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Place branding in strategic spatial planning

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Chapter 8: Conclusions and future challenges

Chapter overview

This research project has dealt with the phenomenon of place branding, and its theoretical and empirical links with the strategic spatial planning approach. The aims of this concluding chapter are threefold. First, by revisiting the theory, it aims to debate new theoretical links between place branding and strategic spatial planning. The novel theoretical connections would strengthen the primary strand of reasoning discussed in the Introduction and subsequent chapters - place branding as a strategic spatial planning instrument. By revisiting the theory, the chapter will contribute to the maturation of the idea of branding places as a geographical/spatial phenomenon. In line with McCann (2009) and Van Ham (2008), Andersson (2015) argues that in the current conceptualizations of place branding, the dominant perspectives align place branding practices with mainstream marketing and business approaches, and little consideration has been given to its spatial connotations and associations. The point of departure for this thesis is a call to bring an alternative view to place branding, specifically at the regional scale, for which a strategic spatial planning approach has been employed. The regional dimension is justified, here, because region branding has thus far been largely neglected, as is argued by Zenker and Jacobsen (2015), among others. Secondly, after several years of research on place branding, certain unresolved issues remain that have provoked criticism of place branding and arguments against it (see, for example, Kavartzis, 2008; Kavartzis *et al.*, 2015). In addition, some scholars have pointed out some misalignments within the practice of strategic spatial planning - it has been said that strategic spatial planning destabilizes and challenges an institutionalized set of practices and cultures in spatial planning (see Olesen, 2011). This chapter also aims to address some of those unsolved issues, not in the vain hope of solving them but in an attempt to contribute to the discussion around them and to shed light on the search for answers and deeper understanding. Thirdly, this thesis ends with some concluding remarks in the hope that they will stimulate critical reflection on the future challenges and opportunities of place branding, as well as instruments in a strategic spatial planning approach. In addition, it aims to incentivize spatial planners to embrace the idea of place branding, not only in Portugal and its northern region but also beyond it.

8.1. Revisiting the theory and polishing the theoretical links between place branding and strategic spatial planning

In the past few decades, Albrechts has been devoting particular attention to strategic spatial planning. He has recently argued that strategic spatial planning faces major ontological and epistemological challenges, and that a more radical approach to spatial planning (Albrechts, 2015b) and to strategic spatial planning (Albrechts, 2015a) is needed. Ashworth, a pioneering scholar in developing place marketing and branding, has recently argued, together with Kavartzis and Warnaby (Ashworth *et al.*, 2015), for the necessity of rethinking the theory and practice of place branding. As noted in the Introduction chapter, the main research objective of this Ph.D. thesis is precisely that - to contribute to the advancement and maturation of place branding as a field by approaching it as an instrument in the strategic spatial planning approach, thus lending a more strategic approach and

geographical/spatial consciousness to the practice. Despite the fact that the previous chapters have already provided some theoretically well-informed steps aimed at contributing to the theoretical refinement of place branding, this chapter is certainly not repetitive. It identifies new theoretical links between place branding and strategic spatial planning, thereby helping us to reflect on what can be done to radically revive strategic spatial planning (responding to the call made by Albrechts, 2015a; 2015b) and to rethink place branding (contributing to the exercise developed by Ashworth *et al.*, 2015 and Kavatzis *et al.*, 2015) as a critical theory and praxis. First, this section revisiting the theory will review and reflect on the constituents for a renewal of the strategic spatial planning approach. Secondly, some reflections aimed at contributing to the rethinking of place branding will also be provided. Thirdly, based on previous reflections, alternative theoretical relationships between the two concepts will be discussed, thus reinforcing the primary/optimal strand of reasoning postulated in this Ph.D. In sum, this section will fulfil the thesis's main research objective - the refinement and maturation of place branding. The 3-R's model is summarized in Figure 8.1.

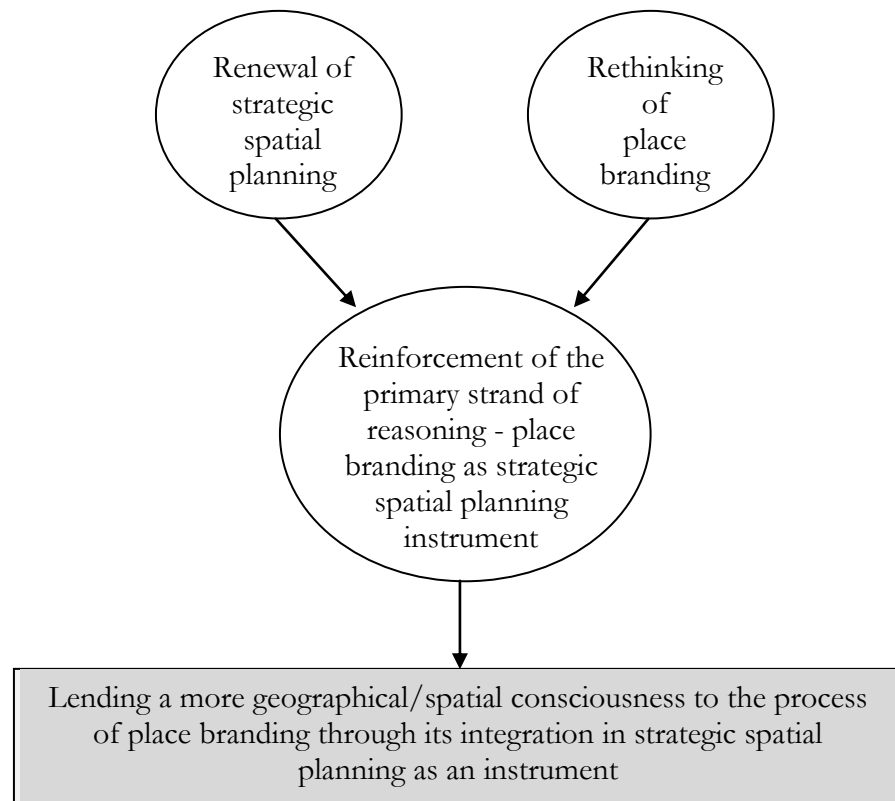


Figure 8.1. Section outline and the 3-R's model explained.

Source: own elaboration.

8.1.1. Constituents for a renewal of strategic spatial planning

Some scholars have been calling for new ideas and the renewal of existing spatial planning approaches - more specifically, that of strategic spatial planning (see Albrechts, 2015a; Kalliomäki, 2015; Albrechts and Balducci, 2013), while others have adopted a more critical stance to the strategic approach in spatial planning (Mäntysalo *et al.*, 2015; Olesen, 2014; Olesen and Richardson, 2012) or have requested alternative attitudes and the involvement of spatial planners in the search for new instruments to cope with challenges faced by societies (Albrechts, 2013; Oliveira, 2014c). Therefore, after briefly dealing with the logic and rationale of a renewal approach towards strategic spatial planning, as well as some critiques, this section sketches the contours of a more radical strategic planning approach that can contribute greatly to the reinforcement of its relationship with place branding.

Summing up what I have argued above: European regions, such as northern Portugal, like other geographical entities, are facing a complex range of issues that impact their socio-spatial and spatial-economic conditions. Some of these challenges are related to environmental issues (for example, global warming, flooding and air and water pollution) and accelerating urbanization, the rise of unemployment and an ageing population, the globalization of culture and the economy, the financial crisis and the subsequent economic crisis (see for example Albrechts, 2015a; Kalliomäki, 2015; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010). Moreover, Albrechts (2010a; 2013) argues for the need to find the type of spatial planning that is necessary to deal with structural challenges. In addition, some scholars also argue that spatial planning and spatial planes must be prepared to support cities and regions to adjust to competition in global markets, and increase their attractiveness with different place promotion campaigns (Mäntysalo *et al.*, 2015). To meet such challenges and opportunities, some attempts have been made to develop an alternative approach to strategic spatial planning.

For Mäntysalo *et al.* (2015), in line with Albrechts and Balducci (2013), the characteristics of strategic spatial planning “give testimony to the need to create new kinds of strategic planning instruments, surpassing the means of statutory planning and the ideas behind them” (p. 171). Albrechts and Balducci (2013) developed a detailed analysis of a body of research regarding strategic spatial planning (see, for example, Albrechts, 1999, 2004, 2006; Albrechts *et al.*, 2003; Balducci, 2008; Balducci *et al.*, 2011; Healey, 1997a, 1997b, 2007; Mintzberg, 1994), in which they list a number of features that characterize strategic spatial planning. I have already alluded to them in the Introduction chapter, as well as in chapters 2 and 3. From this set of characteristics, however, I will underline here the key shifts in the strategic spatial planning approach that contribute to the renewal of strategic spatial planning, thus opening a theoretical window for new strategic planning instruments to come, such as place branding.

I have acknowledged the relevance and pertinence of developing arguments in line with the thoughts of some commentators (see, for example, Cerreta *et al.*, 2010; Olesen, 2011; 2014; Olesen and Richardson, 2012) who have been reflecting, although mainly theoretically, on the rise of strategic spatial planning and the strengthened neoliberal political climate. In addition, Albrechts (2015a), in the vein of Cerreta *et al.* (2010, p. x), Olesen (2011) and Sager (2013), underlines the fact that people are afraid that the ideal of strategic spatial planning could easily be used to favour the neoliberal models of urban and regional development. Despite the value of this debate to the theory

and practice of strategic spatial planning, I will focus here on what some scholars have been proposing as possible solutions in strategic spatial planning that resist the hegemonic discourses of neoliberalism, thus contributing to a reframing/renewal of the strategic approach to spatial planning (Albrechts, 2015a, 2015b; Mäntysalo *et al.*, 2015; Kalliomäki, 2015; Oliveira, 2014c, 2015a) – see Figure 8.2. for a diagram summarizing the basis for a renewal of the strategic spatial planning approach.

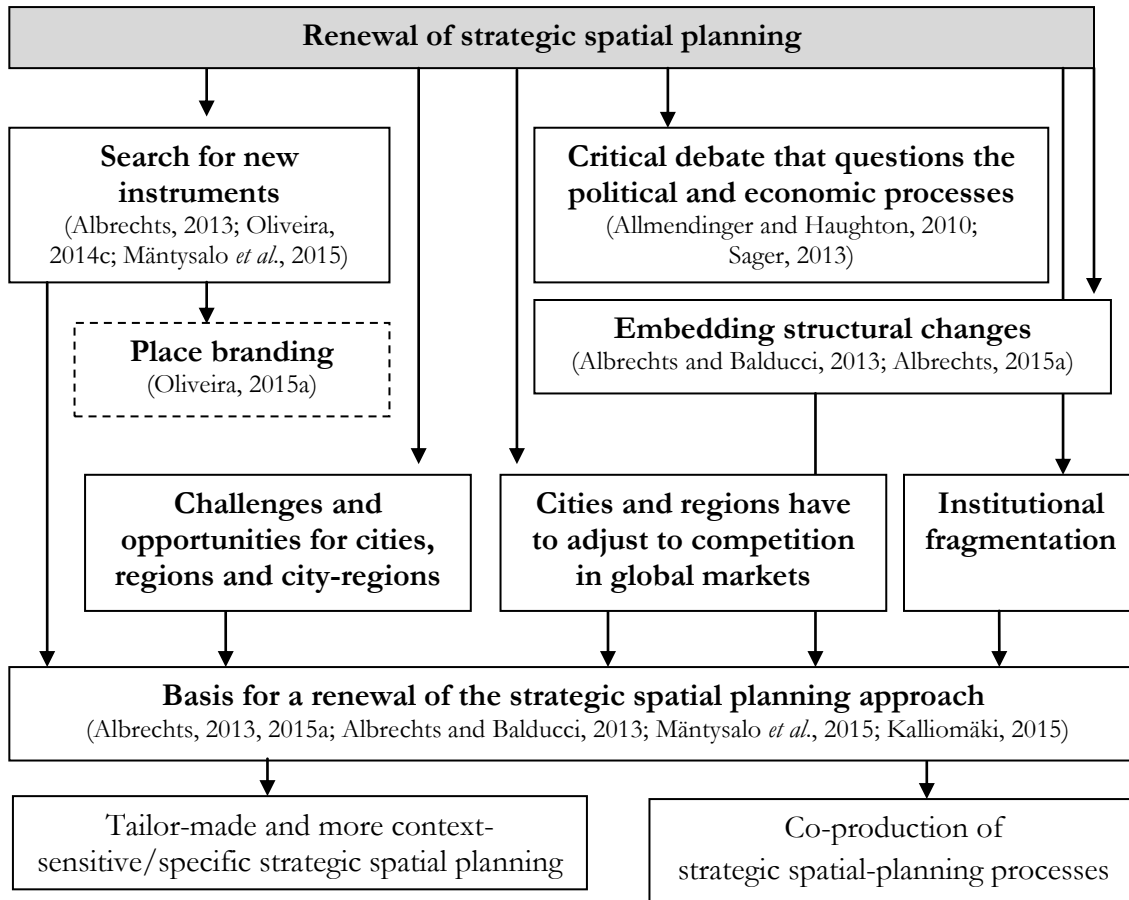


Figure 8.2. The basis for a renewal of the strategic spatial planning approach.

