

Chapter 10

A Strategic Spatial Planning Approach to Cross-Border Place Branding with References to Galicia and Northern Portugal

Eduardo Oliveira

Abstract This chapter adopts a strategic spatial planning approach to think strategically about potential joint place-branding initiatives between cross-border regions. The case study focuses on the extended cross-border European region composed of the NUTS III *Alto Minho, Cávado, Ave, Área Metropolitana do Porto, Alto Tâmega, Tâmega e Sousa, Douro, Terras de Trás-os-Montes* of Northern Portugal and the provinces of *A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense* and *Pontevedra* of the autonomous community of Galicia in northwest Spain. Bearing in mind the mismatch of styles of regional government systems, the approval by the European Commission of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Galicia–Northern Portugal, and the current socio-economic environment, this chapter discusses the possibility of joining forces, procedures and strategic tools in order to enhance the reputation and give visibility to this European regional conurbation. In addition, this chapter intends to shed some light on the empirical significance of a cross-border place-branding strategy able to encourage entrepreneurship, job creation, trade and investment. It draws important lessons from the idea of interregional branding and aims to encourage a unique cross-border storyline. The chapter directly addresses the need to develop place branding, independently of the geographical scale of application, through a strategic spatial planning approach. Here the complex interregional branding exercises carried out by the Øresund and the Baltic Sea regions are taken as comparative cases. This chapter also aims to contribute to the academic debate on interregional place branding by discussing the potential development of place-branding initiatives across – administrative – border regions underpinned by knowledge from strategic spatial planning literature.

Keywords Cross-border • Euroregion • Galicia • Northern Portugal • Place branding • Strategic spatial planning

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Introduction

The debate on spatial planning theory has underlined the challenges, complexity and non-linearity of spatial transformations by applying a paradigm based on the principles of classic rationality of positivism origin. The practice of strategic spatial planning, which gained popularity at the beginning of the 1990s, seemed to offer a way out of the shallows in which ordinary regional and urban planning has sunk (Balducci et al. 2011). Therefore, to embrace the complexity of spatial developments, strategic spatial planning was positioned at the critical junction between a need for a comprehensive vision of the future and the impossibility of predicting the distorting factors. Strategic spatial planning was perceived as a way to overcome the limitations of traditional spatial planning instruments and thus envision, in an innovative and creative way, better futures for cities and city-regions.

This chapter adopts a strategic spatial planning approach as an attempt to think strategically, innovatively and creatively in potential joint place-branding initiatives between cross-border regions, in a European context. The European region composed of the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (henceforth NUTS) level III *Alto Minho, Cávado, Ave, Área Metropolitana do Porto, Alto Tâmega, Tâmega e Sousa, Douro, Terras de Trás-os-Montes* of Northern Portugal (NUTS II) and the provinces of *A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense* and *Pontevedra* (NUTS III) of the autonomous community of Galicia (NUTS III) in northwest Spain is taken as a case study. The Euroregion Galicia–Northern Portugal has legal and institutional support by the Regulation number 1082 of 2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 amended accordingly to Regulation number 1302 of 2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 (European Union 2006, 2013). The European Council (henceforth EC) regulation formally established the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation *Galicia e Norte de Portugal* (henceforth GNP-EGTC). This institutional body, in operation since 1 March 2010, represents the continuous effort from the European Union (henceforth EU) to enhance cooperation, strengthen ties and develop networks between cross-border European regions.

The institutionalisation of the GNP-EGTC has supported our decision to classify this geographical area as an ‘extended’ cross-border region. This is because the region of Galicia–Northern Portugal overlaps physical borders and is composed by the territories between the Bay of *Biscay* (northwest Spain) and the River *Douro* (Northern Portugal). Galicia and the North of Portugal have a long tradition in cross-border cooperation (OECD 2012; CCDRN 2013). In recognition of the strong existing links between these two regions, the networks established as well as the legal framework (i.e. GNP-EGTC), it makes sense to classify it as a cross-border region and hence think strategically about possible joint cross-border branding exercises.

The last decade of the twentieth century has seen a strong surge in the number of cross-border regions all over Europe. Nowadays, there are more than 70

cross-border regions in Europe, operating under names such as ‘Euroregions’, ‘Euregios’ and ‘Working Communities’ (Perkmann 2003). However, these European conurbations were undersupplied by legal frameworks until 2006, when the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation was established. The EGTC was designed to facilitate and promote territorial cooperation (e.g. cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation), in view of strengthening the economic and social cohesion of the European territory (European Union 2011). In addition, Medeiros (2011) argues that the implementation of an EGTC could effectively operationalise cross-border activities such as common transport, sustainable development, environmental protection and regional promotion.

