composed of Galicia in northwest Spain and northern Portugal. Bearing in mind the mismatch of styles of regional government systems, the approval by the European Commission of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Galicia–northern Portugal, and the current socio-economic environment, this chapter discusses the possibility of combining key-strategic domains in which Galicia-northern Portugal excels, joining forces, procedures and strategic tools in order to enhance the reputation, give visibility and echo the cross-border advantage of this European regional conurbation. In addition, this chapter intends to shed some light on the empirical significance of a cross-border place-branding strategy able to encourage entrepreneurship, job creation, trade and investment. It draws important lessons from the idea of interregional place branding and aims to encourage a unique cross-border storyline. This chapter also aims to contribute to the academic debate on regional place branding, in line with the main research objective of this thesis, by discussing the potential development of place-branding initiatives across - administrative - border regions underpinned by knowledge from strategic spatial planning literature. Hence, the primary strand of reasoning postulated in this thesis - that is - place branding as strategic spatial planning instrument and the theoretical framework of the study are both explored within a cross-border spatial context.

7.1. Introduction

This chapter adopts a strategic spatial planning approach as an attempt to think strategically, innovatively and creatively in potential joint place-branding initiatives between cross-border regions, in a European context. The European region composed of the NUTS III Alto Minho, Cávado, Ave, Metropolitan Area of Porto/Área Metropolitana do Porto, Alto Tâmega, Tâmega e Sousa, Douro, and Terras de Trás-os-Montes of Northern Portugal (NUTS II) and the provinces of A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense and Pontevedra (NUTS III) of the Autonomous Community of Galicia (NUTS II) in northwest Spain is taken as a case study (see Figure 7.1.).

The Euroregion Galicia-northern Portugal has legal and institutional support by the Regulation number 1082 of 2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 amended accordingly to Regulation number 1302 of 2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 (European Union, 2006; 2013). The European Council (EC) regulation formally established the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Galicia and northern Portugal (GNP-EGTC) or Agrupamento Europeu de Cooperação Territorial Galicia-Norte de Portugal (Portuguese) or Agrupamento Europeo de Cooperación Territorial Galicia-Norte de Portugal (Galician). This institutional body, in operation since 1 March, 2010, represents the continuous effort from the European Union to enhance cooperation, strengthen ties and develop networks between cross-border European regions.

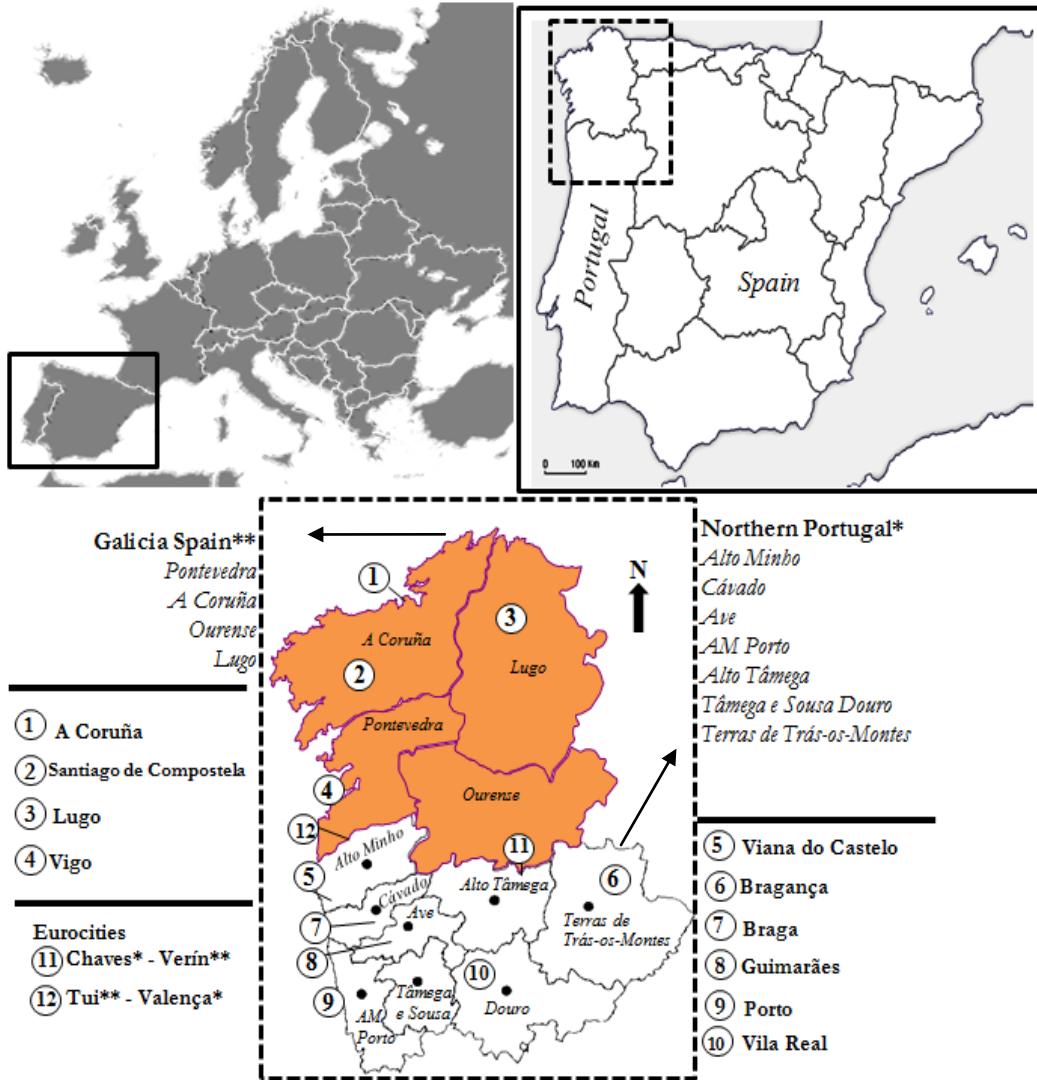


Figure 7.1. The Euroregion Galicia-northern Portugal, the main cities (1-10) and the two Eurocities (11; 12).