Source: own elaboration based on cited references.

In the next section, I sketch the basis for a renewal of the strategic spatial planning approach: i) tailor-made and more context-sensitive/specific strategic spatial planning; ii) co-production of strategic spatial planning processes.

8.1.2. Tailor-made and more context-sensitive/specific strategic spatial planning

Following the increase in the complexity faced by places, Albrechts (2015a) stresses that strategic spatial planning “must be tailored carefully to the situation at hand if desirable outcomes are to be achieved” (p. 512). It also needs to be sensitive to the spatial context in which the spatial strategies are embedded. This means that strategic spatial planning must be adaptive to changing circumstances by evolving, following the technological developments as well as scientific ones and local knowledge. Oliveira (2014d), in line with Pareja-Eastway *et al.* (2013), argues that tailored and context-sensitive spatial policies pose a systematic breakdown of established neoliberal policies for the spatial agenda of cities and regions, and offer an alternative to the “one-size-fits-all” approach. In addition was the necessity of adapting to the specific characteristics of places as well as their needs; for “some people strategic planning needs a specific political and institutional context (Olesen and Richardson, 2012, p. 1690) for others “is sensitive to specific intellectual traditions” (Albrechts, 2015a, p. 512). Accordingly, tailor-made spatial planning strategies, geared towards specific potentials and focused on tackling specific bottlenecks that occur in places over time, would be able to render strategies more effective and equitable. The point I would like to highlight here is that strategic spatial planning must focus and capitalize on specific spatial contexts (cities, regions), as well as on place-specific qualities, assets and potentialities (see chapter 7 and Oliveira, 2015d), rather than select from a portfolio of spatial strategies that were successful in different environments/spatial contexts. Putting it simple, strategic spatial planning must focus on the specific characteristics of a specific place and not choose from an existing assortment of spatial strategies. In line with Asheim *et al.* (2011), and as I demonstrated in chapters 2 and 7, pursuing such a region-specific strategic spatial-planning approach is not to say that regional planning should rely exclusively on the resources of the region alone. Instead, knowledge-sharing platforms (tacit/experiential knowledge of local communities versus traditional scientific knowledge), policy-making synergies and spatial strategies may cross over regional and national boundaries (for example, in a Euroregion context such as northern Portugal and Galicia), as they do over sectoral boundaries - thus constructing an advantage through tailored and specific spatial planning strategies.

For Campbell and Marshall (2006, p. 240) spatial planning is “an activity which is concerned with making choices about good and bad, right and wrong, with and for others, in relation to particular places”. Therefore, the outcome of this dialectic good/bad, right/wrong would be more effective in enabling change and envisioning better futures if it was tailored to the place’s specific needs, assets and qualities. However, there is an important dimension that is often neglected in spatial planning literature or seldom addressed. Places are not homogeneous. They are complex and heterogeneous entities. Spatial planning, spatial planning strategies often impose costs and benefits unequally upon people. Hence, the question, who pays and who benefits from spatial planning interventions/strategies is also a critical one that deserves further research.

A tailor-made strategic spatial-planning strategy brings to the table the collective “interests that can be” and which may yet “become” (Metzger, 2012, p. 794), where citizens and disadvantaged people become equal partners in devising spatial strategies (Albrechts, 2015a). Mäntysalo *et al.* (2015), in line with Healey (2009), encourages an approach of strategic spatial planning as a realm that generates around itself a community of inquiry that nurtures the collective intelligence of those

within it. Collective and tailor-made spatial strategies must be the result of a joint effort to understand the present conditions and to envision different future possibilities, before starting to take decisions on which paths of spatial-developmental are most wanted and how to prepare the ground for them (Healey, 2009, p. 448). Albrechts (2015a) suggests co-production as a way to identify who defines concretely what spatial quality, equity, accountability and legitimacy really are (that is, identifying who is involved in the planning process and definition of strategies). Co-production as a basis for a renewal of the strategic spatial planning approach is further debated below in an attempt to also provide some reflections about who is co-producing with who/whom)?

8.1.3. Co-production of strategic spatial planning processes

In line with Albrechts (2015a, 2015b; 2013) and Kalliomäki (2015), co-production reframes the relation between government and citizens. In addition, it focuses on the equal partnership between actors involved in the strategic planning processes. Co-production acknowledges the value of multi-actor collaboration in strategic spatial planning; it opens consensus-based governance networks more widely, to cover diverse interests related to not only economic but also social and environmental issues, which accord well with the aims and objectives of place branding (see Oliveira 2015a, 2015b).

Arguably, one of the most challenging aspects of contemporary spatial planning is the dialectic relation between the manifestations that seek democratization/collective decision-making and the empowerment of citizens and communities. Co-production, which accounts for citizens' and institutional participation in the delivery of public services and political strategy, is not a new phenomenon, and can be viewed as making a solid contribution to a renewal of the strategic spatial planning approach.

Elinor Ostrom, American political economist and, later, a Nobel prize-winner, reflected in the 1970s (Time Banks, 2011, cited in Albrechts, 2013) that public goods such as “education, health, or infrastructure services such as water and sewage treatment were very often assigned to government agencies to produce, while citizens were given the passive role of consumers and clients” (2013, p. 48). Ostrom (1996) defines co-production as “the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service is contributed by individuals who are not in the same organization” (1996, p. 1073). Ostrom goes on to argue that citizens must be active actors in decision-making processes over public goods and services, and “she came to the conclusion that coproduction was often the missing ingredient that only citizens could provide” (Albrechts, 2013, p. 48).

Whitaker (1980), cited in Albrechts (2013), argues that co-production with citizens and grassroots organizations is needed for more effective management of some initiatives/issues/projects, but also for the dynamic that encourages transformative practices. Albrechts (2013), in line with Mitlin (2008), reinforces this argument and argues that co-production provides a response to real needs because it prepares citizens and organizations/institutions for a more substantive engagement with political and decision-making systems. Following several definitions and perspectives on co-production in decision-making, spatial-planning processes and political strategies, Table 8.1. provides a brief summary of the approaches used by authors, in chronological order.

Table 8.1. Summary of definitions and perspectives on co-production*

Whitaker (1980)	<p>“Coproduction implies the possibility that citizens might influence the execution of public policies as well as its formulation and actors interact to adjust each other’s expectations and actions” (p. 242). In the vein of Whitaker’s arguments, citizens are regarded as decision makers. In addition, citizens are also viewed as “benchmarks against which to assess the wisdom of alternatives, but they do not determine behavior; neither do frames prescribe fixed outcomes” (p. 242).</p> <p>Whitaker’s main argument: Citizens are decision makers capable of influencing public policies.</p>
Ostrom (1996)	<p>“Coproduction implies that citizens can play an active role in producing public goods and services of consequence to them. Coproduction is one way that synergy between what a government does and what citizens do can occur” (p. 1079). Ostrom delivers a strong statement in saying that “no government can be efficient and equitable without considerable input from citizens” (p. 1083).</p> <p>Ostrom’s main argument: Citizens impact the efficiency of government positively.</p>
Sandercock (1998)	<p>Co-production is focused on developing socio-spatial imaginations and also on the construction of an inclusive governance system. In this way, it “includes not only the views of the most articulate or powerful, but also the views of those who have been systematically excluded by structural inequalities of class, gender and religion” (p. 65).</p> <p>Sandercock’s main argument: Co-production is an integrative process.</p>
Joshi and Moore (2004)	<p>“Institutionalize coproduction is the provision of public services (broadly defined to include regulation) through regular, long-term relations between state agencies and organised groups of citizens, who both make substantial resource contributions” (p. 40).</p> <p>Joshi and Moore’s main argument: Provision of public services occurs through institutions and citizens.</p>
Boyle and Harris (2009)	<p>“Coproduction means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change” (p. 11). The advantage of co-production is that it</p>

	acknowledges and rewards both local knowledge and experience, “while continuing to value professional expertise” (p. 15).
	Boyle and Harris’s main argument: Co-production values local and expert knowledge simultaneously.
Mitlin (2008)	Co-production is “a political process that citizens engage with to secure changes in their relations with government and state agencies in addition to improvement of basic services” (p. 352) - that is, joint/co-production of public services between citizens and the government. An important conceptual differentiation is also provided by Mitlin (2008), who suggests that co-production is different from standard civic participation or partnership arrangements. In addition, co-production is apparently more effective than lobbying or protesting in terms of enabling change or gaining benefits. The implementation of co-production in spatial decision-making may be smooth and cooperative.
	Mitlin’s main argument: Co-production has more impact in enabling structural change than other forms of civic demonstration.

Source: Own elaboration based on cited references and Albrechts (2013). *co-production appears in this chapter and in thesis as “co-production”. However, the reader will also find “coproduction” but only when is part of a citation.

The sum of the definitions above suggests that co-production provides a platform for wider civic and institutional engagement and participation in policy- and decision-making. In addition, it prepares citizens and organizations to challenge, resist and comply with state government (Albrechts, 2013, in line with Roy, 2010). The above-mentioned definitions, however, do not state clearly the interrelations between co-production and spatial planning. Therefore, it is important to debate here how co-production can contribute to a renewal of the strategic spatial planning approach, and how it can contribute to the rethinking of place branding as a more geospatial phenomenon. I also acknowledge that the work on - local production system (see for example Rodríguez-Pose, 2001) as well as the work on - geographically concentrated production systems (see for example Storper and Scott, 1988) could be useful to deepen the understanding on the conceptual links between co-production, place branding and strategic spatial planning. Table 8.2. attempts to summarize the conceptual links between co-production and strategic spatial planning. Those current and potential links are particularly useful for the conclusions of this thesis.

Table 8.2. Summarizing co-production in strategic spatial planning.