Despite the relatively recent legal and institutional developments, regarding a more formalisation of the European regions, elsewhere denominated Euroregions, this chapter applies the notion of cross-border European region to refer to the EU region Galicia–Northern Portugal. The theoretical background follows the topical developments on the strategic spatial planning literature in Europe (e.g. Friedmann 1987; Healey 1997; Hillier 2002; Albrechts 2004, 2006, 2010, 2013; Balducci et al. 2011) and on interregional and inter-territorial place branding (e.g. Hosper 2004; Andersson 2007; Pasquinelli 2013; Pasquinelli and Teräs 2013). The discussion around the concept of Euroregions and the changes at the Portuguese–Spanish border are supported by Medeiros (2011) and Amante (2013).

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

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

The global competition, the growing complexity and the challenges posed to diverse spatial scale entities, as cities, regions and transnational geographical entities boost the practice of undertaking cross-border territorial cooperation in order to enhance their competitiveness and strengthen their positioning and territorial

visibility. According to Pasquinelli (2013), territorial competition, cooperation and co-opetition are viable strategies for place branding at different scales. The scale component, cross-border spatial area and the approach, strategic spatial planning followed in this chapter, bring innovation, creativity and future thinking to interregional place-branding discussion. Place branding offers a potential collaborative linkage between previously disparate activities and departments within place authorities at different spatial scales. Also, strategic spatial planning seems able to deal with multi-scale spatial challenges and transformations in an innovative and emancipatory way (Albrechts 2013).

The spatial dimension involved in this study brings challenges to a potential cross-border branding exercise. It includes eight subregions from the Portuguese side and four provinces on the Spanish side, both member states of the European Union. Additionally, we highlight that this area has now an institutional and legal support from the GNP-EGTC. In addition, this study encounters complexity as different approaches towards strategic spatial planning and dissimilar models of regional government and decision-making capacity are involved. However, the historical background of togetherness between Galicia and Northern Portugal, the language similarities and identity ties are clearly an advantage towards a common cross-border brand-storyline. Underpinned by knowledge from the strategic spatial planning literature and spatial planners as catalysts and initiators of change (Albrechts 1999), this study tries to shed some light on potential place-branding synergies between the cross-border areas of Galicia and Northern Portugal. Furthermore, bearing in mind all the aforementioned opportunities and threats of branding places, the study will clarify if a cross-border place-branding initiative is likely to encourage the following, in times of financial and economic crisis in both countries:

- Cross-border trade
- Cross-border infrastructure developments
- Cross-border investment and tourism development
- Cross-border research and development projects
- Cross-border entrepreneurship, employment and labour mobility

In pursuit of novelty in the field of interregional place-branding research, two inter-territorial branding exercises are taken as comparative cases (i.e. the Øresund region and the Baltic Sea region). The Øresund region is geographical composed by the Danish Great Copenhagen and the Swedish region of Scania (see Pedersen 2004; Hospers 2004, 2006; Pasquinelli 2013). The Baltic Sea region encompasses several countries which presents higher complexity and challenges (see Andersson 2007, 2009; Pasquinelli 2013). These cases were strategically selected for the reason that the plethora of literature is highly relevant to support our reflections. In addition, the process of cooperation in both cases is older than the cross-border cooperation process undertaken by Northern Portugal and Galicia and, as a consequence, should have a higher degree of maturity and better outputs in generating positive and effective territorial impacts.

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

Defining Borders, Cross-Border Geographical Areas and the Shaping of the European Map

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

If political theory defines borders as the outcome of institutional processes, often as a consequence of political power skirmishes such as wars or royal negotiations, borders are addressed differently in other theoretical approaches (Yndigegn 2013). Common sense defines borders as territorial demarcations between neighbouring countries. Borders are socially constructed as a result of everyday social and communal interactions (Yndigegn 2013). The border between Portugal and Spain is a historical and political construction achieved through concessions, negotiations and exchanges between Portuguese and Spanish authorities (Amante 2013). Emotional elements such as national pride, notoriety, positioning and as icons of national identity, borders have defined the geography of the two European countries and, as consequence, the social and cooperative networks. Borders have also defined competitive diplomatic discussions and have been driving a number of transnational infrastructures (e.g. tunnels, roads).

As a matter of fact, alike in the past, a considerable number of European regions try to outcompete each other in a fear of being wiped off the map. The remarkable overall growth in establishing multilevel relational networks across the EU border areas has changed the European geography, paving the way for the Europe of the Regions (see Perkmann 2003; Medeiros 2011). Nevertheless, according to Amante (2013), it is not cordial to embark, uncritically, upon the political oratory of a European geography composed by regions. Moreover, discussing the relevance of borders within the idea of a Europe of the Regions becomes paramount (Bucken-Knapp and Shack 2001; Anderson et al. 2003).