The region Galicia–northern Portugal overlaps physical borders and is composed by the territories between the Bay of Biscay (northwest Spain) and the River Douro (northern Portugal). The regions of Galicia and Northern Portugal have a long tradition in cross-border cooperation (OECD, 2012a; 2012b; CCDRN, 2014d). Furthermore, both regions have enjoyed centuries of shared history, culture and roots. These roots date back to the Iron Age, the Castro culture and Celtic presence in the territory of “Gallaecia” (3rd-6th centuries). Linguistic similarities between Galician and Portuguese, years of unity until the foundation of the kingdom of Portugal in 1139, a shared sense of identity and spatial proximity (border regions) can be seen as the key “ingredients” in designing a joint cross-border branding strategy and building regional leverage for a unique Galicia-North Portugal region (Oliveira, 2015g). Cross-border trade, economic affairs and labour force

mobility have also been characterising the cross-border cooperation between Spain and Portugal. In recognition of the strong existing links between these two regions, the spatial and cognitive proximity, the networks established between public entities (for example, between Xunta de Galicia and CCDRN) as well as the legal framework (that is, GNP-EGTC), it makes sense to classify it as a cross-border region and hence think strategically about possible joint cross-border branding exercises.

The last decade of the 20th century has seen a strong surge in the number of cross-border regions all over Europe. Nowadays, there are more than seventy cross-border regions in Europe, operating under names such as “Euroregions”, “EUREGIO”, and “Working Communities” (Perkmann, 2003). However, these European conurbations were undersupplied by legal frameworks until 2006, when the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) was established. Medeiros (2011) argues that the implementation of an EGTC could effectively operationalise cross-border activities such as common transport, sustainable development, environmental protection and regional promotion. This chapter applies the notion of cross-border European region to refer to the Euroregion Galicia–northern Portugal.

The theoretical background of this chapter follows the topical developments on the strategic spatial planning literature in Europe (for example Friedmann, 1987; Healey, 1997a; 1997b; Hillier, 2002; Albrechts, 2004, 2006, 2010a, 2013; Balducci *et al.*, 2011) and on interregional and inter-territorial place branding (for example Oliveira, 2015c; Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015; Pedersen, 2004; Hosper 2004; 2006; Andersson 2007; Pasquinelli 2013; Pasquinelli and Teräs 2013). The discussion around the concept of Euroregions and the changes at the Portuguese–Spanish border are supported by Medeiros (2011) and Amante (2013).

This strategic spatial planning approach to cross-border place-branding seemed most needed in a moment where the European discourse on internal borders promoted the conceptualisation of cross-border cooperation and transnational integration. The cross-border cooperation emerged as a new paradigm of economic and social development. In addition, cross-border areas were presented as an effective effort to strategically overcoming the traditional isolation of border territories.

The European efforts to design territorial strategies and multilayer relational networks across the European Union borders reoriented the practice of spatial planning towards a more strategic approach to everyday challenges (Albrechts *et al.*, 2003; Healey, 1997a; Salet and Faludi, 2000). Changes related to the globalization process, the dematerialisation of European internal borders and the enlargement of the EU resulted in rhetoric and idealism upon the inevitability of living in a borderless world (Amante, 2013) with consequent impact at the spatial level. The European and national political discourses emphatically reinvoked the idea of a Europe of the Regions, linking the notion of four freedoms: free movement of goods, services, people and capital (Rumford, 2006). Certain spatial functions, traditionally led by national borders, were questioned, and Europeans were introduced to supranational spaces, namely, the single market and the Schengen space (Amante, 2013), with implications in the European political and competitiveness agenda and cohesion policy. Some details on the historical evolution of the creation of the geographical dimension of Euroregion are further provided.

The global competition, the growing complexity and the challenges posed to diverse spatial scale entities, as cities, regions and transnational geographical entities boost the practice of undertaking

cross-border territorial cooperation in order to enhance their competitiveness and strengthen their positioning and territorial visibility. According to Pasquinelli (2013), territorial competition, cooperation and co-opetition are viable strategies for place branding at different scales. Place branding offers a potential collaborative linkage between departments within place authorities at different spatial scales. Also, strategic spatial planning seems able to deal with multi-scale spatial challenges and transformations in an innovative and emancipatory way (Albrechts, 2013).