Albrechts (2013)	<p>Albrechts argues that it seems worthwhile exploring the added value of co-production - as a strategy to secure political influence and to access resources and services - as a central concept in the theory and practices of strategic spatial planning. In addition, co-production strategies can be understood as a response to some of the paradoxes of democratic will and practices. Albrechts (2013) advocates that a co-productive perspective in strategic planning would reframe the state-citizen relationship by highlighting their skills and knowledge to deliver services, policies, plans or projects.</p> <p>Albrechts’s main argument: Co-production will bring citizens close to the strategic spatial planning process. Citizens will actively engage with the development of spatial strategies.</p>
Albrechts (2015a)	<p>Albrechts (2015a), in line with Purcell (2009), suggests that “a strategic spatial planning process based on coproduction acknowledges that some forms of strategic spatial planning tend in the long term to reinforce the status quo because it seeks to resolve conflict, eliminate exclusion, and neutralize power relations rather than embracing them as the very terrain of social mobilization” (p. 515). Following Friedmann (2005), Albrechts (2015a) argues that co-production ought to be conceived as a collective endeavour. In this collective action, citizens are an integral part of the action-project instead of being passive objects in a combination of a “needs-based and a rights-based approach” (p. 515). In line with Healey (2006, p. 541), Albrechts (2015a) highlights what I have exhorted in chapters 5 and 7 of this Ph.D. thesis - that is, the value of local and scientific knowledge in spatial strategy-making. Local and expert/scientific knowledge or expertise can be combined on an “equal base, shared strategic conviction can grow, and conflicts are reframed in a less antagonistic manner” (p. 515). By replicating Brand and Gaffikin’s (2007) arguments, Albrechts (2015a) convincingly states that the application of “coproduction in a strategic planning process offers alternatives, stimulates critical reflection, is noncoercive, and is capable of reflecting particular experiences with more universal principles” (p. 516) and is relevant to today's issues. These universal values and day-to-day issues are equity, social justice, sustainable development and spatial quality.</p> <p>Albrechts’s main argument: Co-production strengthens the socio-spatial character of the strategic spatial planning process.</p>

Kalliomäki (2015) | Kalliomäki (2015) discusses the post-political spatial planning developments “in light of the concepts of coproduction and trading zones with the attempt to reframe new state-led strategic planning practices as arenas for multi-level governance and coordination of the state space” (p. 114). A renewal of the strategic spatial planning approach as a co-productive trading zone situated “between state-led and place-based interests offers a useful framework for policymaking as it sheds light on the need for political trading of narrow planning objectives coproductively by crossing horizontal and vertical boundaries and by acknowledging, and potentially learning from, the different ways of thinking about the ultimate planning goal” (p. 116).

Kalliomäki’s main argument: Planning objectives will be produced in collaboration between citizens, institutions and governments.

Source: Own elaboration based on cited references. *co-production appears in this chapter and in thesis as “co-production”. However, the reader will also find “coproduction” but only when is part of a citation.

An example of co-production in spatial planning and spatial plan making might be useful, here, to illustrate the theoretical links described in Table 8.2. Albrechts (2013), following Milroy (1992), gives the example of the 1991 Toronto Development Plan (Figure 8.3.). Toronto’s urban-region plan was developed via the co-production model, which means that citizens (as well as politicians) accepted that their involvement was legitimate. Citizens’ voices were heard during the spatial planning process – but in a more dynamic, open and friendly way that simple “participation”.

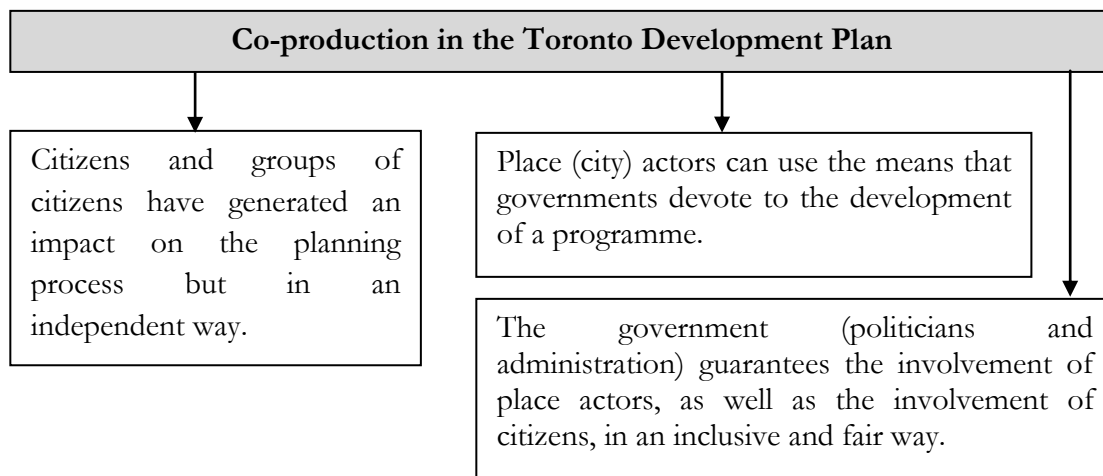


Figure 8.3. An example of co-production in spatial planning.
Source: own elaboration based on Albrechts (2013).

Spatial planners have been looking for ways of involving/engaging with place actors and citizens for generations. However, I acknowledge that involving citizens often proves to be almost impossible and is really never inclusive. In this regard, some scholars have been exploring - co-production, as stated above. Co-production, conceived as a political strategy, allows a city or region to strengthen its local organizational base of citizens and “increase their capacity to negotiate successfully with the state” (see Mitlin, 2008, p. 340). Summarizing Albrechts’s arguments, co-production is an engine to enable change, and provides an alternative approach to civic and institutional participation. By aligning the definitions of co-production presented in Tables 8.1. and 8.2., co-production brings different voices together, empowers citizens and legitimizes political and planning decisions. It thus avoids shaping spatial futures for cities and regions that are not in line with the hopes and needs of citizens and local organizations - co-production is “instrumental in the building of strong, resilient, and mutually supportive communities that could assure its members that their needs would be met” (Albrechts, 2015a, p. 520).

The present subsection complements and concludes the argument of this thesis on civic participation in strategic spatial planning and place branding. The section develops further the concept of co-production, superficially elaborated in chapter 5. Co-production contributes to the renewal of strategic spatial planning, as it requests the full mobilization of citizens to engage in counterhegemonic struggles to establish alternative policies and to play a central role in decision-making by insisting that those alternative policies (alternative to governmental-non-participatory policies) are also possible (see Lambert-Pennington *et al.* 2011; Purcell, 2009, p. 151–152; Saija, 2011). Alternatively, in Monno’s (2010) words, working with the impossible as emancipatory imagination. Albrechts (2015a), in line with Purcell (2009), argues that co-production can indeed contribute to a revival of the strategic spatial planning approach because it counters hegemonic politics by challenging neoliberalization, in which some groups are systematically advantaged by decision-making. Kalliomäki (2015) complements this thought by underlining that the “separate planning theoretical discussions on coproduction, trading zones and post-political planning need to be intertwined in order to increase understanding about the democracy deficit in strategic spatial planning and the potential ways to overcome this deficit” (p. 116). However, one can also argue that this “democracy deficit” (Kalliomäki, 2015, p. 116) is almost inevitable in a representative democracy and it also manifest in other aspects of government not just in strategic spatial planning. Kalliomäki (2015) suggests that reframing of strategic spatial planning as a co-productive trading zone between state-led and place-based interests offers a useful framework for policy and decision making. This, because it “sheds light on the need for political trading of narrow planning objectives co-productively by crossing horizontal and vertical boundaries and by acknowledging, and potentially learning from, the different ways of thinking about the ultimate planning goal” (p. 116). The next subsection will explore how this renewal in strategic spatial planning through tailor-made and more context-sensitive strategies and co-production can reinforce place branding as an instrument in strategic planning.

8.2. Rethinking place branding through strategic spatial planning, towards more effective, integrative, socially responsible and strategic place-branding initiatives

A number of unresolved issues regarding place branding, particularly branding regions, remain. This section aims to specifically highlight and critically reflect upon those unresolved issues. The main goal is to contribute to the theoretical refinement of place branding and to assert its practices, specifically within regions (including cross-border regions).

Following the theoretical framework of this study presented and discussed in chapter 5, as well as the empirical insights deriving from the case study on northern Portugal, this section revisits the theory to debate six main requirements that the place-branding field must meet. These requirements must be critically discussed in the light of the primary strand of reasoning, thus contributing to the theoretical refinement of the main research question stated previously:

How and why might (and, eventually, should) place branding be taken as an instrument in the strategic spatial planning approach (thus contributing to the improvement of the socio-spatial and spatial-economic conditions), reshaping responses to contemporary challenges faced by places and shape clearly envisioned, agreed, socially responsible and realistic futures for places?

This rethinking of place branding is in line with Kavaratzis *et al.* (2015), Ashworth *et al.* (2015) and Warnaby *et al.* (2015), as well as in line with the main research objective of this Ph.D. thesis, as previously stated:

To contribute to the advancement and maturation of the place-branding field, by: taking it to be an instrument within the strategic spatial planning approach, thus lending a more strategic approach and geographical/spatial consciousness to the process of place branding; by discussing its relevance and effectiveness in supporting economic and socio-spatial realignment; by contributing to reimagining processes and structural change through civic participation and the shaping of clearly envisioned, agreed, socially responsible and realistic futures, independently of the spatial scale of application (country, neighbourhood, districts, city, region, across administrative border territories), as well as independently of the nature of the branding process, if it is a novel one or an exercise in rebranding.

Warnaby *et al.* (2015) proposed a rethinking of place branding “in terms of its origins, theoretical underpinnings, conceptual development, practical applications and expected outcomes” (p. 241). Andersson (2015), following various publications by Pike (2009; 2011a; 2013) and Ashworth *et al.* (2015), recently investigated the need for more spatially aware readings in place branding. As Pike (2011a) argued, “more spatially aware readings of brands and branding offer a means of lifting their mystical veils to illuminate and explain their geographical associations and connotations” (p. 326). Andersson (2015) goes on to advocate that “place branding is affected by the spatial processes of the place where it is implemented and that both territorial and relational aspects of these processes must

be taken into consideration to conceptually understand place branding” (p. 40). Table 8.3. summarizes those six needs and the scholars who have inspired my thinking.

Table 8.3. Rethinking place branding (PB) through strategic spatial planning (SPP) towards a more effective, integrative, socially responsible and strategic place-branding initiatives

Remaining issue	The six main needs	Inspired by:
One-size-fits-all approach and the uniformity resulting from the repeated application of the same place-branding initiatives.	i) The need to align place branding with place-specific qualities through tailor-made and context sensitive initiatives.	<p>SPP-oriented literature Albrechts and Balducci (2013); Albrechts (2015a); Healey <i>et al.</i> (1999); Healey (2007a, 2007b, 2009); Asheim <i>et al.</i> (2011); Pareja-Eastway <i>et al.</i> (2013).</p> <p>PB-oriented literature Kavaratzis <i>et al.</i> (2015); Zavattaro <i>et al.</i>, (2015).</p>
Excessive concentration on inter-place competition as the ultimate goal of place branding.	ii) The need to align place branding with spatial-development plans and strategic spatial-planning goals of a place, thus improving spatial conditions.	<p>SPP-oriented literature Balducci <i>et al.</i> (2011); Cerreta <i>et al.</i> (2010); Hillier and Healey (2010).</p> <p>PB-oriented literature Boisen <i>et al.</i> (2011); Kalandides (2011a; 2011b); Warnaby and Medway, (2013).</p>
Excessive reliance on promotional tactics and aesthetics (logos and taglines.) Lack of strategy.	iii) The need for strategic thinking in place branding, thus enabling structural change in places.	<p>SPP-oriented literature Habermas (1993); Cerreta <i>et al.</i> (2010); Albrechts (2013).</p> <p>PB-oriented literature Ashworth <i>et al.</i> (2015); Porter (2013); Ashworth and Kavaratzis, (2010).</p>
Place branding often works to conceal power struggles and to impose elite-led interests and directions, while suppressing opposing voices or neglecting citizens’ needs and hopes.	iv) The need for co-production in place branding, thus co-producing a collective place branding initiative in a collective spatial logic.	<p>SPP-oriented literature Albrechts (2015a); Albrechts (2013); Kalliomäki (2015).</p> <p>PB-oriented literature Ashworth <i>et al.</i> (2015); Eshuis <i>et al.</i> (2014); Stubbs and Warnaby (2015).</p>

Lack of vision in the place-branding process. Disparities between image-building and day-to-day reality.	v) The need to align place branding with the envisioning process of devising desirable futures, thus aligning the expectations people hold in their minds with the actual reality of the place in the present, and the aspirational future.	SPP-oriented literature Healey (2006), Balducci <i>et al.</i> (2011), Albrechts and Balducci, (2013), Albrechts (2015a). <hr/> PB-oriented literature Ashworth <i>et al.</i> (2015); Oliveira (2015a, 2015b).
Communities and other place actors often do not see their values or identities represented in the place-branding initiative.	vi) The need to consider place branding as a possible route to reinvigorate spatial identities and a sense of place .	SPP-oriented literature Amin and Thrift (1994); Harvey, (1996); Healey (2009); Zimmerbauer (2011). <hr/> PB literature Campelo (2015); Ashworth and Kavaratzis, (2010); Clifton (2011); Van Assche and Lo (2011); Kalandides, (2011a; 2011b); Hankinson (2010).