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

Cross-Border Regions, Euroregion and European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

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

The first official cross-border region, the *EUREGIO*, was established in 1958 on the Dutch–German border, in the area of Enschede (the Netherlands) and Gronau (Germany). Since then, such ‘Euroregions’ and other forms of cross-border cooperation have emerged throughout Europe contributing to redraw the political European map, for instance, by reducing the barrier effect, contributing to cost-efficiency of transnational investments and reinforcing common development strategies (Medeiros 2011).

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

In the efforts towards developmental strategies, from the Operational Programme for Cross-border Cooperation, applied in different cross-border European regions, such as Portugal and Spain, to the recently approved European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, the European Union is still conducting initiatives to enhance territorial cooperation and competition.

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

As noted above, there is a theoretical framework to discuss the value of cross-border branding exercises, as this seems a valuable approach to enhance strategic orientations. Furthermore, it could be possible to align border planning systems into the same storyline. Strategic spatial planning, a field of practices of varying nature (e.g. political-institutional, social), is designed to create conditions for integration between decision-making networks and cooperative ties among regional actors. Furthermore, it is able to change the cross-border competitiveness agenda and support territories to stay shining on the map of attractiveness.

Strategic Spatial Planning, the Competitiveness Agenda and Cross-Border Cooperation

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

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

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

The European integration agenda, broadly speaking, is aimed at reducing hierarchies of spatial administrative levels while building stronger institutional capacity at regional and subregional levels. For several times, this process involves cross-border cooperation. The core objectives of cross-border cooperation are to reduce the negative effects of borders as administrative, legal and physical barriers, tackle common problems and exploit untapped potential (European Union 2011).

According to Perkmann (2003), cross-border regions have thrived in particular because of their increasingly relevant role as implementation units for European regional policy in a context of multilevel governance.

The approach explored in this chapter steps towards a development of synergies onto cross-border place branding by emphasising the knowledge and values of spatial strategy making. The literature in place branding, such as Van Assche and Lo (2011, p. 118), underlines that ‘place branding can enhance the stability of planning strategies and that omitting a branding perspective in planning efforts is bound to increase their economic risks’. Following this line of reasoning, a strategic spatial planning approach to cross-border place-branding would give visibility to strategic initiatives and give notoriety to cross-border regions. In addition, it would also strengthening the competitive position and facilitating cross-border multi-sector cooperation, namely, for entrepreneurship, investment and talent attraction as well as talent retention initiatives.

Why a Strategic Spatial Planning Approach to Cross-Border Place Branding?

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

Spatial planners, as geographers, ethnographers and marketers, among a vast list of other experts are exponentially developing place branding at different scales (i.e. neighbourhood, countries, cities, regions, cross-administrative territories) and different scopes (i.e. investment, trade, talent, tourism). The application of branding techniques to places, such as cross-border regions, has been used as part of policies aimed to nurturing economic restructuring, community participation and political engagement (Ashworth 2011). In addition to facilitate strategic change in places, specifically, through reimagining, repositioning or rescaling processes

(Ashworth 2005). Despite theoretical developments in place branding (see Lucarelli and Berg 2011; Kavaratzis 2012; Zenker and Rütter 2014), it has been asserted that the practice demonstrates significant misconceptions. Place branding lacks at present any intellectual grounding or even positioning within spatial planning and policy-making (Ashworth 2011). Furthermore, there is an apparent gap in place-branding literature which overlooks inter-territorial branding or branding across administrative borders (Pasquinelli 2013). To fill that noticeable rational fissure in place-branding literature, we adopt a strategic spatial planning approach to facilitate developments of branding initiatives for cross-border regions. We base our approach on the work of Mintzberg (1994), Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2010), Pasqui (2011) and Albrechts (2013). In our viewpoint, there are three main reasons to follow a strategic spatial planning approach for cross-border branding:

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

This approach goes beyond the norm on interregional place-branding research. Even the literature offers us what is now a structured discussion of the reasons why some geographical units, such as cities, researchers and spatial planners, have engaged with strategic spatial planning (Balducci et al. 2011); we decided to

experiment it and carefully observe the linkage with branding across administrative territories, such as Galicia and Northern Portugal. In this sense spatial planners are called to assume a role as enhancers of processes of integration between decision-making networks and regional actors from both sides of a border, and this is adding value to cross-border branding exercise.

The Role of Spatial Planners and Strategic Thinking in Cross-Border Place Branding

It has been assumed that some of the attempts to respond to the complex issues places are facing depend on the ability to combine the creation of strategic visions with short-term actions (Albrechts 2004). The role of (strategic) spatial planners goes beyond the technicality of land use plans, territorial zoning, spatial regulations or urban transformation. There is an imaginative power in strategic spatial planning (see Healey 2006). Therefore, spatial planners should be creative thinkers, envisioning better futures for places. Furthermore, the spatial planner could play the role of a negotiator engaging various relevant parties in a spatial context. In the same line of reasoning, a spatial planner, nowadays, could embrace future-strategic thinking in place-branding exercises as they deal with spatial qualities, multiple stakeholders, place opportunities and threats and territorial transformation.