The spatial dimension involved in this exploratory study (cross-border region) brings challenges to a potential cross-border branding exercise. It includes eight sub-regions from the Portuguese side and four provinces on the Spanish side, both member states of the European Union since 1986. Furthermore, this area has since 2010 an institutional and legal support from the GNP-EGTC. In addition, this chapter encounters complexity as different approaches towards strategic spatial planning and dissimilar systems of regional government and decision-making capacity are involved. Underpinned by knowledge from the strategic spatial planning literature and spatial planners as catalysts and initiators of change (Albrechts, 1999 and as argued in chapter 1), this chapter tries to shed some light on potential joint place-branding synergies between the cross-border areas of Galicia and Northern Portugal. Furthermore, bearing in mind all the aforementioned opportunities and threats of branding places, the chapter will clarify if a cross-border place-branding initiative is likely to encourage the following, in times of financial and economic crisis in both countries:

- Cross-border trade and investment attraction in key-strategic domains (see below);
- Cross-border investment, infrastructure improvements and spatial development, including the development of cultural tourism (also related with the pilgrimage route of Santiago de Compostela);
- Cross-border research and investigation in areas in which the region as expertise;
- Cross-border entrepreneurship, employment and labour mobility.

To go hand in hand with acknowledged difficulties of developing a cross-border branding strategy, through transnational strategic spatial planning, for two sovereign territories (Portugal and Spain) and member states of a supranational institution (European Union), this chapter aims to contribute to a more consistent understanding of the theory and practice of place branding across administrative geographical border areas, contributing, thus strengthen the line of reasoning of this thesis.

7.2. Defining borders and cross-border geographical areas in Europe

Territoriality is frequently the basis for development of social, economic and cultural milieus. In addition, a territory can assume different political, legal, institutional and administrative bounds.

If political theory defines borders as the outcome of institutional processes, often as a consequence of political power skirmishes such as wars or royal negotiations, borders are addressed differently in other theoretical approaches (Yndigegn, 2013). Common sense defines borders as territorial demarcations between neighbouring countries. Borders are socially constructed as a result

of everyday social and communal interactions (Yndigegn, 2013). The border between Portugal and Spain is a historical and political construction achieved through concessions, negotiations and exchanges between Portuguese and Spanish authorities (Amante, 2013). Emotional elements such as national pride, notoriety, positioning and as icons of national identity, borders have defined the geography of the two European countries and, as consequence, the social and cooperative networks. Borders have also defined competitive diplomatic discussions and have been driving a number of transnational infrastructures (for example tunnels, roads, bridges).

As a matter of fact, alike in the past, a considerable number of European regions try to out-compete each other in a fear of becoming less attractive for investment, for tourism, for working or for living. The remarkable overall growth in establishing multilevel relational networks across the EU border areas has changed the European geography, paving the way for the Europe of the Regions (see Perkmann, 2003; Medeiros, 2011). Nevertheless, according to Amante (2013), one must be critical about the political oratory of a European geography composed of regions. Moreover, discussing the relevance of borders within the idea of a Europe of the Regions becomes paramount (Bucken-Knapp and Shack, 2001; Anderson *et al.*, 2003). There was much talk in the 1970s of a Europe of the regions - the idea of the nation-state unravelling at the edges, however, this did not happen in practice. Arguably the nation state seems stronger at current times than in the past. For instance, Portugal is more of a unitary state than Spain. Portugal is devoid of regional government and has a weak regional expression if compared to Spain. In line with Oliveira (2015c), Galicia has also stronger identity - as a region - than northern Portugal.

On the European discourse towards a refreshed EU geography, concepts of cross-border cooperation and transnational integration have emerged as an almost magic solution to overcome the territorial depression of several EU border areas. However, the growing of networks and partnerships that connect a wider range of local and regional actors into cross-border cooperation process has increased the need to clarify the Euroregion concept (Medeiros, 2011), cross-border areas and the role of the new European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation.

7.3. Cross-border regions, Euroregion and the role of EGTC Galicia-northern Portugal

Developing thoughts regarding the geographical concept that better fits the European cross-border areas is fundamental regarding the confusion this geographical dimension of cross-border brings (see Perkmann, 2003; Medeiros, 2011). Some of the cross-border cooperation entities in operation at the European level call themselves Euroregions. A Euroregion must be able to develop strategic-oriented cross-border cooperation in a multilevel partnership (that is, European, governmental, regional, and local) in different development domains, such as mobility, economy, culture and sports, tourism and leisure, transports, environment, health, energy, communications, education, innovation and technology.

The first official cross-border region, the *EUREGIO*, was established in 1958 on the Dutch–German border, in the area of Enschede (the Netherlands) and Gronau (Germany). Since then, such “Euroregions” and other forms of cross-border cooperation have emerged throughout Europe contributing to redraw the political European map, for instance, by reducing the barrier effect, contributing to cost-efficiency of transnational investments and reinforcing common development

strategies (Medeiros, 2011). For local and regional governments, engaging in cross-border cooperation exercises signifies a change of the paradigm by entering a field long reserved for central authorities. Early cross-border cooperation policies were significantly informed by spatial planning theories and practices. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, various bilateral and multilateral governmental commissions were established without granting access to local authorities (Perkmann, 2003).

Despite the tangible and intangible closeness between Galicia and northern Portugal, it was only with the EU membership of Spain and Portugal (1986) that the foundations of successful cross-border cooperation could be built. The establishment of the Working Community Galicia–northern Portugal in 1991 and cross-border cooperation programmes under INTERREG has created benefits that are today enjoyed by a resident population of approximately 6.5 million. The INTERREG IVC (2007-2013) has now been replaced by INTERREG Europe for the period between 2014 and 2020 and Working Communities have been progressively replaced by the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (European Union, 2011).