Source: own elaboration based on the cited references and in line with Oliveira (2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d)

Following the logic implemented in the subsection above (8.2.), I will further detail each point mentioned in Table 8.3. Later, I will return to the theoretical framework debated in chapter 5.

i) The need to align place branding with place-specific qualities through tailor-made and context sensitive initiatives

In the light of inspiring work by Healey *et al.* (1999), Healey (2007a, 2007b, 2009) and Hillier and Healey (2010), I have introduced the first sector/vector of the theoretical framework - a focus on regional qualities. Here, I argue for the need to align place branding with place-specific qualities through tailor-made and context-sensitive initiatives (Oliveira, 2014d; Pareja-Eastway *et al.*, 2013). In line with the thoughts I have been shaping over the past four years regarding place branding, I advocate the need for places and place authorities to decide against taking a one-size-fits-all approach. My thoughts have also been influenced by the economic geography literature (see chapter 7 and Oliveira, 2015d). For instance, the work developed by Asheim, Boschma and Cooke on constructing a regional advantage is of relevance to the refinement of the place-branding literature, in my view. Asheim *et al.* (2011) argue that the copying of best practices, as identified by benchmarking studies, is popular amongst governments and policymakers but has proved a failure because of place-specific and knowledge asymmetries. These failures could be “illustrated by regional policies aimed at creating new growth sectors or imitating successful models like Silicon Valley in California” (Asheim *et al.*, 2011, p. 894). This “copycat behaviour”, in the words of Hospers (2004, p. 274), can be witnessed in Europe, “where many authorities are dazzled by Silicon high-tech dreams and hope to

copy the alleged success of Silicon Valley. Kavaratzis (2010) complements Hospers' (2004) rationale by arguing that "it is imperative to develop branding tools that are place-specific and not a simple extension of well-known tools that are used for purposes that have little resemblance to place development goals" (p. 37).

Increasingly inspired by this high-tech Californian area, regions are presenting themselves as being "Silicon' or 'Valleys' - without emphasising their own uniqueness" (Hospers, 2004, p. 274). Therefore, in the vein of Hospers (2004), Tödting and Trippel (2005), Asheim *et al.* (2011) stress that there is widespread awareness that 'one-size-fits-all' spatial-policy measures and frameworks do not work because, among other reasons, they: 1) do not emphasize spatial uniqueness; 2) are not embedded in their spatial settings and 3) are not adapted to the place-specific qualities. The aim to become 'silicon valley somewhere' or to implement a place-branding strategy in line with well-known cases such as 'I Love New York' or 'I amsterdam' remains one of the unresolved issues in place-branding initiatives. Stimulated by place-based approaches in spatial policy (for example, Kinner *et al.*, 2013) I proposed here (complementing and concluding what I have argued in chapter 1 and 2) that tailor-made and context-sensitive initiatives would greatly contribute to make place-branding initiatives become effective, integrative and socially responsible.

Aligning place branding with place-specific qualities through tailor-made initiatives adapted to the spatial context would strengthen local and regional institutions that are able to assess and develop local economic assets (Kinner *et al.*, 2013) in the long term. In line with Asheim *et al.* (2011), tailor-made initiatives and processes would allow capitalization on place-specific assets and the revealing of place-potentials and expertise (Oliveira, 2015d). Tailor-made place-branding initiatives, as suggested by Pareja-Eastway *et al.* (2013), focus on local realities, assets and both tangible and intangible elements - thus bringing to the branding process uniqueness and the distinctive elements of a place, rather than 'importing' measures, approaches or formulae. Furthermore, context-sensitive initiatives, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all strategy, are required to achieve effective socially and economically sustainable place branding, independently of the scale of application.

ii) The need to align place branding with spatial-development plans and strategic spatial-planning goals of a place, thus improving spatial conditions

In line with Boisen *et al.* (2011), Kavaratzis *et al.* (2015), Oliveira (2015a, b, c, d) and the main findings of Chapters 2, 3 and 5, I argue for the need to align place branding with the spatial development of regions, in an approach to the branding process of places that goes far beyond territorial competition. Pasquinelli (2013) defines territorial competition "as the main assumption of place branding" (p. 1) but argues that competition is not an exhaustive approach to understanding place branding as a part of local and regional development strategies. Indeed, place brands are useful tools that countries, cross-border regions, regions, cities and districts use as they compete with each other for limited, hypermobile financial and human resources (Ashworth *et al.*, 2015). Pasquinelli (2013), however, argues that places can "undertake inter-territorial cooperation in order to enhance their competitiveness". Ashworth *et al.* (2015) highlights the fact that place brands and place branding could provide solutions to practical/functional place-related problems, while Rainisto (2003) argues that place marketing and place branding have become prominent features in the economic

development strategy of places and as tools for place development. In line with Kotler *et al.*, (2002), “place development means to develop for a place a systematic and long-term marketing strategy directed towards nurturing and developing the natural and potential attributes of an area or region” (p. 57).

Place branding aligned with and ultimately integrated into strategic spatial planning would provide the context in which various functional, social and economic constraints or time-sensitive issues can be solved. An example might be useful, here. One of the recurrent functional problems, registered in northern Portugal, is the problem of how to attract investment for a development/regeneration project defined in a spatial-development plan for a place, such as a city or region. Place branding could also contribute by shedding light on how to capitalize fully on a tourist resource in the area, or how to increase the usage or yield of a recently redeveloped site. Often, several industrial sites located in northern Portugal have been planned, built and even promoted. Some of them, however, are still lacking in activity. Place branding, if aligned with such spatially planned interventions, could support the communication between local authorities and potential investors. In addition, place branding could also be a vehicle of a reimagining process that could reposition a certain industrial site and, as a consequence, an entire place - it could achieve strategic planning goals, for instance, the goal of becoming a high-tech industrial region or technical textiles-oriented industry park.

According to Ashworth *et al.* (2015), a place brand is assumed to lend support in securing a desired position within the global flows of people and capital. In this regard, and in line with Kavaratzis (2010), it is vitally important to understand place branding as an eclectic and strategic choice for spatial development and not just a set of promotional tools. Kavaratzis has made two relevant arguments that, in my view, align place branding and strategic spatial-planning goals. Kavaratzis (2008) argues that place branding is not about informing the world that a place is good or excellent; instead, it is more about making it a good place (improving the spatial conditions) and letting the world know that the place’s authorities are trying to improve it and solve spatial constraints. In addition, Kavaratzis (2008) argues that place branding does help to improve a place’s image *per se* but also that this improvement is always based on broad interventions - which, in line with Oliveira (2015a), could be linked to strategic spatial planning. Kavaratzis (2010) goes on to argue that the essence of place branding lies within strategic thinking, which links to the third need debated here: the vital question of whether place branding can provide a useful basis for such strategic thinking when it comes to spatial development (economic, social, cultural) and achieve strategic spatial-planning goals. The next subsection highlights the need for strategic thinking in place branding.

iii) The need for strategic thinking in place branding, thus enabling structural change in places

As I have argued before, Kavaratzis (2010) emphasizes the fact that the essence of place branding lies in strategic thinking. Braun (2008), in a study dedicated to city marketing, underlines that “city marketing is therefore a long-term strategic commitment” (p. 67). This means that place branding could be employed to find solutions for spatial problems in the long-term, rather than be accepted as

a solution in and of itself in the short-term. Furthermore, place-branding initiatives must last longer than the term in office of one particular government and, as I have been arguing throughout this thesis, integrated as an instrument of strategic spatial planning so that they can help to enable structural change - “if branding altogether is not merely about the intentional communication of a favourable image but is a strategic response to challenges in the environment, then place branding is useful” (Kavaratzis, 2010, p. 39).

Recently, Ashworth *et al.* (2015) stated that place branding and place brands provide strategic guidance for place development that links well with strategic spatial planning and the envisioning process that is intrinsic to it. In line with Malecki (2004) and Paul (2004), Andersson (2015) argues that territorial competition, as well as the increase of co-dependency of other places, is suggested in order to create a need for new forms of strategic planning, of which place branding is considered to offer guidance and management principles. As has been argued before, the ‘strategic’ in strategic spatial planning implies that “some decisions and actions are considered more important than others and that much of the process lies in making the tough decisions about what is most important for the purpose of producing fair, structural responses to problems, challenges, aspirations, and diversity” (Albrechts, 2004, pp. 751–752). Strategic thinking in place branding and linked with strategic spatial planning would bring consistency to the branding process and will align it with a wider vision for a place. Boisen *et al.* (2011) assert that “when spatial policies are followed by a strategic vision and tactical actions to promote specific goals, the institutions formulating and pursuing these policies can exercise significant power in guiding the future development of the place in question” (pp. 6–7). In this regard, place branding used as a strategic spatial-planning instrument will not only support the communication of eventually secured structural changes in a place’s spatial structure but will also do it by pursuing different interventions altogether.

Strategic thinking in place branding would avoid constant changes in place brands by maintaining consistency, while always remaining open to potential improvements and existing in symbiosis with wider spatial strategies, visions of and desired futures for a place. For this to happen, it is necessary to embrace a participative approach to the process of branding places (Oliveira, 2015a, 2015b). However, recent scholarship on strategic spatial planning, mainly Albrechts (2015 a, 2015b) as I have underlined above, makes claims for an ‘innovative approach’ to civic and organizational participation - co-production - which I will focus on further as the fourth necessity of rethinking place branding in strategic spatial planning, thus constructing a collective place-branding initiative in terms of a collective spatial logic.

iv) The need for co-production in place branding, thus co-producing a collective place branding initiative in a collective spatial logic

Recently, Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) proposed a rethinking of place brands and place branding through a more interactive formation of place brands and a more participatory mode of place branding. Their view on participatory place branding is supported by developments of the “the concept of brand co-creation as this has been developed within general branding and leads to a more participatory approach” (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015, p. 1369). I have debated co-creation in place branding in chapter 4. In this subsection, I draw into the discussion about place branding the

concept of co-production that has been explored within the strategic spatial-planning literature (see Tables 8.1. and 8.2., above). I argue here for the need for co-production in place branding in order to co-produce a collective place-branding initiative within a collective spatial logic - a process in which participatory place branding and the co-creation of place brands are both intrinsic to the concept of co-production.

Albrechts (2015a, 2015b) argues that co-production is a cornerstone for more radical strategic spatial planning, which means strategic spatial planning developed through the participation of citizens and myriad place actors. According to Albrechts (2013), “coproduction combines the provision of public goods/services needed with the building of a strong, resilient and mutually supportive community that could assure its members their needs would be met” (p. 46). In my view, this is a key insight that must be translated into place-branding theory and practice, and that this translation could be achieved if place branding is used as an instrument in wider spatial-planning strategies. This involves changing the behaviour of practitioners and place managers dealing with place branding, as it requires a higher degree of involvement of not only parties with a stake in a certain place but also the citizens and communities more widely, in order to cover diverse interests related to social and environmental as well as economic issues. Acknowledging the fact that bringing all place actors together is a tough task, Kalliomäki (2015), in the vein of Albrechts (2013), underlines the fact that co-production offers an alternative approach to the relation between governments and citizens, and “focuses on the equal partnership between actors involved in the strategic planning processes” (Kalliomäki, 2015, p. 114). Place brands also provide a foundation for cooperation between multiple place actors, organizations and communities in general.