Place stakeholders are becoming more proactively involved in the planning process (Albrechts 2004). A proactive reaction to spatial issues involves designing the future to make it happen (Albrechts 2004, 2010). According to Kavatzis (2012), it is imperative to rethink the role of stakeholders towards a more participatory place-branding approach. The involvement of stakeholders as well as community participation in strategic spatial planning and place branding strengthens a place brand. Given these facts, a place brand has the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, it is created by everybody. Hence, proactive participation, strategic networks and strategic thinking place branding, including over borders, are vital.

From the intellectual grounding of strategic spatial planning, the rationale linkage to place branding, for instance, applied to cross-border regions, lies in the need to counteract the pure instrumental rationality able to encourage strategically thinking economic and social ailments (Albrechts 2004). Strategic spatial planning creates or supports design of a vision for a future environment. Over time strategic spatial planning process 'must stay abreast of changes in order to make the best decisions it can at any given point' (Albrechts 2004, p. 750). The envisioned future should be placed within the economic, social and political environment and the variable time and scale with regard to specific issues and a particular combination of actors (Albrechts 2004).

On the other hand, Syssner (2010) calls to develop a multilevel approach to place branding, an effort that would explore the complex relationships within and

between place-branding initiatives at various levels of regulation. In this regard, a cross-border branding strategy, as the result of political arrangements, would influence the interregional cooperation agenda. Strategic thinking in spatial planning allows for a more effective way of integrating the economic, cultural and cohesion policy agendas (Albrechts 2004). These agendas could be developed into specific programmes and regulatory practices, opening up room for integration of place-branding initiatives in spatial planning and territorial development. If territorial development is underpinned in strategic frameworks and visions, with an emphasis on place assets and values, it would be more fruitful to rescale issues on the complex agenda of today's economic and social scene.

The approach to cross-border place branding through strategic spatial planning is deeply anchored in the ideas of Albrechts (2004, 2013) in widening the range of place stakeholders involved in policy-making for territorial (place) development and the need to think strategically in new instruments to cope with the challenges. As outlined in Albrechts (2004), Furst (2001) and Kunzmann (2001), territorial development as a goal (likewise in place branding) encourages levels of government to work together (multilevel governance) and in partnership with actors in diverse positions in the economy and civil society. Its rationale is to frame the activities of place actors, from public to private, into more shared concerns regarding common and transborder issues (such as the current economic and financial crisis that affects both territories) and joint initiatives for spatial (structural) change. Furthermore, there is an opportunity for spatial planners to cross administrative boundaries and develop efforts to combine two or more geographical units in order to build a more attractive territory (see Hankinson 2010). Accordingly, benchmarking best practices in interregional place branding is also fundamental to accredit the rationale of building branding strategies over administrative territories.

Lessons from Interregional Branding of Selected Cases

The Øresund Region

The Scandinavian Øresund region is a cross-border conurbation made up by two nearby cities, Copenhagen (Denmark) and Malmö (Sweden). The branding exercise taken by the Øresund region authorities was developed intentionally to nudge the residents to identify themselves with the region (Pedersen 2004). The Øresund region is often highlighted as a best practice of place marketing (see Van Ham 2002; Hospers 2006).

The regional branding process of the Øresund region was marked by the planning of the bridge linking Copenhagen and Malmö. Trade organisations, governmental administrations and industry started working together to organise the projection of the region into the global market (Pedersen 2004). The aim was to integrate the interior organising and the exterior communication in one symbolic regime, in the same regional storyline. The heterogeneous business structure of the Øresund region

turned out to be a core source for cross-border cooperation. Both sides of the region complemented each other in several domains. Jointly the areas have developed significant strengths in three clusters:

1. Information technology
2. Medical technology
3. Tourism-based activities (Hospers 2006)

This point is fundamental for the rationale of developing a joint cross-border branding for the region Galicia–Northern Portugal. By taking the best of each one, a stronger region could emerge. If the cross-border branding exercise is integrated in strategic spatial planning it could attempt to a structural change in direction and, eventually, fulfil the desires of regional actors, citizens and decision-makers. In times of economic and social crisis, and where the EU financial mechanisms 2014–2020 will be the single source to financially support projects, for instance a place branding one, it seems a smart approach to engage with regional actors and build uniqueness with cooperative ties underpinned on regional potentials and assets.

In Øresund, the strategy of adjusting the relations of meaning between the bridge, the logo and the discourse (the fundamental coherent storyline) of the region illustrates how branding works. The brand connects all potentially profitable and significant objects and events of the region to the region (Hospers 2006). In our view, the rather successful development of the Øresund region can be a lesson for Galicia–Northern Portugal to learn to strategically communicate and give visibility of their industrial know-how, creative industries, high-tech research units and tourism potential to the surrounding world. However, to overcome the failure that occurred during the branding process of the Øresund region, we argue that a strategic spatial planning approach to cross-border branding could be the key to successful place branding across administrative regions with, often, paradoxical planning, government and identity systems.