The overall purpose of an EGTC is further to develop and broaden the common border areas towards improving connectivity, infrastructures, enhancing socio-economic and institutional integration, promoting employment, reinforcing competitiveness and to promote territorial cooperation, thus contributing to meet the objectives of the EU 2020 strategy. In line with the mentioned Regulation 1082/2006, the EGTC Galicia–northern Portugal was officially established in 2010, thus formalizing years of healthy trade and cultural relationships as well as language similarities between Galicia and the northern Portugal region. Recently, the EGTCs have started publishing their joint investment programmes. The GNP-EGTC has also published their Joint Investment Programme Galicia-northern Portugal 2014-2020 (GNP-EGTC, 2014) a document further analysed in this chapter. The GNP-EGTC could also assume a primary role in developing cross-border branding efforts and strategic spatial planning arrangements. This will also be debated further below.

7.4. Strategic spatial planning, cross-border regions and cross-border cooperation

Different forms of multilevel governance have a long history in Europe with impact upon spatial planning. During the 1980s, strategic spatial planning was at a stationary point of evolution (Healey, 1997a; Salet and Faludi, 2000). Instead, urban and regional planning practices were particularly concentrated on projects, mainly for the revival of run-down parts of cities and regions, and on land use regulation. The end of the 20th century saw new efforts in many areas of Europe to produce strategies for cities, sub-regions and regions (Salet and Faludi, 2000).

Efforts in spatial-planning strategy making, involve the construction of new institutional arenas within structures of government that are themselves changing through time. The objectives are, in a nutshell, and following previous chapters of this thesis, the need to improve the articulation towards a more coherent spatial logic for land use regulation, resource protection and investments in regeneration and infrastructure and spatial competitiveness and development. According to Albrechts *et al.*, (2003), strategic frameworks and visions for territorial development, in a Europe undergoing progressive expansion, are demanding specific spatial development initiatives and proactive approaches towards contemporary challenges and global competitive arena.

Following the line of reasoning of Albrechts *et al.*, (2003), Fürst (2001) and Kunzmann (2001), the concentration of efforts on the spatial relations of territories offers a more effective way of integrating economic, environmental, cultural and social policy agendas. In addition, a territorial focus also provides a promising basis for encouraging levels of government to work together and in partnership with actors in diverse positions in the economy and civic society (Fürst, 2001; Kunzmann, 2001). Recently, Albrechts (2013) has suggested reframing of strategic spatial planning. Strategic spatial planning could be seen as a possible approach to deal with societies' economic, social and political challenges in an innovative, creative, coordinated and transformative way, as I have extensively argued in chapters 2 and 5. Strategic spatial planning could support a progressive change in practice, while the government loads onto the term a series of aspirations for policy change at various levels, as economic and social implemented through strategic initiatives, including at the cross-border spatial level. Strategic initiatives are focused on the understanding of the holistic situation, the definition of realistic general goals, and orientation of available strengths and persistence of the action until significant results have been achieved, as at the competitive agenda (Albrechts, 2004). Investment in infrastructure and urban redevelopment, mainly focused on city and regions, relates to well-established arguments about the importance of place qualities, values and knowledge in economic development and spatial transformation in an integrative manner (Albrechts *et al.* 2003).

The European integration agenda, broadly speaking, is aimed at reducing hierarchies of spatial administrative levels while building stronger institutional capacity at regional and sub-regional levels. For several times, this process involves cross-border cooperation. The core objectives of cross-border cooperation are to reduce the negative effects of borders as administrative, legal and physical barriers, tackle common problems and exploit untapped potential (European Union, 2011). According to Perkmann (2003), cross-border regions have thrived in particular because of their increasingly relevant role as implementation units for European regional policy in a context of multilevel governance.

The approach explored in this chapter moves towards a development of synergies onto cross-border place branding by emphasising the knowledge and values of strategic spatial planning. According to Van Assche and Lo (2011), "place branding can enhance the stability of planning strategies" (p. 118). In line with Van Assche and Lo (2011), other scholars and following the primary strand of reasoning of this thesis, a strategic spatial planning approach to branding regions across administrative borders would give visibility to strategic initiatives and enhance the notoriety and increase the recognition of cross-border regions. In addition, it would also strengthening the competitive position and facilitating cross-border multi-sector cooperation, namely, for entrepreneurship, investment and talent attraction as well as talent retention initiatives.

7.5. Debating the primary strand of reasoning of this thesis - place branding as strategic spatial planning instrument at the cross-border spatial level

Strategic spatial planning, as opposed to strategic corporate planning, is an intrinsically political activity (Friedmann, 2004). The reasons are varied. For Mastop (1998, cited in Albrechts 2004), strategic spatial planning in Europe dates back to the 1920s and 1930s where it was used by public and private actors in support to spatial challenges as well as a response to the economic depression in the traditional industrial areas of Europe. The primary strategic spatial planning literature states that strategic spatial planning is not a single concept, procedure or tool but a set of concepts, procedures and tools that must be tailored carefully to different situations. Strategic plans are also not the outcome of a legal obligation (see Quinn, 1980; Healey, 1997a; Kunzmann, 2000; Albrechts, 2004, 2010a, 2013). According to Albrechts (2013), strategic spatial planning is able to support a strategic change, at urban and regional level, changing agendas and thus socially and economically improving places by using different instruments, for instance, place branding (Oliveira, 2015a). All European Union member states, except the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, use detailed planning instruments, such as regulatory zoning instruments, building control instruments, and implementation instruments. However, new approaches are requested following the market conditions of a global society.

