

EDITORIAL

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How to cite this editorial

Barreto, Ana Margarida, Mariutti, Fabiana, Freire, João R. & Brito, Nuno Correia de (2025). Editorial, Places, People and Partnerships: Literature's Indispensable Theoretical-Practical Trivium. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations*. VOL 15 N.º 2, TD2 – Thematic Dossier – “Place Branding and Public Diplomacy”. February 2025, pp. 8-12. <https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0125ED>.





PLACES, PEOPLE AND PARTNERSHIPS: LITERATURE'S INDISPENSABLE THEORETICAL-PRACTICAL TRIVIUM

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This special issue of the e-journal of International Relations, dedicated to scientific research from Ibero-American countries, is the result of an editorial partnership between researchers from Portugal and Brazil, with the support of the Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa and ICNOVA.

Studies on place branding and public diplomacy have evolved significantly over time, with a greater concentration of analyses focused on locations in Europe and Asia. Although the term 'public diplomacy' dates back to 1965 (coined by Edmund Gullion, see Cull, 2008), Anholt's introduction of the concept of 'place branding' in 1998 helped formalise the idea of managing a place's reputation using branding principles. Since then, these two fields have become intertwined in practice and knowledge.

Despite decades of existence, these concepts are still far from fully mature. Therefore, dossiers like this one help to promote conceptual alignment, where different perspectives coexist and places differ by location, size, culture, economy, politics, among other factors. Whatever the perspective, place branding and public diplomacy are related, as both aim to influence international perceptions. Although there are still few articles that integrate the two fields of knowledge, we believe that both areas can benefit and reinforce each other. The literature points precisely to some gaps and needs for theory building, such as developing new concepts and theories in the context of artificial intelligence; adapting models for small cities, towns and rural areas; reviewing the real positive impact that places have on people's lives; and analysing the role of places in mitigating the negative effects of climate change or eradicating poverty. After all, places have interesting histories, survive on resources and exist for people. The reality of each



place needs to be studied for its reputation to be properly perceived or for its space to be worth living, visiting, working, studying, undertaking, investing there, etc.

By lucky coincidence, this dossier is being published in the year that Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (PBPD) celebrates its 20th anniversary. The special two-decade edition of PBPD magazine invites reflection on the state of the art of Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (see Florek & Pamment, 2024). The guest authors analyse the evolution of the theme in the theoretical-methodological field, highlighting the need for greater theoretical consolidation of the concept of Place Branding and the building of bridges to the concept of Public Diplomacy. It is, however, two decades of research and innovative contributions to a field of knowledge that has reformulated the way countries, cities and regions think about themselves and how they present themselves to the world, evolving their actions towards an integrated model. Place brand management is currently consolidated as a scientific topic in academia, widely recognised by researchers from various fields and backed up by publications in different scientific journals.

The six articles chosen by authors from Brazil and Portugal for this special edition highlight the diversity and richness of place branding research - four articles on regions in Portugal and two articles on Brazil. With regard to the methodology used, qualitative studies prevail (four), followed by theoretical essays (two).

The first article, a theoretical essay, *A Theoretical Background for Place Branding in a Tourism Context*, explains how place branding works in a tourism context - destination branding. It acknowledges that the tourist's purchasing decision has some unique aspects that differ from more generic buyer behaviour. It is therefore argued that in order to understand how destination branding works, it is necessary to comprehend the specific characteristics of tourist behaviour.

In another theoretical essay, *From Smart Cities to Smart Territories: Co-operation as a Place Branding Strategy*, a reflection is presented on the use of the smart cities concept and its potential to be applied to wider territories, involving several municipalities. The concept of smart cities is expanded to include rural or hinterland territories, suggesting that this approach can bring considerable benefits to these regions, including greater integration, co-operation and sustainable development. *People and Planet First: Testing a Nuanced Approach to Place Branding in The Dão Wine Region* proposes an innovative and disruptive approach to place branding, suggesting that the focus should be on people and the planet, arguing that applying sustainable and socially responsible practices can be an effective way of building a strong place brand. This qualitative approach is tested in a Portuguese wine region, the Dão, demonstrating how social and environmental responsibility can contribute to strengthening a place's identity.

The article *Destinations, Experiences, and Places: The Role of Storytelling in Tourism Advertising Communication* analyses the role of storytelling in the communication of tourist destinations, based on an analysis of the 'Can't Skip Portugal' campaign, developed by the Turismo de Portugal. This qualitative research concludes that storytelling is an extremely effective communication tool, both for involving internal stakeholders and for increasing the efficiency of destinations' communication with their



target audiences. Storytelling, in this context, serves as an emotional link that connects the destination to the visitor, creating a more engaging and memorable image.

The article Management and Positioning of the Brazil Brand in the Latin American Context focuses on the development of a country brand for Brazil, with the aim of strengthening the country's image on the international stage. The study, which is qualitative in nature, uses secondary sources to construct a guiding document that can assist in the brand development process. The study argues that developing a strong brand for Brazil has the potential to attract more investment, tourists and boost exports, while at the same time improving the country's image in the Latin American and global context.

The Human Side of Places: Machine Learning and Scientific Knowledge, uncovers that when comparing the results of an artificial intelligence (AI) tool related to scientific knowledge, the realities or nuances of the human side of the place are considerably lacking, in terms of the creative thinking of sensory and imaginary perception when experiencing a city, region or country, namely, living, visiting, working, studying, undertaking, investing, immigrating there, etc. This qualitative study analyses the deliveries of a Large Language Models (LLM) platform together with the results of nine country-brand indices to explain Brazil's reputation abroad, as a proxy for interpretive content analysis.

The articles selected, with their diverse theoretical approaches and interpretive methodologies, make a significant contribution to understanding and advancing the field of place branding, offering new perspectives, timely insights and contemporary scenarios to solidify the literature. Places with their own cultures, people with peculiar creativities and partnerships between varied groups synthesise the tripod needed for theory and practice to come together in favour of academic advancement, scientific rigour and human prosperity. May it be a contribution to applicable knowledge in research on cities, regions and countries for future generations of researchers from Ibero-American countries and other nations.

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