The Baltic Sea Region

The Baltic Sea region has been developed as an inter-territorial branding exercise. The inter-territorial brand covers a geographical area managed and planned by diverse public authorities which decided to collaborate voluntarily (Pasquinelli 2013). The interregional branding case of the Baltic Sea region is complex regarding the number of sovereign states involved. According to Pasquinelli (2013), the region as a destination brand is aimed at attracting visitors, as well as investors, by promoting the region to foreign capital and also by promoting exports. The Baltic Sea region faces a considerable number of issues and challenges. As suggested on place-branding literature, the most notable being a lack of one single decision-making authority and a lack of unity of purpose among its potential stakeholders (Andersson 2007). Andersson (2007, 2009) argues that if the region wants to be positioned in the minds of potential visitors, investors, residents, talents and entrepreneurs,

therefore to gain visibility and be seen as a more coherent and attractive entity, it needs to work hard on integration, identity building and economic development. In addition, it needs to maintain the communication of its achievements, either tangible or intangible. Despite some failures, the branding process undertaken by the Baltic Sea region could hold lessons for the European region Galicia–Northern Portugal. For instance, the region was able to strongly develop commitment and engagement with multiple organisations (Andersson 2010). In addition, another lesson has emerged from the awareness of the region organisations about the need to implement marketing and branding approaches to improve the image of the unknown region by giving visibility. It is curious that the visionary idea of branding the region went viral and was spread to a variety of networks, contexts and stakeholders.

For the region Galicia–Northern Portugal, spending time discussing the best nomination for the regional conurbation (i.e. be Euroregion or something else) could start the engines and open the dialogue to reimagine, revitalise and reorganise the region towards more visibility, credibility and respect of their multidimensional potential as a unique territory. The branding storyline should be built based on what is unique, best and outstanding in the region. Economies of scale and cross-border infrastructures are essential to raise the idea that the region is familiar and closer and the citizens (Portuguese and Spaniards) are part of it. They are the story that the world wants to hear.

Cross-Border European Region Galicia–Northern Portugal

Although Galicia and Northern Portugal have enjoyed centuries of shared history and culture, it was only with the EU membership of Spain and Portugal that the foundations of successful cross-border cooperation could be built. The establishment of the Working Community Galicia–North of Portugal in 1991 and cross-border cooperation programmes under INTERREG (1990–2013) has created benefits that are today enjoyed by a resident population of 6.5 million. The Regulation (EC) number 1082/2006 (amended accordingly to Regulation EC number 1302/2013) established the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Galicia–Northern Portugal (Fig. 10.1). The overall objective of the programme is to further develop and broaden the common border areas towards improving connectivity and infrastructures, enhancing socio-economic and institutional integration, promoting employment and reinforcing territorial competitiveness and cooperation and to overcome the obstacles to the cross-border cooperation process.

The GNP-EGTC is the organisation in charge of promoting interconnection and territorial cooperation for the cross-border European region Galicia–Northern Portugal. The GNP-EGTC aims to support institutional arrangements and establish communication bridges, dialogue, investment and convergence between business, citizens, universities and government on both sides of the border. The GNP-EGTC could also assume a primary role in developing cross-border branding efforts and strategic spatial planning arrangements in the region.