Place branding researchers have been paying particular attention to civic and institutional participation in place branding as an alternative approach. The recurring approach understands place branding as the development of place promotional initiatives and identity claims, which, according to Bennett and Savani (2003), are clearly top-down rather than bottom-up and exclusive rather than participatory (see, for example, Braun, Kavaratzis and Zenker 2013; Houghton and Stevens, 2011). For example, Warnaby *et al.* (2015) emphasizes that one of the primary aims of place branding is to identify common ideas and directions for the future of the community, and to produce collectively generated place stories and visions. This is an approach that focuses on internal audiences, assuming that the aim of place branding is to reinforce peoples’ identification with the place and to increase place-attachment. Eshuis *et al.* (2014) argue that “citizen involvement in place branding can be used to enhance the quality of the brand and include citizens’ emotions in governance processes” (p. 151). Kavaratzis (2012) convincingly debates the need to rethink the role of stakeholders, moving towards a more participation- and involvement-orientated mode of place branding. Kavaratzis (2012) points out some reasons that justify a higher degree of stakeholders’ involvement in place branding. One of the reasons is that place branding is a public management activity, and such activities need to have some more realistic support from certain elements of the public realm for various social and political reasons. In addition, place branding is a political process connected to the discussion of “power struggles” (Kavaratzis, 2012). In the same line of thought, Ashworth *et al.* (2015) underline the fact that place branding is undertaken as a struggle for political, financial and social power. Ashworth *et al.* (2015) go on to highlight that it “is most commonly assumed that place branding works to conceal

such power struggles and to impose elite-led interests and directions while suppressing opposing voices” (p. 6). Kerr and Oliver (2015) make clear the fact that co-production of place identity refers to the residents being simultaneously producers and consumers of place identity. In addition, they advocate the view that place identity is the result of continuous meaning-making processes between citizens and the place in which they live.

By using place branding as an instrument in strategic spatial planning and emphasizing the concept of co-production, such power struggles are likely to be managed in a more fair and equitable way. In addition, co-production in place branding sounds at first like an effective step towards a more participation-oriented practice of branding places that Kavaratzis (2012) and Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) have been calling for. Kavaratzis (2012) argues that “most of place branding practice actually testifies that these struggles are not only evident as results of power inequalities and institutional agendas but also, most commonly, solved to the interest of the most powerful group” (p. 13). In addition, with co-production, a place’s actors and citizens interact and adjust each other’s expectations and actions in terms of the public’s decisions (Whitaker, 1980).

As I have argued, strategic spatial planning focuses on day-to-day issues (Albrechts, 2010a, 2010b) and co-production responds to the real needs of citizens and organizations by preparing them for a more substantive engagement with the political and planning systems (Albrechts, 2013; Mitlin, 2008). I acknowledge that one can be doubtful about the difference between participatory place branding and the introduction of co-production place-branding initiatives. Albrechts (2015a) argues that the one-size-fits-all concept of citizens’ participation does not seem to provide the equal and reciprocal relationship between political (governments’), economic and social (citizens’) powers that is so desired. Co-production used in policy making, strategic spatial planning and (as argued here) place branding, would contribute to resolving or at least simplifying conflicts, eliminating exclusion and neutralizing power relations, rather than embracing them as the very terrain of social mobilization (see Purcell, 2009). In line with Ostrom (1990), Roy (2010), Mitlin (2008) and Albrechts (2013), co-production is conceived as a collective effort, as place branding should be, with citizens as a part of the action rather than its object (Friedmann, 2005); it is also a combination of a needs-based and a rights-based approach towards a collective spatial logic “where value systems can be articulated, local and scientific knowledge can be combined on an equal basis, shared strategic conviction can grow, and conflicts are reframed in a less antagonistic manner” (Albrechts, 2015, p. 515, in line with Healey, 2006).

Co-production in a place-branding process integrated within wider spatial-planning strategies offers an alternative approach to civic and institutional participation. It allows us to pay more attention to the principles of equity and social justice, as well as to focus on sustainable development and spatial-quality issues. Co-production could strengthen the socio-spatial dimension of the place-branding process within a strategic spatial-planning one. It also blurs the boundary between producers and consumers, emphasizes repeated informal interactions (Boyle and Harris, 2009) and derives from a strong ethical sense (see Moulaert, 2011). The uniqueness of co-production, a fact that defends the use of co-production in place branding, is that citizens are being asked to construct their own governance institutions (see Healey, 1997b) and not only to cooperate. By undertaking place branding as an instrument of strategic spatial planning, citizens will have the opportunity to

envision a different future for their place, for instance a region, as well as to articulate their interests in an organized way towards the satisfaction of real needs.

Co-production would greatly reinforce the arguments made throughout this thesis and debated specifically in chapter 5: that a place brand only makes sense when it is created by everybody, when everybody can envision aspirational and better futures. Apart from the importance of strategic spatial planning for this discussion, as highly debated in this thesis, integrated spatial planning (see for example Vigar, 2009) could also be fruitful in the exploration of the possible links between spatial planning, place branding and co-production. This statement bridges the gap between arguments for these six needs to the next one I discuss: on the need to align place branding with the process of envisioning desirable (better) futures.

v) The need to align place branding with the envisioning process of devising desirable futures, thus aligning the expectations people hold in their minds with the actual reality of the place in the present, and the aspirational future

As Ashworth *et al.* (2015) convincingly state, place branding is potentially to be used as “an instrument for envisioning an aspirational ‘imagined future’” (p. 4) - which would allow the imagining and idealizing of desirable futures (or a totally different direction) for the spatial condition of a place (for example, economic, social, cultural and environmental). Following this line of reasoning, place branding is an instrument to create visions about the future, and place brands are thought to provide both a vision for the place’s future and a direction for possible measures that will help to attain this vision. The aim of envisioning is to broaden the scope of the possible or, in the words of Žižek, cited in Albrechts (2013, p. 54), envisioning is the “art of the impossible” (Žižek, 1999, p. 199 cited in Albrechts, 2013). It provides a frame for decisions in order to view a, hopefully, better future; to encourage hopes, wills and dreams; to appeal to values and to challenge existing knowledge and practices.

According to Albrechts (2010a), envisioning is the process by which citizens or groups of citizens develop visions of future states for themselves, their organizations and their place (a city or region). Envisioning enables citizens to make decisions in terms of a desired alternative future for their own place, as well as to understand and accept opportunities for change (including structural change). Albrechts (2010a) argues that envisioning assumes that cities or regions understand that the future does not have a linear relationship with the past; it is, instead, discontinuous with the past and the present. In strategic spatial planning, “envisioning provides direction without destination, movement without prediction” (Albrechts, 2013, p. 55); by taking place branding as an instrument in strategic spatial planning, imagining visions for the future would sustain a place brand, thus contributing to its effectiveness and impact. Combining the need to align place branding with the envisioning process of desirable better futures with co-production, regional actors would “assess together and co-construct spaces of possibilities or impossibilities” (Forester, 2010b, p. 172). In this manner, place actors would imagine futures/engage in envisioning or create visions about the future for themselves, the organizations they represent, their neighbourhood, their city or their region — visions that are appropriately clear and powerful enough to arouse and sustain the actions necessary for (at least parts of) these visions to become a reality (Goodstein *et al.*, 1993).

With envisioning included in place branding, it is possible to focus on what ought to open doors for the integration of multiple perspectives emerging from the participatory and co-production processes - it includes not only the views of the most articulate or powerful, but also the views of those who have been systematically excluded by the structural inequalities of class, gender and religion (Sandercock, 1998). In line with Roy (2010) and Grosz (1999), envisioning must be capable of envisioning the transformative by questioning different types of knowledge (local, expert and statistical). As envisioning is a collective process (Albrechts, 2010a, 2010b) that requires the involvement of all relevant actors (Innes, 1996), so do strategic spatial planning and place branding. Therefore, envisioning must be as central to the process of place branding as it is to that of strategic spatial planning (Albrechts, 2010a, 2010b). Envisioning, in my view, reinforces the commitment of citizens and a wide range of regional actors, including policy and decision makers, to the realization of the created (envisioned) vision of the future. These visions must be shared and provide a sense of direction (a direction in which to go) and, simultaneously, a sense of engagement in something worth engaging in (Goodstein *et al.*, 1993).

According to Albrechts (2010a, 2010b), envisioning reveals how things can be different and better than they were in the past, how citizens can be innovative in their city and how it is possible to unlock creativity in a place's improvement. In addition, some other questions could also arise: how can regional actors and citizens be persuaded to cooperate and endorse the same vision, spatial strategies and place brand? How to convince publics that the way forward is to imagine alternative futures in order to master structural change? Active participation in place branding, as in strategic spatial planning, may generate trust, as participants in the process are likely to understand why certain visions and decisions for the future are better and suit their needs.

As argued above, despite several calls for a more participatory approach to place branding, communities and other place actors often do not see their values and identities represented in place-branding initiatives. Thus, I also argue here for the need to consider place branding as a possible means of reinvigorating spatial identities and a sense of place, a view inspired mainly by Campelo (2015) and Kerr and Oliver (2015). Campelo (2015) also calls for a distinct form of place branding based on the need to include the local community, its habitus and its sense of place. The next subsection will debate this.

vi) The need to consider place branding as a possible route to reinvigorate spatial identities and a sense of place

Ashworth *et al.* (2015), in their search for possible answers to the question 'what builds place brands?', suggest that "place brands consist of associations with place-making elements" and that the essence of place branding lies "in understanding, enhancing and even helping to shape 'sense of place' and how this changes over time" (p. 5). Campelo (2015) deepens this idea and argues that time, ancestry, landscape and community create a sense of place and are fundamental for the construction of spatial identities and the place brand. In line with the previous chapters, Campelo (2015) also argues in favour of a distinct form of place branding based on the need to include the local community, its habitus and its sense of place.

The emphasis of this need to think place branding as a possible means of reinvigorating spatial identities and a sense of place is twofold. First, it aims to emphasize the collective construction of place brands. Secondly, it aims to emphasize the fact that place branding involves a wide range of processes rather than exclusively promotional activities. These points highlight the fact that place branding and the development and management of place brands must be inclusive and representative of all segments of a community (Campelo, 2015). As stressed by Campelo (2015), a sense of place must take into account the *genius loci* as a shared sense of the spirit of a place. In line with Low and Altman (1992), Campelo (2015) emphasizes that “this shared atmosphere includes place attachment, social context, community ties, and ancestral connections” (2015, p. 52). On the one hand, understanding the sense of place is important in attempting to develop brands for places, as stressed by Campelo (2015). On the other hand, Campelo (2015) asserts that “the development of brands for places is complex because it requires the recognition from local people, acknowledgement of local cultural values and idiosyncrasies” (p. 58).

I argue here that if place branding must integrate the hopes and wills of local communities and actors, inclusion of their habitus, values and tangible and intangible assets can also reinvigorate a sense of place, as local people will be involved with the process and will feel that they are taking part in it. Ashworth (2009) explains that people “make sense of place by constructing their own understandings of them in their minds through contact points” (p. 1). In line with Campelo (2015), the contact points include collected personal experiences; forms of representation such as films, novels and media reports and thoughtful policy interventions on spatial planning and spatial design. I concur with Kerr and Oliver (2015), in arguing that residents are the identity holders of a place and that “ideally the identities held by residents need to be considered within place branding strategies” (p. 66).

Kerr and Oliver (2015) reinforce the argument stated here – “a place branding strategy that is far removed from its place identity (what we are) will not likely be accepted as true by residents” (p. 66). The proposal stated here would reinvigorate spatial identities because place branding is identity driven, and a place-branding strategy that is far removed from its spatial identity (what we are) will not be received well, welcomed or accepted as true by residents, let alone by the external recipients of advertising communications. However, it is important not to associate the stimulation/reinvigoration of spatial identities, and thus identification, with place branding. While the stimulation/reinvigoration of spatial identities is certainly a part, and usually an important initial condition, of place branding, it does not, however, encompass it, as argued by Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2010). The identification of people with places extends beyond place branding, and place branding is more than the formation of identity, recreation, revitalization and promotion of place images as part of place management.

