

DRAW THE SIGNS OF POLIS

The brand as a political plan and historical plan

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ABSTRACT

The globalized world we live in today has brought new and greater demands to the cities and equally to regions and nations. Locals compete for an external investment, exports and tourism, through the promotion of its individual personality, cultural, historical and values, projecting what might be an idealized conception but immediately recognized by themselves [Olins03]. The city brand is a factor of affirmation, positioning and distinction, essential in this globalized world that is ours. The trend of people settling in the city makes them, in the current outlook, to face the great challenges of today and therefore, its political deciders that have today, new and more demanding goals of government, have assumed a crucial role to promote urban schedules, able to generate a profile of the city that makes it wanted [Giddens09]. The important contribution of Design to the conception and promotion of the city brand (through its visual representation) due to the fact of its methodological attitude, the position as a specialist in the cultural mediation between the local administration and the citizens – political design.

KEYWORDS

Brand, city, identity, territory, tradition.

4. INTRODUCTION

In a period when cities compete with each other, Design plays a key role in the design of its interfaces for cultural communication and mediation between administration and community. Understanding how the brand monitors and promotes effectively, the strategic communication of the city which represents, might mean its success in the global outlook of national and international affirmation.

The added value of Design in leadership of the exercise of creating identity and brand management of a city, is that this discipline has privileged tools of interpretation and signs conception, capable to associate three fundamental axes: 1. leadership (strategic governance); 2. Space (territorial identity); 3. People (cultural community). The Design competence as message interpreter and solution operator is enhanced by its high communicative values with all stakeholders. Therefore, from the first you should get sensitivity to invest and build a global strategy to the city's future; from the second, the subject for analysis interpretation and representation; and finally, communicate with the third, in order to raise recognition, pride and necessary sense of belonging.

In Portugal a vast majority of the cities have adopted a brand. Interested to analyze and clarify the actual national situation regarding to create strategy and managing its city brands, through the monitoring of reality and creating taxonomy of existing examples, draw a map of stocks and provide its managers and political deciders of tools that uniquely place them to evaluate the brands in practice and thus give them the critical capacity to improve, develop or eliminate.

5. THE BRANDS

Today we live, more than ever, in a World dominated by signs, identification signs, brands. By taking on this domain role, the brands have gone through an evolutionary process of representation and communication, until finally they were part of our experience as social beings. We are in some way, the reflection of the brands we consume. Hard to imagine today, the World without brands. They're everywhere and even places already have a brand.

The brands set a standard of quality and safety near the consumers. Somehow, it works as an internal mechanism for its protection. From this perspective, brands are promises of good quality products, helping costumers to repeat their successful choices and with no doubt [Mollerup97]. Thus, the use of brands today isn't a choice, but inevitability. A good brand will be the one that meets a set of qualities as *"notoriety; strength of positioning, concept, personality, precise and distinct image; strength of the signals recognized by the public; authority near that same public, esteem, perceived status and brand loyalty"* [Kapferer03].

The brand also works as an asset for organizations, adding value to the company's capital and conveys a certain image of the brand. There are many cases where the valuations of the symbolic assets (promises) present in the brands on the tangible of the organization itself.

[Coelho07] describes very briefly the essence of the evolution of the brands to the consumer: *"the brands began to be distinction factors, after having evolved claiming as differentiators, so today are, above all, seduction instruments"*.

6. CITY BRAND

The city brand is the result of the mature growth of the brand concept and equally the new and greater challenges, responsibilities and skills that the contemporary cities are facing. The though of market applied to cities is today a reality, that the cities, and naturally, its political deciders must know how to manage in favor of a strategic positioning that is distinctive from other candidate cities.

In the twenty-first century, brands have followed the trend of the late twentieth century expanding its involvement in social life. *"The brands management exceeded its commercial origins that the resulting impact is almost immeasurable in social and cultural terms. Extended to education, sports, fashion, travel, art, theatre, literature, to region, nation and almost all areas we can imagine"* [Olins03]

Do not think that the graphic representation of the cities is only a contribution of contemporaneity. Heraldry science, who was brought to Portugal in favor of cities with great accuracy, technique and art, from the 30's from the twentieth century [Langhans66], was an effort to standardize across the municipal seal that appealed to the semantic argument to assign individual symbology to each municipality. This symbology has migrated for too many city brands, understanding by city brand, the exercise identity after the municipal seal.