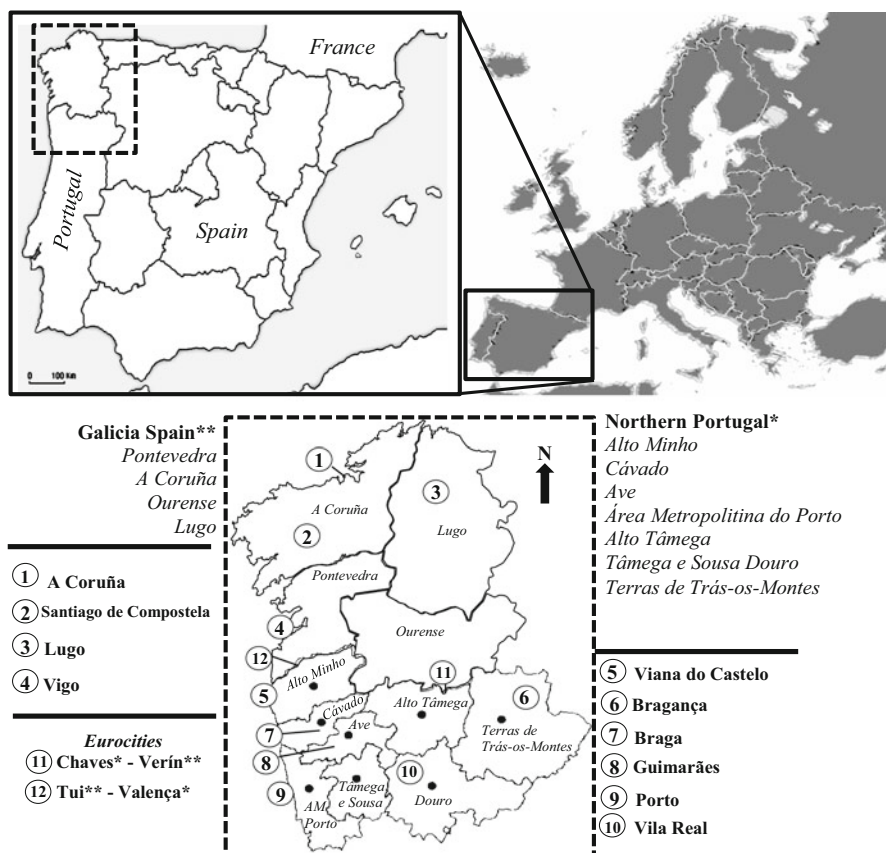


Fig. 10.1 Geographical area of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Galicia-northern Portugal, the main cities (1–10) and the two Eurocities (11;12) (approximately).

Galicia is Spain's most western Autonomous Community and is bordered by Portugal to the south. With approximately 2.8 million inhabitants, the region is sparsely populated; it accounted for 6 % of Spain's population and 5.2 % of the national GDP in 2010. It is characterised by a very long coastline (more than 1,700 km) as well as rugged terrain. The Autonomous Community of Galicia has always preserved a strong sense of regional identity, based on its unique culture and language (Galician) and has an autonomous government (*Xunta de Galicia*). Galicia has strong trade and cultural relationships with Portugal, especially with its Northern region (OECD 2012).

The Northern Portugal region, without an institutionalised level of government, only supported in terms of regional development and cohesion by the North Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDRN), has a territorial area of 21.285,88 km² with 3.694.152 as the resident population. By taking the

Table 10.1 Key social and economic figures, Galicia and Northern Portugal

Indicators	Spain	Galicia	Portugal	Northern Portugal
<i>Population</i>				
Resident population (N.) (2013)	46.704.308	2.736.637	10.487.289	3.694.152
Life expectancy (%) (2011)	82,4	82,2	79,8	81,3
<i>Labour market</i>				
Unemployment rate (%) (01/2014)	25.8	20.7	15.3	16.1
Employment rate (%) (10/2013)	59.3	57.7	66.5	60.9
Regional GDP (2004, purchasing power standard per inhabitant)	–	17.600	–	13.100
GDP per capita in PPS (EU28 = 100)	96	–	76	–
Real GDP growth rate (2015 forecast)	1.7	–	1.5	–
<i>Trade (thousand Euros)</i>				
Total imports	–	14.848.729,8	–	11.677.141,0
Total exports	–	16.499.233,9	–	16.799.356,0
Intra-EU 27 exports to Spain (% of the total)	–	–	–	4.030.413 (30 %)
Intra-EU 27 imports from Spain (% of the total)	–	–	–	4.323.206 (43,92)
<i>Tourism</i>				
Total nights spent (number, 2011)	–	8.538.669	–	5.479.709
Establishments (number, 2011)	–	2.837	–	531
Air transport (1,000 passengers)	–	4429.0	–	6005.0
<i>Science and technology</i>				
Human resources (% of active population, 2012)	–	39.1	–	24.2

Source: Author's own design based on Eurostat (2014)

newest data from secondary sources, Table 10.1 shows the key figures of the cross-border region, with particular focus on macroeconomic indicators.

From the key figures above, we underline the importance of the trade (export/import) from the Northern Portugal to Spain. The gross domestic product has registered negative variation rates since 2007. The unemployment rate is above 15 % in both regions.

During our research and analysis on the latest strategic documents from the institutions involved in cross-border cooperation in the European region, only the *Estructura empresarial conjunta en la eurorregión de Galicia–Norte de Portugal para el impulso y la captación de la inversión internacional* (henceforth ECICII)

seems to step towards joint efforts to attract inward investment to the region. Recently the ECICII (2012), an enterprise association aimed at attracting foreign investment to the region, presented a strategic memorandum where Galicia–Northern Portugal is characterised as the ‘Atlantic gateway to Europe’. After the interpretation of the strategic memorandum, we argue that there are some consistent lines to build up a cross-border branding strategy. At least there is awareness of its relevance to give visibility to the region as a whole. Although some of the reasons are redundant, the mentioned document *Ten reasons to invest in the Euroregion* (ECICII 2012) expresses the business sector ambitions to position the region as (following the source order):

