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Propositions belonging to the PhD thesis

Place Branding in Strategic Spatial Planning

An Analysis at the Regional Scale with Special Reference to Northern Portugal

By Eduardo Henrique da Silva Oliveira

- 1) People mistakenly think they know what place branding means because we are confronted daily with brands in shopping centres, grocery stores and through a variety of media channels. Place branding is a rather complex phenomenon.
- 2) Place branding is an increasingly appealing topic for academic research and has proven to be a popular practice, while the debate on place branding too often lacks any intellectual grounding or even positioning within wider spatial planning strategies.
- 3) There is a need for ways of thinking and for tools, concepts and instruments that help governments, citizens and spatial planners to cope better with the challenges that arise in dynamic and complex environments: strategic spatial planning is such an approach - able to deal with these social, economic and spatial challenges places are facing.
- 4) Place managers, spatial planners and policy-makers have been embracing place branding as a possible solution for a bewildering assortment of deep-seated socio-spatial and spatial-economic issues. It is, however, important to realize that place branding is neither a magic solution nor a one-size-fits-all approach.
- 5) Place branding aims to identify common ideas and directions for the future of the community, and to produce collectively generated place stories and visions.
- 6) Place branding must be primarily oriented towards the support of local business, the improvement of infrastructures and the physical condition of the territory, the provision of health and educational services, and contribute towards job creation as well as job maintenance and talent retention - rather than focus mainly on attracting investment, tourists, new residents and highly qualified workers.
- 7) As a strategic spatial planning instrument, place branding focuses on a limited number of strategic key issues and focuses on place-specific qualities, assets (whether tangible or intangible), and involves relevant place actors and the specific activities of citizens, politicians and spatial planners.
- 8) Place branding, integrated as an instrument in strategic spatial planning, supports visionary realignments and structural change, fosters economic restructuring, social inclusion and cohesion, encourages political engagement and civic participation, in addition to reinforcing place identification and the general well-being of communities.
- 9) Place branding is thought of as a process of place re-imaging in order to correct a negative image or to increase awareness of the place.
- 10) To be effective place branding should be narrowly defined, but to be possible it must be wide in scope.