Today, most places use consciously the brand, or if they don't use it, they talk about the possibility of doing it, and generally aiming to the growth, the tourism, the business and the positive image. The concept of city, region or nation brand represents the contribute connection of several subjects, which have the common goal of creating a *"strong and recognized by all locals brand"* [Kotler cit in Sousa07].

3.1. Continuity and Change

The need for change isn't specific of the brands or city brands, it happens because the whole tradition is autophagy and therefore only exists while the ability to integrate the new and the different.

Design will have the task of retaining the reality of the city and work towards the sustained change, after understand what must change and what should remain untouched, in an evolution of continuity and change. *"Brand management is in this aspect, also the time management"*[Kapferer03].

The same value of the past can be represented in order to gain an identity of the future and the past. The distinct element remains in the way of the field of graphic and symbolic grammars which give a meaning to de significant. Thus, cities that gain competitive edge of the world are those that develop strategies in advance. Don't react, but propose. It's the role of who creates the graphical representation, making it new, unknown, but contemporary and able to bring a future dimension.

3.2. Symbolic Resources

The identity of a place is made of multiple factors, its history, main activities, personalities, monuments, landscapes, culture and also its brand. The brand of a city establishes a compromise between the legacy of the past, the statement in the present and the ambition for the future, in a constant search to be current and alive at the public's mind. Only this way can be linked the conception of the unit, generating a desirable sense of belonging.

[Augé92] defines the places, for affixing to non-places such as identity, relational and historical. The local brands differ here from branded products and services since *"it's not possible to change the history of a country, or its culture, nor its geography; it's only possible to change its economy"* beyond that *"we are all inter owners and consumers"* [Olins03]. Also contributes to state the differences, the fact that a brand is usually a unique idea, while the brand of a country, region or city is a very broad set of ideas, multiple natures that, in its identity assemblage come together as one

The diversity of symbolic resources used in city brands isn't something that creates awkwardness. In a semantic analysis of city brands in Portugal it's possible to frame the structures of meaning in legendary and mythological evocations, built, natural and cultural heritage and also abstract evocations such as life quality, youth and modernity.

3.3. Genuineness

While characterizing symbolically the city, pasting it attributes that overcome its own origins, the design contributes to the value creation. This value is also the value of persuasion of the market visit to the city, or to its adoption as a space to inhabit. These are the cities that show a bigger ability to attract people and creative activities, which offer greater future expectations, quality and comfort.

However, the brand of a city, region or nation *"will only succeed, in this new flat world, if it's a contemporary reflection, but genuine, of its people's soul"* [Coelho08]. The genuine appreciation is the appreciation of the truth of what the city's able to offer, denying the false arguments that sooner or later corrupt people's expectations.

The genuineness or the idea of genuineness can be statistical, the widespread popular recognition; material, result of the geographical location and territorial limits; or ideological when belongs to the collective subconscious and therefore is part of a place's culture.

3.4. The metaphor value

Propose the new, catalyze the unspoken and to form the commonplace are the Design goals in the demanding role to communicate visually to a city.

The brand can deliver an historical plan or a political plan and thus result in a strategy of registered past or imagined future. As a mobilization instrument is a symbolic resource valuable to social cohesion.

When the communication of a city makes us want it, we are faced with an emotional argument that we adopt and which is reportedly the proof of its genuineness. The metaphor value translates into pure emotion, irrationality, lust.

7. CONCLUSIONS

If it is true that the graphic grammars used in the current municipal brands may show a rhetorical affirmation of the city by the way it become differentiated, and also true that the freedom given to the representation, may show a double setback: the imposition of a centered power on the political decider for the city's characterization and a naïve approval of a perverse solution.

“At a time visually sophisticated, with competition increasing exponentially and the products/services become increasingly similar, the design continues to be the big differentiator. It has always been a very influential factor in the creation of differences and always will be” [Olins03]. The designer recognizes the creative ability to interpret the signs of the place and imagined place, representing them in genuine (true) way, memorable and innovative.

The city's image doesn't end in the brand that represents graphically, but will be essential a coordinated image and a conducive brand to the needs and ambitions in that same city and therefore, the city brand management on the twenty-first century will require high levels of political, administrative and technical competence [Olins03].

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