1. An open door to the world

- *The Euroregion’s strategic geographical location makes of it the easiest gateway to connect to other world destinations.*

2. A well connected region by sea, land and air

- *Infrastructures that connect the region through air and land to any destination.*

3. Industrial estates for expansion

- *More than 6 million square metres of spaces available for industrial activities, trade and services that will continue generating wealth and employment.*

4. Institutional support

- *Growth and entrepreneurial development through financial instruments and public capital risk under especially favourable conditions.*

5. Talent

- *Seven universities. A wide offer in postgraduate education. Agreements between universities and the enterprises which capitalise knowledge and research.*

6. Innovation

- *The Euroregion has more than 30 technological and research centres, coordinated through two hubs of innovation (i.e. RetGalicia and Associação dos Centros de Empresa e Inovação Portugueses – BIC Northern Portugal).*

7. Outstanding quality of life

- *The Euroregion’s mild climate allows several possibilities to enjoy its unique natural background of coast and Atlantic forests.*

8. Sustainability

- *The Euroregion is watchfully committed (...) strategies and practices applied to every social, economic and environmental dimension.*

9. Progress

- *Creation of employment and economic growth based in the development of a new productive model.*

10. Solid representation of the main industrial sectors

- *The Euroregion's economy stands on basic (e.g. construction, agro-food), strategic (e.g. textile, tourism) and prospective sectors (e.g. health, knowledge-based economy).*

However, it was not possible to identify if this bashful attempt to position the region to the outside world has seen new developments. Could this initiative be seen as an active instrument to wake up regional minds to act towards a cross-border place-branding strategy? Are infrastructures the unique element to strengthen cross-border cooperation ties? Following this way of thinking, is an investment on the high-speed railway system between the main cities in each side of the border (Porto, Northern Portugal and Vigo, Galicia, Spain) able to enhance the position of the region and be the incentive for a future thinking in joint place-branding exercises? Or is a more intangible action also able to lift the region? These questions will remain unanswered as in-depth primary research is required to bring the interested parts to the discussion.

Discussing a Joint Cross-Border Place-Branding Strategy

In contemporary times of uncertainty and growing challenges that require spatial-economic transformation, the global competition between countries and regions is heating up. Being unknown or having a weak image becomes a serious handicap for a place.

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

The new type of cooperation focused on science, technology and strategic nanotechnology could be seen as a positive move for the cross-border region Galicia-Northern Portugal. With future thinking and making the right strategies in

spatial planning in both sides, a joint place-branding strategy could position and thus add value to the region. A cross-border place-branding strategy would require strong effort among the key regional actors.

From our analysis of the documents *Ten reasons to invest in the Euroregion* (ECICII 2012); the *Strategic Plan for Cooperation Galicia–Northern Portugal, 2007–2013* (GNP-EGTC 2007). Following the European Union strategy 2020 and the respective financial mechanisms 2014–2020, this strategic plan 2007–2013 has been updated to the Joint Investment Programme Galicia–Northern Portugal 2014–2020, see GNP-EGTC 2014); and the *European Territorial Cooperation – Building Bridges Between People*, published by the European Union (2011), we argue that there are windows of opportunity to develop joint cross-border branding exercises. It seems that there is political will; however, better coordination, organisation and cooperation could support decision-making towards a unique regional brand and the same regional promotional storyline.

A cross-border branding for Galicia–Northern Portugal could play an important role in facilitating/simplifying the communication that the region is planning, implementing structural changes, encouraging long-term strategic vision, providing integration among a range of sectoral and multi-spatial level plans (e.g. European, Spain, Portugal, NUTS II, NUTS III, Autonomous Community) and improving engagement with stakeholders and the community. It would be a long-term plan for earning and maintaining a distinctive, positive and competitive cross-border regional reputation, both within the region and around the world.

These aims could be achieved through a joint strategic spatial planning exercise at the cross-border level. A joint exercise able to harmonise and highlight cross-border innovation, creativity, authenticity, policy making, international relations and public diplomacy, investment and export promotion, tourism and cultural relations. Furthermore, collaboration and cooperation among inter-territorial unities offer the chance to achieve a higher quality of international promotion campaigns at lower costs for regional stakeholders, thus improving the cost-effectiveness of initiatives (Pasquinelli 2013).

Conclusions and the Way Forward

In a world with growing turbulence, complexity and uncertainty, where crisis is becoming the norm rather than the exception, strategic spatial planning is increasingly seen as a critical feature that reflects the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise without collapsing. In addition, the globalisation leads to processes involving a change in the perception of distance (the stretching of all kinds of social, cultural, political and economic relations across space and time). In fact, the search for strategic thinking in place branding to face global competition, cost-effectiveness and the emergence of virtual regions, due the complexity of networks and panacea of information communication technologies, becomes paramount. In addition, scarce means of funding at the European level, triggering transformation and change and, finally, the internationalisation of territories, are drivers of cross-

border branding and, at the same time, increase the demand for a resilient approach to resources management and long-term strategic visions. Moreover, the added competition creates a dispute for visibility and for recognition of the quality, differentiation and competitiveness of their territorial economic specialisation and institutional density as in European countries.