8.3. Towards a more geospatial way of thinking in place branding

I have assembled, here, six needs in rethinking place branding beyond place promotion, such as the definition of logos, slogans or the creation of social media accounts like ‘visit place X’, ‘discover place Y’ or even ‘invest in place Z’. I have tried to summarize the key theoretical conclusions of the discussions I elaborated in the chapters above to underpin the effectiveness of place branding as a

strategic spatial-planning instrument. The arguments of Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2010), Kavaratzis *et al.* (2015), Van Assche and Lo (2011) and Albrechts (2013, 2015a, b), among others, support my argument that place branding can be the means of achieving a competitive advantage in order to increase investment (and attract investment); tourism revenues (and attract tourists) and attract media attention; sponsor community development; improvement of the socio-spatial and spatial-economic conditions of places; reinforcing spatial identity and a sense of place, as well as identification of the citizens with their place and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion and unrest.

The aims of this section in revisiting the theory and making concluding remarks are manifold. First, they aim to contribute to the place-branding discussion by providing some answers to the questions posed by Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2010), such as - is place branding effective or even useful?. I have presented some arguments for a more effective and socially responsible form of place branding. Secondly, this section also aims to contribute, with insights from the spatial-planning literature in general and the strategic approach in particular, to the need identified by Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2010): “to create a common body of knowledge and vocabulary among different disciplines working in the field” (p. 7). Thirdly, it also brings a more geospatial way of thinking to the field of place branding as requested by Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2010), Andersson (2015) and Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015). For instance, Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2010) stress that “questions of place-scale, place-function and place-identity should come to the foreground” (p.7) of research in the field of place branding. Fourthly, by exploring the intertwining of place branding and strategic spatial planning, this section also aims to contribute to the reframing of strategic spatial planning in line with the research conducted by Albrechts (2015a, 2015b). This concluding chapter, and the thesis overall, is an attempt to contribute towards that ambition.

The chapters included in this thesis, separately and collectively, set out to demonstrate the proposition that place branding, specifically at the regional scale, needs to be thought of as a continuous process involving strategic thinking, which is interlinked with all strategic spatial-planning goals. This is the underlying principle of all chapters presented here, which guides both the theoretical suggestions discussed above and this concluding section, which will further highlight the challenges of branding regions.

8.4. Future challenges and opportunities for place branding on the regional scale

It is generally accepted by scholars and practitioners, as argued in chapter 2, that place branding applies to different spatial scales such as as neighbourhoods, districts, cities, regions, across administrative borders of regions (as in the example debated in chapter 7, for the case of Galicia-northern Portugal) countries and even continents. As stressed by Braun (2015) and Hankinson (2015), each of these spatial scales entails its own particular characteristics and challenges for place branding. As I have argued in chapters 2 and 5, region branding has not been a frequent subject of place-branding research, and several challenges have confronted the process of branding regions, such as the region of northern Portugal.

Hankinson (2015) emphasizes that ‘place branding’ is currently used as an umbrella term that encompasses the literature of at least five areas, including the branding of cities, destinations, retail centres, nations and regions, with an increasing overlap between the main theoretical contributions

of those areas on the branding process of multiple spatial scales. These overlaps occur because place branding has been interpreted as particularly important for attracting people, activities and capital to places, as well as to give or enhance visibility to regions that are not top global hubs (OECD, 2013). Some regions, particularly in Europe, are seeking to construct regional brands from their vast networks of small and medium-sized cities in order to attract and retain international workers and firms, as well as to use resources more sustainably. Table 8.4. summarizes some of the general challenges of region branding and presents the opportunities of branding a region as a whole, bearing in mind the main strand of reasoning postulated in this Ph.D. thesis.

Table 8.4. Summarizing some of the challenges and opportunities of regional branding.

Challenges	Opportunities
<p><i>The consensus challenge</i> The difficulties of aligning all regional actors' - both public and private, as well as citizens' - interests, hopes and wills within the same region-branding strategy.</p>	<p>Region-branding strategies constructed on the basis of geographical proximity, including municipalities and parishes, may be more effective globally when compared to a municipal or city brand that is operationalized in an isolated way.</p>
<p><i>The diversity challenge</i> The challenge of regional diversity, in terms of assets (tangible and intangible) and identities of communities.</p>	<p>A region brand can take better advantage of global networks. In this case, other forms of proximity in terms of knowledge bases and socio-cultural factors are also fundamental for the effectiveness of a region brand.</p>
<p><i>The decision-making challenge</i> Some regions are devoid of a regional authority with the autonomy or decision-making capacity to decide upon their own future, to carry out an open and free envisioning process or to define the parameters of a region-branding strategy. When there is no central, decision-making authority in the region, the challenges of coordination and management of region branding are significant.</p>	<p>By branding a region as a whole, regional actors (both public and private) can take advantage of economies of scale; for instance, to build critical mass, increase media presence, gain political power or gain access to specialized services or specialized infrastructure. A region-branding process must be able to compensate for decision-making deficits by employing more of a collaborative network approach and working in coordinated partnerships and alliances.</p>
<p><i>The storyline challenge</i> One of the most critical challenges for region branding is coordinating the messages communicated and streamlining efforts, not only across national and regional governments, but also across the private sector. All of these entities have different goals and the power to</p>	<p>Regional actors, public administrations, municipalities and inter-municipalities could become more competitive and take advantage of joining forces in a unique region brand. They will share resources, and communicate their uniqueness and potentials to the target audience on a wider scale.</p>

create their own brands. A joint branding effort at the regional level, however, needs to be managed with strategic thinking, as argued in chapter 2, or in line with wider strategic spatial-planning instruments.

The consistency challenge

Regions, either functional or political-administrative, are composed of cities, towns and villages. Most of these spatial scales can develop place branding; thus, all regions communicate in manifold ways. If the main messages that emanate from a region are not to some degree coordinated and communicated in a consistent way, there is a risk that the region will present diverging and even contradictory messages, which may prove in the end detrimental to the region’s image.

It often happens that city brands give visibility to a region brand. In my view, the existence of a region brand does not eliminate or exercise control over city brands; nor will city brands diminish the value and effectiveness of a region brand. Both can align their goals, visions and interventions — strategic spatial planning could work as the necessary mechanism to coordinate the branding efforts of both.

The cultural background challenge

Some cities that are located in formal or functional regions have difficulties in accessing the financial, organizational and even technical means to develop a place branding strategy independently.

The place-branding literature supports the idea that there is a strong theoretical link between a place’s identity and the brand identity. A shared place identity will facilitate unity of purpose amongst regional actors. This common identity would simplify cooperation among regional actors, to reach agreements on core values, aims and visions for the region, and on how to operationalize them.

The lack of resources challenge

Some cities that are located in formal or functional regions have difficulties in accessing the financial, organizational and even technical means to develop a place branding strategy independently.

A region-branding strategy, which implies the higher involvement of all human forces in a region, would gather together financial, institutional and technical capacities to further develop region branding. In addition, a successful region-branding strategy would generate positive economic impacts that can contribute to easing the lack of resources faced by smaller spatial scales, such as towns and villages. A region brand could work as an anchor brand for a region, thus compensating for the shortcomings of brands with smaller geographical scales.

The geographical location challenge

Some regions, either functional or those well-defined politically and administratively, are identified “simply” by geographical coordinates such as North/Northern, South/Southern regions, which does not highlight any distinctive element. People only will be able to, for example, say/identify that northern Portugal is the territory in the North without making a clear statement about its assets, potentials, uniqueness and excellence.

A region-branding strategy would be able to communicate more to internal and external audiences than just a geographical location. As the use of a geographical position (Northern, Southern) as an “identifier” can be meaningless and not distinctive, a region brand has to be built with unique content, communicate a clear and powerful message, be able to position and give visibility and internal/external recognition to a region far beyond geographical coordinates.

The enable-change challenge

This challenge is linked to the previous ones. Often, regions without official government mechanisms find it difficult to decide on matters that impact their future spatial development. In addition, cities have no decision-making capacity to enable structural change and they are often embedded in a geographical area facing deep social and economic troubles. Individual efforts to enable change will be fruitless.

To overcome this challenge, a region brand developed as part of strategic spatial planning at the national and regional levels would be effective in enabling structural change. Let us put it simply. The image of City A is characterized as having heavy and polluting industry and City A is located in a region characterized with the same features. Therefore, a city brand would be ineffective in supporting a reimagining process unless the region also embraces region branding in supporting a reimagining process. One can argue that a city brand can also distance itself from the region and a potential regional brand. I acknowledge this, but I also argue that co-production in a regional branding process and the co-creation of a region brand would avoid discrepancies between the city and the region. A region brand could mobilize other cities and integrate, or at least align with, strategic spatial planning to enable structural change - for example, from a heavy-industry region to a knowledge-based one.

Source: own elaboration based on the chapters above and complemented by OECD (2013); Zenker and Jacobsen (2015), Hankinson (2015), Andersson (2007; 2009), Pasquinelli (2011/2012), Hospers (2004; 2009; 2011; 2015).

Following Zenker and Jacobsen’s (2015) arguments, the main challenge of branding regions is that of unification. This involves the complex issue of coordinating interests, aligning the desires of branding places embraced by cities and their municipal administrations. It is also a challenge to decide which spatial scale will give more value and contribute to recognition of a region as a unique

geographic entity. Are the images of the cities located in the region strong enough to positively influence a “new” region brand? Or are the regional assets *per se* strong enough to boost the region brand? Moreover, it is also necessary to align the region brand with the brand created in order to communicate the idea of a nation as a whole, if such a brand exists. I have underlined in chapter 3 the case of Portugal, with a mixture of destination brands at the national and regional levels that, in my view and also interviewees’ opinions, causes confusion in people’s minds. Figure 8.4. aims to demonstrate the complexity of region branding.

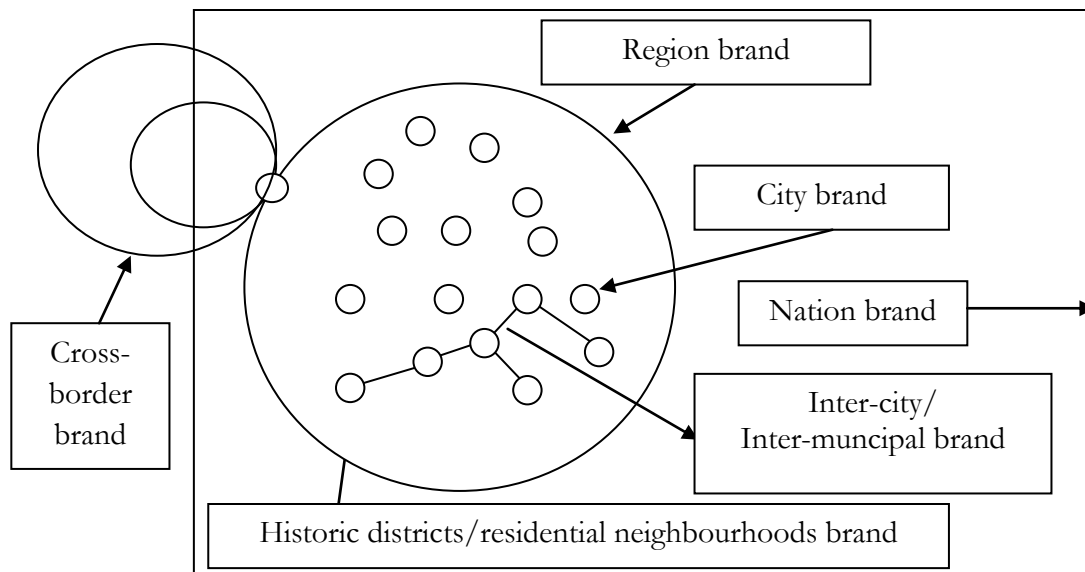


Figure 8.4. The “Russian Doll model” of nested scale hierarchies (each scale nestles within another) representing the complexity of regional branding.