Spatial planners now have to assume different roles. Spatial planners, strategic planners, as geographers, ethnographers and marketers, among a vast list of other experts are exponentially developing place branding at different scales (that is, neighbourhood, countries, cities, regions, cross-administrative territories) and different scopes (that is, investment, trade, talent, tourism). Despite theoretical and methodological developments in place branding (see chapter 1, 2, 5), it has been asserted that the practice demonstrates significant misconceptions. I have been debating, throughout this thesis, on one of these misconceptions - that is the correct integration of place branding with spatial planning and spatial planning strategies (Oliveira, 2015a) and policy-making (Ashworth, 2011a). In this chapter, I therefore elaborate on the lacuna in place-branding literature which overlooks inter-territorial branding or branding across administrative borders (Pasquinelli, 2013). To fill that noticeable rational fissure in place-branding literature, this chapter adopts the primary strand of reasoning postulated in this thesis - place branding as a strategic spatial planning instrument - to facilitate developments of branding initiatives for cross-border regions.

Branding cross-border geographical entities is arguably challenging as it involves different governmental structures, there is a need to balance cultural and identity gaps as well as different languages, in most of the cases (Kavaratzis *et al.*, 2015). The approach explored in this chapter clarifies that the integration of branding in strategic spatial planning at the cross-border level could be an effective way to build uniqueness, enhance distinctive features across borders and design a unique branding storyline.

The approach taken here follows the argumentation discussed in previous chapters. In addition, the work of Oliveira (2015a; 2015b; 2015c; 2015g), Kavaratzis *et al.* (2015), Zenker and Jacobsen (2015), Mintzberg (1994), Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2010), Pasqui (2011) and Albrechts (2013) are also of relevance. In my perspective, there are three main reasons to follow a strategic spatial planning approach for cross-border place-branding:

- (1) **Strategically thinking about the future of cross-border regions:** The construction of visions of the future for territories, in the context of joint initiatives, strategic arrangements and consensus building between regional actors and civic society. As cross-border territories are organized by multiple actors and different levels of government, strategic spatial planning could establish solid links for effective decision-making and strategic networks to envision better futures for the area, thus contribute to joint branding initiatives.
- (2) **Integrating decision-making and cross-border branding:** If one accepts that the constituent elements of places are linked with others in distant politically and administratively geographies, one may also aim to reconsider the definition of inter-territorial competition and cross-border cooperation. Territories are involved in highly complex relations of co-dependency, cooperation and co-opetition, at the national and transnational levels. Therefore, oversimplifying the relations only to competition may lead to economic and social imbalances. An integrated approach to place branding may support cohesive decision-making concerning agreements of cooperation, coalition of place actors and development of joint strategic tools. Through strategic spatial planning, as opposed to the one-size-fits-all approach and the all too often blind and frenetic rush to attract investment, talent and tourists. In addition, context-sensitive interventions will prepare the territory and further encourage a cross-border branding strategy (this is further explored in chapter 8).
- (3) **Reinforcing coordination mechanisms in cross-border regions:** Strategic spatial planning has a core of objectives which include coordination and/or convergence between sectoral policies around a disparity of governments, such as in cross-border areas. Furthermore, flexibility and adaptability to circumstances of strategic planning could be an advantage when building cross-border branding strategies. Tailor-made approaches to cross-border branding are suited to enhance place assets and spatial qualities and bring together divergent voices. Ultimately, designed to satisfy the primary needs of the communities and design a unique storyline for shared futures.

The European effort to revitalise a government-led strategic interventions at the urban and regional level has also been used to reposition cities and regions in the expanding economic and political landscape of the EU and of globalising economic relations (Albrechts *et al.*, 2003). The European integration and the challenges posed by globalisation reassert the importance of local and regional identity and image of Europe and the European Union, as a whole, the relevance of the competitiveness agenda and strengthening the ties of cross-border cooperation.

As noted above, there is a theoretical framework to discuss the value of cross-border branding exercises, as this seems a valuable approach to enhance strategic orientations. Furthermore, it could be possible to align border planning systems. Strategic spatial planning, a field of practices of varying nature (for example political-institutional, social), is designed to create conditions for integration between decision-making networks and cooperative ties among regional actors. Furthermore, it is

able to change the cross-border competitiveness agenda and support territories to stay shining on the map of attractiveness.

This approach goes beyond the norm on interregional place-branding research. Even the literature offers us what is now a structured discussion of the reasons why in some geographical units, such as cities, researchers and spatial planners, have engaged with strategic spatial planning (Balducci *et al.* 2011); I have decided to experiment and carefully observe the linkage with branding across administrative territories, such as Galicia and Northern Portugal. In this sense strategic spatial planners are called to assume a role as enhancers of processes of integration between decision-making networks and regional actors from both sides of a border, and this is adding value to cross-border branding exercise.

7.6. Background of the case study: Galicia–northern Portugal

Galicia is Spain's most western autonomous community, and is bordered to the south by Portugal. With approximately 2.8 million inhabitants and a territorial area of around 30,000 km², the region is sparsely populated (with a population density of 95 individuals per km² in 2011); it accounts for 6 per cent of Spain's population and 5.5 per cent of national gross domestic product (GDP) in 2011. Galicia has its own language (Galician) and has always preserved a strong sense of regional identity. The geography of the region is characterized by 1700 km of coastline as well as rugged terrain. It has an elected regional government: the Xunta de Galicia. Galicia has strong trade and cultural relationships with Portugal, especially with its Northern region (OECD, 2012a).