Since the 1990s many cities, especially in Europe, have used promotion policies to support their images and improve their competitive position. This process is especially noticeable in the contexts of globalisation, entrepreneurship and increased competition. Thus, within the frame of global competition, regions and cities engaged in inter-territorial cooperation initiatives aimed to enhance their competitiveness. According to the *Lisbon Strategy* (European Union 2000), in the *Europe 2020 strategy* (European Union 2010), there are conceptual frameworks for thinking in developing joint place-branding initiatives across member states. Objectives such as the development of joint economic, social and environmental cross-border activities geared towards regional territorial development also drive cross-border branding. Accordingly, we underline that joint cross-border place-branding initiative to the extended cross-border European region Galicia–Northern Portugal could be able to support and encourage:

- *Cross-border trade*
 - Facilitating the coalition of trade associations and unions
 - Sharing the participation in national and international trade fairs
 - Sharing trade facilities and joining forces for efficient resource management
- *Cross-border infra-structure developments*
 - Sharing facilities for cross-border mobility (e.g. railway networks connecting the main Galicia–Northern Portugal cities)
 - Improving virtual networks and communication technologies
- *Cross-border investment and tourism development*
 - Sharing facilities and social and human capital for joint investment. Promote synergies to support industrial production (e.g. exchanging know-how). Therefore, support economies of scale, sustainability, and efficient use of non-renewable resources
 - Taking advantage of the tourism potential in both sides of the border (e.g. the pilgrimage routes to *Santiago de Compostela*, River *Douro*, wine and gastronomy, promoting cross-border cultural touring)
 - Promoting cross-border *sensemaking* by taking advantage of the historical roots of Galicia and Northern Portugal to construct project orientations for the future (e.g. cultural events, historical recreations) – short-term actions embedded in long-term strategic visions
- *Cross-border research and development projects*
 - Sharing facilities to capitalise nanotechnology, bioscience and biomaterials research (e.g. enhance the regional role of the *International Iberian Nanotech-*

nology Laboratory; the 3B's Research Group – Biomaterials, Biodegradables and Biomimetics, both located in Braga, Northern Portugal; and other research centres in Galicia)

- Sharing facilities for utilisation of laboratories and best practices in academic research (e.g. agro-food, health, regenerative medicine, high-tech textile materials, nano-products and renewable energy)
- Sharing procedures and tools for talent attraction and retention
- *Cross-border entrepreneurship, employment and labour mobility*
 - Facilitating strategic network enterprise–university
 - Exploring synergies with other territories (i.e. EU and non-EU regions) to incentive start-up and spin-off developments.
 - Facilitating cross-border mobility of talented people to support knowledge creation and patent development
 - Facilitating entrepreneurship networks (e.g. cross-border workshops)

However, political decisions (both place branding and strategic spatial planning are inherently political activities) and administrative mechanisms are necessary. Designing a cross-border branding process by linking place branding and strategic spatial planning, in a context of permanent changes, uncertainty and desired transformations, within two distort approaches to spatial planning, regional development and government, is a challenge in itself and requires continuous research. In this regard, the EGTC and the strategic priorities of the *Europe 2020 strategy* (the EU's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth) could be the institutional, financial and organisational support to encourage a multi-package of objectives. Given these recommendations, a joint cross-border branding initiative could give visibility and build a coherent and respected storyline of the region, to the region and to the outside world. Shared facilities may bring together the key regional voices. However, we acknowledge that there will be difficulties and misalignments towards a common strategy, in consensus building towards strategic planning, and mutual agreement for decision-making arrangements.

A strategic spatial planning approach to cross-border place branding, supported by consistent image building, a strong vision and consensus building, will allow development of unique and distinct identities over geographic boundaries. In addition, this could be the key to bring together contradictory voices to develop and agree on shared visions for future regional development, contributing to job creation and general well-being of *Gallegos* and Portuguese citizens. A successful cross-border brand requires the right ideas, the right mind-set, the right people and the right strategy and resources at the right time. Designing a comprehensive cross-border branding strategy, responding to all the opportunities and satisfying all demands, and in a multi-scalar context, can be a tough task, however, not impossible.

This chapter has certain limitations. The arguments presented in this chapter were based on secondary research and analysis of strategic documents from multiple sources. These documents only reveal a unilateral discourse and they are not a unique regional oratory. Therefore there is a need to undertake primary research,

such as in-depth interviewing with regional actors from both sides of the border to understand their vision regarding a cross-border branding initiative and a strategic regional planning exercise.

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