I acknowledge that the above-outlined challenges need to be considered in regional brand building but do not disqualify it as an effective tool. These and other challenges merely counsel caution if the effectiveness is to be maximised. At its core, as Andersson (2009) has underlined regions need to develop a capacity to determine their own economic future, solve their own conflicts, city and legitimate their own decisions relevant in the short and long term. In this regard, place branding as an instrument of strategic spatial planning is an aid to mobilising regional actors and designing coherent and consistent strategic goals and envisioned futures. The regional actors interviewed for the purpose of this study have argued that a region-branding strategy could help solve some of the economic and social issues of northern Portugal. However, they also admit that a region branding strategy alone would be ineffective in bringing about structural change. The key concluding remarks of the regional actors’ perspectives about a region branding strategy for northern Portugal will be further debated. The search for answers and clarity on this issue must continue in theory, as well as in more empirical research.

8.5. Future challenges and opportunities for region branding in northern Portugal

The conclusions above reinforce the analysis and theoretical arguments debated throughout the thesis. However, it is also useful to summarize research findings and link them to the theoretical propositions detailed above. Region branding deals with politically, economically or socially defined regions that can be within a single nation (for example, northern Portugal), or between several nations (for example, the Baltic Sea Region, see Andersson (2009) or Galicia-northern Portugal, see chapter 7 and Oliveira, 2015d). Place branding, including at the regional scale, aims “to maximize the efficient social and economic functioning of the area concerned, in accordance with whatever wider goals have been established” (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990, p. 41). Ashworth and Voogd (1990), as well as Ashworth *et al.* (2015), were clear that place branding could contribute to the achievement of strategic goals, but also that these goals have to be well established and preferably co-produced. By the latter (co-production), I mean the participation of citizens and experts on the definition of strategic priorities for the territory of a region as well as the definition of the parameters and content of a region brand. My work has considered a potential region-branding strategy for northern Portugal that is integrated as an instrument within the strategic spatial-planning approach. With this subsection, my aim is to replicate the key perspectives of the 16 regional actors interviewed for the purposes of this study; Chapter 5 discussed their opinions. In addition, I will discuss the challenges and opportunities of embracing place branding at the regional scale in northern Portugal by basing my remarks on interviewees’ opinions.

According to interviewee number 11, “researching northern Portugal is a headache”, and the key problems/weaknesses of northern Portugal were identified as a “complex matter” (IN 9), as the region is currently suffering from profound economic and social issues (IN 7). The Portuguese national government is experiencing deep social and economic problems. Following the memorandum of understanding signed in 2011 with the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the national government has been implementing austerity measures to cut spending in traditional areas of the welfare state (education, research and development and the health sector), including the redistribution of wealth between richer and poorer regions of the country. Despite a recent cyclical recovery, a series of deep-rooted problems/weaknesses prevail in northern Portugal, as in other Portuguese regions (IN 9; 15). The key weak points are structural in their nature (IN 9; 12). Table 8.5. provides a detailed summary of the challenges and opportunities of a region-branding strategy for the region that is incorporated or aligned with strategic spatial planning. The structure of the table accords with the theoretical model of this thesis presented in chapter 5.

Table 8.5. Summarizing some of the challenges and opportunities of a potential region-branding strategy for northern Portugal identified by the 16 interviewees during field work.

Components/vectors of the theoretical model discussed in chapter 5	Challenges	Opportunities that could emerge with region branding
A focus on a region’s qualities, strategic domains, assets and attributes.	Diverse regional domains (tangible and intangible) located in different geographical areas in the region.	A region brand could be the right impulse to reorganize regional information regarding the key regional strategic domains, and its cultural and sporting agendas.
A focus on addressing regional economic, social and political constraints.	Lack of regional leadership and political will, and the high national/centralization of decision-making have also been identified as challenges. The absence of a national and regional strategy beyond the EU financial framework of 2014–2020, as well as a strong dependency on EU funding, have been identified as regional challenges. Other pressing economic and social challenges linger against the backdrop of fiscal austerity.	A region-branding strategy could support the development of an international agenda able to position and give visibility to the region as a whole.
A focus on enabling and communicating structural change.	Weak regional lobbying capacity to communicate the region’s potential and its excellence, as well as the multiple sportive, cultural and religious agendas.	A region-branding strategy aligned with wider regional planning strategies would enable structural interventions, thus contributing to changing current patterns of spatial development.
A focus on involving key regional actors and civic society.	Weak coordination between regional actors. In addition, the majority of public investments (for instance, road infrastructures) have	Boosting territorial cohesion by aligning political, economic and social actors. A unique regional brand could support the

	<p>been carried out with a lack of coordination between local governments and citizens as well. In addition, investments have been made in areas that are not priority for the real needs of communities (for example, Olympic-sized swimming pools instead of schools or social centres).</p>	<p>development of synergies between universities and research centres located in the region with local industry within a unified and envisioned strategy. Strategic spatial planning is essential here to bring together the desired future (as a result of envisioning) with the reality (the hopes, needs and wills of citizens and local organizations).</p>
<p>A focus on envisioning shared, better and realistic futures.</p>	<p>An absence of vision based on the present regarding possible shared futures that harmonize the different interests of civic society and institutions.</p>	<p>Region branding could be effective in envisioning a regional economic and social destiny based on shared futures, constructed in a multilevel governance environment and benefitting from strong cooperative ties among regional actors. Citizens must be able to participate, as well. A potential region brand must be co-created by all potential agents (from travel bloggers, as I have suggested in chapter 4, to citizens) and co-produce spatial strategies by public and private entities.</p>
<p>A focus on reinforcement of a sense of belonging and regional feelings.</p>	<p>The lack of involvement of citizens in spatial development and a more neutral attitude towards elements of regional identity, such as heritage, legacy, music and gastronomy.</p>	<p>Northern Portugal presents a strong regional identity (there is a feeling of belonging to northern Portugal) which is relevant content for feeding a potential region-branding strategy.</p>

Source: own elaboration.

As has been stated in the thesis preface, this thesis critically explores the actual or potential roles of place branding as an instrument for the attainment of strategic spatial planning goals. Aiming to contributing to this exploration, Table 8.6. identifies the ten main strategic goals for northern Portugal for the period between 2014 and 2020 and the actual or potential roles of a region branding strategy for the attainment of those ten spatial strategies.

Table 8.6. The actual or potential roles of a regional branding strategy for northern Portugal as an instrument for the attainment of strategic spatial planning goals 2014-2020.

Ph.D. thesis main research question:	
How and why might (and, eventually, should) place branding be taken as an instrument in the strategic spatial planning approach (thus contributing to the improvement of the socio-spatial and spatial-economic conditions), reshaping responses to contemporary challenges faced by places and shape clearly envisioned, agreed, socially responsible and realistic futures for places?	
Strategic northern Portugal planning goals for the period 2014-2020	The roles of a region branding strategy
1) Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	Region branding could give visibility to the research taking place in regional universities and research centres to the outside. A region branding could also strengthen the ties with other regions of the country and explore research synergies. A region brand could work as an umbrella for ideas developed in the region by those living there.
2) Strengthening the competitiveness of small and medium sized enterprises	A region branding strategy could bring together small and medium enterprises in one platform, thus promoting raw materials of final products, support communication to attract investment or new costumers. Individual product brands could enhance a potential region brand and a potential region brand could make them flourish and lift enterprises to a higher competitive level.
3) Supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy in all sectors	A region branding must integrate environmental preoccupations and use

	it to engage with people as well as environmental friendly activities.
4) Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting efficient use of resources	A region branding strategy as it presupposes aligning place actors would contribute to efficient use of economic and natural resources. Priorities and interests would be aligned (preferably).
5) Promoting sustainable transportation and removing bottlenecks in key infrastructure	A region branding would demonstrate the needs to align infrastructure investments with the need of potential investors, tourism activity, facilities.
6) Promoting sustainability and quality of employment and incentivise labour mobility	A region branding strategy could support the achievement of this goal as it would re-position and give visibility to the region with the intention of attracting investment and supporting spatial development.
7) Promoting social inclusion, tackle poverty and discrimination	A region branding strategy must be integrative and take into consideration less favoured groups. The desire to spread a positive image about the region must take at the heart of the intervention the well-being of local communities. Furthermore, some social groups must take part in the decision-making process.
8) Investing in education and vocational training to acquire skills and learning throughout life	
9) Investing in institutional skills and efficiency of public administrations and public services at national, regional and local levels in order to introduce reforms, implement better regulation and good governance	A region branding strategy to be effective and successful has to be based on simple (that is, less complex and less bureaucratic) yet productive and efficient public services. The desire of designing a strong region brand could support the achievement of this goal as it requires capacity-building and new modes of governance based on strong communication between public-private-communities.

Ph.D. thesis main research question applied to the case study:

A region branding strategy for northern Portugal might (and eventually should) be developed in line with the strategic spatial planning documents in force - that is - Northern Portugal Strategic Guidelines 2014-2020. This is the main strategic planning document that establishes ten planning-goals/priority axes aimed at improving the socio-spatial and spatial economic condition of northern Portugal. Taking region branding as an instrument in the Northern Portugal Strategic Guidelines would contribute to re-imagining and re-positioning the region in those ten goals. As the planning document is the result of a thorough participatory process it represents the communities needs and would generate legitimacy for a region brand. Resources will be economised and an integrative spatial development would be reached. As the Strategic Guidelines 2014-2020 is essential to apply for EU funding – region branding could be fuelled with capital to contribute to the achievement of the strategic goals identified.

Source: own elaboration based on Northern Portugal Strategic Guidelines/Operational Programme 2014-2020 analysed in chapter 3, 5 and 6.

8.6. Concluding remarks on the summary of the research findings

Complementing the above-mentioned economic constraints (see Table 8.5.), IN 9 argued that northern Portugal currently has the lowest local/municipal purchasing power of the country, and only the municipalities of Braga and the greater metropolitan area of Porto stands above the national average. According to Statistics Portugal (INE, 2011), seven out of 10 municipalities with the lowest purchasing power per capita were located in northern Portugal (70%). Economic (structural) challenges are also related to the specialization of the labour force (IN 9, 15). The low-skilled workforce (IN 12) associated with traditional industry (for example, textiles, clothing and footwear) inform the image of northern Portugal (IN 1, 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). A high unemployment rate, lower purchasing powers and depopulation are also challenges the region must face.

The idea that northern Portugal has a productive sector with “low added value” has been progressively fuelled, with the support of national media channels (IN 8). Interviewee number eight went on to clearly state that “there is a bias regarding northern Portugal”, meaning that when a particular innovative event takes place in the region and any product is developed there, it is very difficult to get the message across that the product has been made by northern Portuguese workers or in a firm located in the region. The same lack of attention seems to occur with sporting or cultural events that take place in the region and are often neglected by national media. This position has been also argued by other interviewees. For example, IN 8 convincingly states that the “decision-making capacity is centralized in Lisbon” and that when it comes to a subject of national interest — for example, the opening of an art exhibition or even an industrial investment — the panoply of communication channels discuss its location as only being possible in the greater Lisbon area; “there is a clear leadership deficit” (IN 8) able to support northern Portugal to build its own path, with its

own potential (IN 8). INs 2 and 8 argue that a region brand can be effective in giving visibility and improving the international reputation of northern Portugal's assets and potentialities.