Northern Portugal, without an institutionalized level of government (policy-making is centralized in the national government), as I have argued in chapter 5, is supported in terms of regional development and cohesion by the North Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDRN), has a territorial area of around 21,000 km² with approximately 3.7 million inhabitants (with a population density of 176 individuals per km² in 2011); it accounts for 35 per cent of Portugal's population and 28.3 per cent of national GDP in 2011 (Table 7.1.). CCDRN, a body that has administrative and financial autonomy, but which is appointed by the central Portuguese government, is tasked with coordinating and promoting governmental policies with regard to regional planning and development, environment, land-use management, and inter-regional and cross-border cooperation, mainly with Galicia.

The peripherality and trans-frontier geography of GNP have exacerbated the decline of traditional agricultural and industrial activities that face increasing competition within and beyond the EU. Both regions are currently facing economic and social imbalances which have been affecting the citizens directly. Table 7.1. shows the key figures of the cross-border region, with particular focus on macroeconomic indicators.

Table 7.1. Key social and economic figures for Spain, Portugal, Galicia and northern Portugal.

Indicators	Spain	Galicia (Spain)	Portugal	Northern Portugal
Population				
Resident population (N.)* (3 rd Quarter 2014)	46,464,001	2,748,695 (6% of Spain)	10,427,301	3,694,152 (35% of Portugal)
Population density (No./ km ²) (2011)**	93.3	94.5	115.4	175.8
Labour-Market				
Unemployment rate (%)* (30 th September, 2014)	23.7	20.2	16.2	17.1 (14.2 % in the 1st quarter of 2015)
Youth Unemployment (%)* (4 th Quarter 2013)	54.9 (16-29 years)	36.6 (16-29 years)	38.1 (15-24 years)	35.4 (15-24 years)
Economic-Indicators				
GDP (thousands of euros)** (2011)	1,063,355	58,001 (5.5% of Spain)	171,040	48,403 (28.3% of Portugal)
GDP <i>per capita</i> (thousands of euros)** (2011)	23.1	21.2	16.1	12.9
Tourist arrivals* (2012)	93,674,522	3,838,07 (4.1% of Spain)	14,088,295	2,779,406 (19.7% of Portugal)
World Economic Forum*** <i>Global Competitiveness Index</i> (2014-15) (*)1-7 (best)	35 th position [(4.5(*))]	--	36 th position [(4.5(*))]	--
World Economic Forum*** <i>Capacity of companies to innovate</i> (2014-15) (*)1=not at all; 7=to a great extent	60 th position [(3.8(*))]	--	37 th position [(4.3(*))]	--

Source: author's elaboration based on *Eurostat (2014), **Xunta de Galicia (2013), ***World Economic Forum (2014).

The gross domestic product has registered negative variation rates since 2007. The unemployment rate is above 15 per cent in both regions and the youth unemployment is dramatically high in both regions - above 35 per cent. The level of unemployment request strong measures to bring back the hope to the youth in both sides of the border.

7.7. Content analysis of Joint Investment Programme Galicia-northern Portugal 2014-2020

The analysis of the content of the Joint Investment Programme Galicia-northern Portugal 2014-2020 published by GNP-EGTC in March 2014 supports the present discussion. The primary economic domains identified (Table 7.2.) reveal the strategic domains that could be combined, fuelling, thus, a potential cross-border brand (see the column GNP strategic-domains combined in Table 7.2.).

Embracing a branding process by focusing on place-specific qualities, in line with the theoretical framework of the study discussed in chapter 5, seems to respond to the call Boschma (2014) has made to design tailored actions that take region-specific assets as a starting point to create momentum and generate job opportunities. In line with Table 7.2., GNP could explore the connectivity of key economic domains - as life sciences, agro-food-oriented activities and tourism, among others. Exploring links between and within sectors would demand for joining forces, engagement with regional actors, as well as community involvement in order to design a unique cross-border brand and at the same time reinforce the image of each region and their brands.

Table 7.2. Galicia-northern Portugal-specific qualities/key-strategic domains combined.

Key-strategic economic domains		Combining key-strategic domains at the cross-border level
Galicia	Northern Portugal	Galicia-northern Portugal
Fishing Sea activities	Sea economy Renewable energies	Sea-oriented activities (for example, energy production) Sea-food industry
Life sciences Health-oriented activities Cultural and natural heritage	Agro-food activities Life sciences Cultural tourism	Food-oriented research Health-oriented research Cultural and heritage tourism (for example, pilgrimage, traditions)
Environment Energy Green-biotechnology	Textile and Clothing Footwear ICT services Green industries	Technical textiles (for example, sportswear, workwear) Environmental-oriented ICT Biotechnology industries

Source: own elaboration based on GNP-EGTC (2014).

Following the GNP-EGTC (2014), synergies between Galician sea-oriented activities could be combined with the sea-economy initiatives of northern Portugal. The traditions of the textile industry and shoemaking/footwear could be explored synergistically with the universities and research centres of the Euroregion, for instance with the 3B's Research Group and CITEVE-Technological Institute for Textiles and Clothing and the International Iberian Nanotechnology

Laboratory located in northern Portugal, which could contribute to job creation and fundamentally to its maintenance. Technical textiles, which require knowledge transfer between universities and industry, could support the retention of an expert labour force. Tourism, particularly cultural tourism and tourism associated with religious sites, which is robust on both sides of the border, and the historical and cultural background, are likely to boost regional feelings (of belonging to Galicia-northern Portugal).

Analysis suggests that the potential joint branding strategy would be more effective in providing greater visibility to the Euroregion GNP and communicate its regional excellence, if it is sustained with strong cooperative ties between key regional actors and communities, research laboratories, universities and technology transfer agencies. Recent advances in technical textiles, bio-and nanotechnology (know-why), combined with traditional industry (know-how), will echo the cross-border advantage. Furthermore, a branding strategy could support the communication of GNP assets (tangible/intangible), position, and give visibility to the outside and inside region alike (know-where or spatial dimension). The cultural and linguistic background of GNP could play a key role in the success of a potential joint branding strategy.

There are similarities, cognitive and spatial proximity as well as institutional willingness to position the Euroregion as a whole. The abovementioned joint programme developed by the GNP-EGTC has proposed the development of a marketing plan for the Euroregion which can be considered as a starting point towards a joint cross-border branding strategy. However, I argue that to build uniqueness stronger spatial planning strategies are need, in both sides of the border, to improve the socio-spatial and spatial-economic condition.

7.8. Discussing a cross-border branding strategy for Galicia–northern Portugal

Cross-border cooperation between Galicia and the North region of Portugal is shifting towards improving local competitiveness but also headed for creating stronger cooperation ties. In the past, infrastructure investment brought people together (for example bridges, railways), with positive impact on labour mobility, trade and cross-border investment. Nowadays other joint areas of interest have been identified. Ambitions on joint programmes and organizations set up to improve cooperation in areas such as employment, small business support, environmental planning, heritage conservation, urban regeneration, tourism, university research, risk prevention, socio-economic integration and technical assistance are leading the work on both sides of the border.

The new type of cooperation focused on science, technology and strategic nanotechnology could be seen as a positive move for the cross-border region Galicia–northern Portugal, for instance to tackle the high youth unemployment rate. With future strategic thinking and making the right strategies in spatial planning in both regions, a joint place-branding strategy could position and thus add value to the region. A cross-border place-branding strategy would require strong effort among the key regional and national actors of Portugal and Spain.

A cross-border branding strategy for Galicia–northern Portugal could play an important role in facilitating/simplifying the communication that both regions (and as consequence the Euroregion a whole) is planning, implementing structural changes, encouraging long-term strategic vision, providing integration among a range of sectoral and multi-spatial level plans (for example European,

Spain, Portugal, NUTS II, NUTS III, Autonomous Community) and improving engagement with regional actors and communities. It would be a long-term plan for earning and maintaining a distinctive, positive and competitive cross-border regional reputation, both within the region and around the world. These aims could be achieved through a joint strategic spatial planning exercise at the cross-border level. A joint exercise able to harmonise and highlight cross-border innovation, creativity, authenticity, policy making, international relations and public diplomacy, investment and export promotion, tourism and cultural relations. Furthermore, collaboration and cooperation among inter-territorial unities offer the chance to achieve a higher quality of international promotion campaigns at lower costs for regional actors, thus improving the cost-effectiveness of initiatives (Pasquinelli, 2013).

Objectives such as the development of joint economic, social and environmental cross-border activities geared towards regional territorial development also drive cross-border branding. Accordingly, I underline that a joint cross-border place-branding initiative to the cross-border Euroregion Galicia–northern Portugal could be able to support and encourage:

- **Cross-border trade:**
 - Facilitating cooperation among trade associations and enterprises;
 - Sharing the participation in national and international trade fairs;
 - Sharing trade facilities and joining forces for efficient resource management.

- **Cross-border infra-structure developments:**
 - Sharing facilities for cross-border mobility (for example by improving railway networks connecting the main Galicia–northern Portugal cities);
 - Improving virtual networks and communication technologies.

- **Cross-border investment and tourism development:**
 - Sharing facilities and social and human capital for joint investment. Promote synergies to support industrial production (for example exchanging know-how in areas in which both regions excel). Therefore, support economies of scale and efficient use of non-renewable resources;
 - Taking advantage of the tourism potential in both sides of the border (for example the pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela, River Douro, wine and gastronomy, promoting cross-border cultural touring);
 - Promoting cross-border sensemaking by taking advantage of the historical roots of Galicia and Northern Portugal to construct project orientations for the future (for example cultural events, historical recreations) – short-term actions embedded in long-term strategic visions (both tailor-made and context sensitive);

- **Cross-border research and development projects:**
 - Sharing facilities to capitalise nanotechnology, bioscience and biomaterials research (for example enhance the regional role of the International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory; the 3B's Research Group – Biomaterials, Biodegradables and Biomimetics, both located in Braga, Northern Portugal; and other research centres in Galicia);
 - Sharing facilities for utilisation of laboratories and best practices in academic research (for example agro-food, health, regenerative medicine, high-tech textile materials, nano-products and renewable energy – linking with the key strategic domains identified in chapter 5);
 - Sharing procedures and strategic tools for talent attraction and retention, both from inside as well as outside the region.