Discovering ways of overcoming the centralization of decision-making among Portuguese regions seems to have been pursued by other institutions I interviewed. Several projects have been initiated by the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation for the Euroregion of Galicia-northern Portugal (IN 5) and others at the expense of local associations (IN 4, 7), mainly to boost regional development through knowledge-based capacities, universities located in the region (IN 8) and competitive clusters such as the HCP (IN 6) and PortugalFoods (IN 16). Although the last two interviewees (IN 6, 16) embrace Portugal as a spatial scale for project making and implementation, they have been engaging with public and private entities. These entities were able to self-organize in a "non-strategy environment" (one lacking an effective, strategic spatial-planning document and institutional confusion) to involve key actors in a "highly centralized decision-making environment" and produce collectively long-term strategies and short-term actions. These agents seem to respond to the criticism of strategic spatial planning lodged by Newman (2008) and provide empirical evidence for the argument of Ledo (2000) that "determining the correct organizational form is as important as determining an economic development strategy" (p. 125).

The example of the autonomous community of Galicia in north-west Spain was given by several interviewees (IN 2, 5, 8) as an example of successful regional-based economic development and region-strategy making. Galicia enjoys autonomy and decision-making capacity over its own development path (IN 2). In this regard, IN 8 argues that it is necessary to develop an international agenda for Portugal that goes "beyond Lisbon", the Portuguese capital, just as the agenda of Barcelona goes beyond the agenda of Madrid (referring here to the central government of Spain).

Northern Portugal is "too important to be ignored" (IN 8) or to be "simply perceived as the factory of Portugal" with its dominance of the textile and footwear industry, as some of the interviewees argued (IN 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15). However, the Textile and Clothing Association of Portugal (IN 7) argues that northern Portugal is no longer perceived as traditional but as "having an industry with tradition". The interviewee supports that comment by saying that this "tradition is a driving force for innovation" and that some firms have been updating their models in response to the market. In addition, the region is already well known as having strong industrial capabilities to both adapt to and resist drastic market variations. However, this point has been criticized by IN 12 and IN 10. The region is still characterized as having a low-skilled labour force, which acts as a barrier to the implementation new modes of production and organization. Interviewees 8, 10 and 12 give the examples of Finland and Ireland. These countries faced deep economic and social problems but the capabilities of their labour forces supported the implementation of structural changes. The success of the structural changes in Finland can also be justified by the strong local autonomy in terms of the planning and service provisions that Finnish regions can enjoy (Sellers and Lindström, 2007). Furthermore, and according to Kalliomäki (2015), "Finland has recently launched a state-led, cross-sectoral planning process to create a new vision for the national spatial structure" (p. 115).

According to IN7, the textile industry of northern Portugal currently focuses on creativity (with the introduction of design and fashion) with a high degree of incorporation of technology, including nanotechnology in final products, products that are often tailor-made for a demanding customer (IN

7). In addition, the region has been shaping its image by producing high-quality shoes that are now reaching the global markets at a quite remarkable level (IN 12). Some of those footwear firms have created their own labels/brands, but most of them are quintessentially small and medium enterprises producing their shoes for multinational companies that are owners of brands and can benefit from strong distribution channels (IN 9, 10, 11, 12).

An onerous bureaucracy, a weak judicial system and a weak or non-existent decision-making capacity and leadership have been identified as the key issues facing the region, and are seen as administrative barriers for investment attraction and regional development (IN 13). Those key issues work against the expansion and improvement of the transportation system (IN 14), as well as the sustainable growth of local businesses and internal markets (IN 12, 13). Interviewees also asserted that some firms have difficulties in attracting a labour force, as the provision of public transportation is weak (IN 9, 11).

In light of the interviewees' opinions, the development of a region-branding exercise integrated as an instrument in strategic spatial planning requires the equal adoption of appropriate organizational structures, political willingness, leading voices, collective strategies and consensus among decision makers, organizations and citizens towards the envisioning of shared futures. Place branding in strategic spatial planning prioritizes participation, as it engages people with a place. This does not mean that place branding should be imposed or embedded by force in strategic spatial planning or in spatial plan making (for instance, at the regional scale), but could instead be the result of coordinated efforts between all actors and communities in a place. The key regional actors acknowledge that a region-branding strategy for northern Portugal might be fruitful in changing perceptions, supporting a reimagining process, as well as communicating to the country and beyond the fact that the northern Portugal region as a whole has been trying to implement structural changes.

Figure 8.5. represents the brand-anchor challenge, which is the challenge of aligning branding efforts currently taking place on different spatial scales with a new branding attempt. Is strategic spatial planning able to bridge the gap and work as the anchor for countries', regions' or cities' brands? I have been arguing that if place branding, independent of the scale of application, is taken as an instrument of strategic spatial planning, then spatial-planning strategies will guide spatial interventions and seek coordination between regional actors and the construction of visions for the future (envisioning). A region brand would attempt to communicate a structural change, the existence of regional assets and attract investors, tourists, researchers, talented people and potential new residents.

The main concluding remark from the research findings is that the institutional confusion existing in northern Portugal has resulted in a number of branding attempts that are neither integrated in a unique branding narrative nor interlinked with wider spatial-planning strategies.

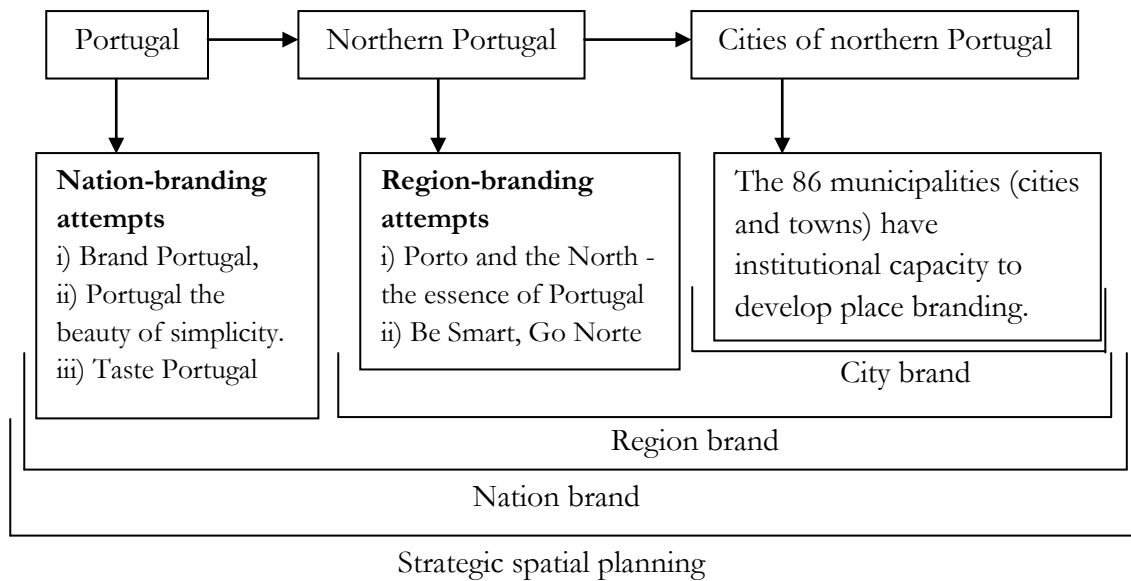


Figure 8.5. Current main branding efforts at the national and regional levels, and possible attempts at the city level. *Source:* own elaboration.

In my view, a region brand could work as an anchor for other potential city brands. I acknowledged that northern Portugal could benefit from the international reputation and recognition of cities located in the region, such as Porto, Braga and Guimarães. In addition, a northern Portugal branding strategy could also reinforce the image and position of “Brand Portugal” beyond tourism.

Strategic spatial planning at the national and regional levels could, and eventually should, coordinate such branding efforts. Strategic spatial planning would unify regional and national actors, align key strategic domains for northern Portugal (and the country itself) and identify spatial constraints. A region brand would be able to support the spatial-development path and contribute to fulfilling the strategic planning goals identified in strategic spatial-planning documents such as the Northern Portugal Operational Programme 2014–2020.

8.7. Future challenges for place branding and strategic spatial planning

This Ph.D. thesis has made a small contribution to the theoretical underpinning of place branding by elucidating the research and practice of the strategic spatial-planning instrument. This approach aims to go beyond the corporate branding and marketing approach to the process of branding places, without aiming to underestimate the value and relevance of that approach. The thesis highlights the value and effectiveness of a spatial-planning approach to place branding in support of structural change and reimagining, rescaling and envisioning processes. Empirical evidence was gathered by taking a peripheral European region facing several socio-economic challenges in the current period (northern Portugal) as a case study.

The theoretical propositions discussed in this thesis are put forward in the hope that they might steer interests towards the alignment of a place branding strategic spatial planning, independent of

the scale of application (nations, regions, cross-border regions, cities, inter-cities, districts and neighbourhoods) as well as the nature and the stage of the branding process itself — whether this is a rebranding process, a new one or a process occurring in terms of wider spatial-planning strategies. An exhaustive review of the literature has been carried out to establish theoretical and empirical links between place branding and the strategic spatial-planning approach. Searches for additional links, however, are necessary to make a fuller contribution to rethinking place branding as a more geospatial phenomenon, and thus contributing to the theoretical maturation of the field. In addition, those new links would contribute to the reframing of strategic spatial planning by introducing a new instrument to the toolbox of spatial planners in general, and strategic spatial planners in particular.

As a suggestion for future research, it would be of great value to explore the theoretical links between place branding and the concepts of economic geography, such as constructing a regional advantage (following the preliminary approach developed by Oliveira, 2015d) or regional innovation systems. In addition, several authors argue over the complexity of branding places (for example, Kavartzis *et al.*, 2015; Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015; Kavartzis and Kalandides, 2015), while others argue that place branding can become a vital strategic governance practice (for example, Ashworth and Kavartzis, 2009; Eshuis and Edwards, 2013; Eshuis *et al.*, 2013; Kavartzis, 2004; Klijn *et al.*, 2012; Zavattaro and Adams, 2015). It also seems relevant to explore the theoretical linkage between place branding and complexity theory in spatial planning (for example, de Roo, Hillier, Van Wezemael, 2012) and evolutionary governance theory (Van Assche *et al.*, 2014).

I have justified in almost all chapters of this thesis the reasons that northern Portugal was selected as the case study. Despite the fact that undertaking the empirical work was a great pleasure and very fruitful, additional research is needed to prove the theoretical assumptions postulated here. The field would benefit from extension of the research areas to other Portuguese regions, as well as by taking other European regions for comparison and theory testing. Chapter 7 shows my attempt to expand the research area beyond the funding proposal, which mentioned only northern Portugal as a case study, to include Galicia due to its geographical and cognitive proximity. However, in-depth interviews need to be conducted with regional actors in Galicia to build empirical evidence in order to establish the relevance of region branding and branding across administrative border regions — in this case, the Euroregion of Galicia-northern Portugal. I think that deepen the research on a potential cross-border brand for Galicia-northern Portugal would prominently benefit both, place branding and strategic spatial planning. I also acknowledge that some of the readers can argue on something like a super-national “brand” in Portugal, namely the concept of “Lusofonia/Lusophony” - which aims to unite culturally and linguistically Portuguese-speaking countries. Researching the cultural, historical and linguistic ties between these countries and the relevance of a super-national brand would greatly improve the literature on place branding at the country level.

It is the contention of this Ph.D. thesis that a strategic spatial-planning approach to place branding can help the field become more embedded as an instrument for the attainment of strategic spatial-planning goals for places such as regions. It can also help to shape envisioned shared futures, contribute to improving the socio-spatial and spatial-economic conditions as well as making a significant contribution to spatial development, thus steering clear of the dominant corporate branding and marketing approach and avoiding accusations of irrelevance, ineffectiveness, elitism

and self-regarding fascination. It is also my heartfelt hope that this Ph.D. thesis will stimulate critical reflections on the future of place branding and strategic spatial planning, inspiring place marketers, spatial planners, geographers and consultants, among other experts, to bring a much needed geospatial consciousness to the phenomenon of place branding.