- **Cross-border entrepreneurship, employment and labour mobility:**
 - Facilitating strategic network enterprise–university;
 - Exploring synergies with other territories (that is, EU and non-EU regions) to incentive start-up and spin-off developments;
 - Facilitating cross-border mobility of talented people to support knowledge creation and patent development;
 - Facilitating entrepreneurship networks (for example cross-border workshops).

One can argue that the above strategic goals are excessively ambitious. To achieve them through a joint cross-border branding strategy, integrated as an instrument of strategic cross-border planning, requires political decisions (both place branding and strategic spatial planning are inherently political activities) and effective administrative mechanisms in both regions. Designing a cross-border branding process by linking place branding and strategic spatial planning, in a context of permanent changes, uncertainty and desired transformations, within two distort approaches to spatial planning, regional development and government, is a challenge in itself and requires continuous research and practical experiments.

The historical background of togetherness, the cultural roots and identity ties are clearly an advantage towards a common Galicia-northern Portugal brand storyline. However, the different government systems could be seen as a possible barrier. The absence of regional legislative and decision-making capacity in Portugal, the diverse and fragmented regional assets, and the current socio-economic environment of both regions all require regional coordination efforts, territorial reorganization, stronger cooperation bonds as well as rethinking the modes of regional government, particularly in northern Portugal.

The GNP-EGTC could play a key role as a policy platform facilitating the cooperation between two distinctive territories and rendering them more competitive as a unique geographical entity. The working philosophy of GNP-EGTC could be highlighted as an example for other cross-border regions trying to explore synergies among them. The GNP-EGTC has capabilities, as well as access

to financial means, to draw cross-border strategies by exploring related strategic domains to further constructing a regional advantage, turning different types of knowledge into innovation and making it known within and beyond borders.

7.9. Conclusions

Strategic spatial planning is increasingly seen as a critical feature that reflects the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize without collapsing. In addition, the globalisation leads to processes involving a change in the perception of distance (the stretching of all kinds of social, cultural, political and economic relations across space and time). In fact, the search for strategic thinking in place branding to face global competition, and the emergence of virtual regions, due the complexity of networks and panacea of information communication technologies, becomes paramount. In addition, scarce means of funding at the European level, triggering transformation and change and, finally, the internationalisation of territories, are drivers of cross-border branding and, at the same time, increase the demand for a resilient approach to resources management and long-term strategic visions. Moreover, the added competition creates a dispute for visibility and for recognition of the quality, differentiation and competitiveness of their territorial economic specialisation and institutional density as in European countries.

Since the 1990s several places, especially in Europe, have used promotion policies to support their image and improve their competitive position. This process is especially noticeable in the contexts of globalisation, entrepreneurship and increased competition. Thus, within the frame of global competition, regions engage in inter-territorial cooperation initiatives aimed to enhance their competitiveness. In line with the Lisbon Strategy (European Union, 2000), and Europe 2020 strategy (European Union, 2010), I argue that there are frameworks for thinking in developing joint place-branding initiatives across member states, for instance between Galicia and northern Portugal.

From the analysis of the documents: i) Joint Investment Programme Galicia-northern Portugal 2014-2020 (GNP-EGTC, 2014); and ii) the European Territorial Cooperation – Building Bridges Between People, published by the EU (European Union, 2011), I also argue that there are windows of opportunity to develop joint cross-border branding exercises. It seems that there is political will; however, better coordination, organization and cooperation could support decision-making towards a unique regional brand and the same regional promotional storyline.

The EGTC, and the EU cross-border cooperation programmes, could be the institutional, financial and organizational support to encourage a multi-package of objectives in which branding could emerge. Given these recommendations, a joint cross-border branding initiative could give visibility and build a coherent and respected storyline of the region Galicia-northern Portugal, to both regions, to the region and to the outside world. A joint cross-border branding initiative could work as an anchor for the two regions and their potential brands, not eliminating characteristics or strategic domains, but combining them towards a more attractive region.

A strategic spatial planning approach to cross-border place branding, supported by consistent image building, a strong vision and consensus building, will allow development of unique and distinct identities over geographic boundaries. In addition, this could be the key to bring together contradictory voices to develop and agree on shared visions for future regional development,

contributing to job creation and general well-being of Gallegos and Portuguese citizens. A successful cross-border brand requires the right ideas, the right mind-set, the right people and the right strategy and resources at the right time. Designing a comprehensive cross-border branding strategy, responding to all the opportunities and satisfying all demands, and in a multi-scalar context, can be a tough task, however, not impossible. Yet, it is acknowledged that bringing all regional actors together to share the same vision and branding aims will remain a tough task and that there will be difficulties towards mutual agreement for decision-making arrangements.

One real challenge of a joint cross-border branding strategy for the Euroregion Galicia-northern Portugal would be the articulation with regional branding initiatives for each region (Galicia and northern Portugal) already in place or projected. I argue that if place-branding is taken as an instrument in strategic spatial planning the effectiveness of a common brand could unify regional interests from both sides of the border and actually enhance region brands and not diminish their value. In this regard, the EGTC Galicia-northern Portugal could be a key-player; the Joint Investment Programme Galicia-northern Portugal 2014-2020 could be the key-policy document; the INTERREG Europe 2014-2020 could be the key-financial mechanism; and the spatial and cognitive proximity the key-ingredients to support an effective joint Galicia-northern Portugal brand (in line with Oliveira, 2015g).

PART C:

CONCLUSIONS