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Instruments of Place Branding and Regional Dynamics: Guimarães as European Capital of Culture

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ABSTRACT

Place branding has emerged as a powerful instrument to create some uniqueness, and differentiate places, which could be linked to a general increase in competition between countries, regions and cities in order to draw the attention of stakeholders to invest and host events. Moreover, it has been implemented as a form of spatial planning and place management. The concept is thought to provide valuable tools for places to differentiate themselves, by managing their opportunities and transforming them into competitive advantages, thus gaining brand value and strengthening their global market position. Three following instruments have been explored as a competitive appeal: i) personality association ii) signature building, and iii) event hallmarking. Amongst others, cultural events are used to improve overall reputation and stimulate development by attracting visitors and capital. This paper focuses on the European Capital of Culture-Guimarães as the 2012 city host (ECC-2012). First, it attempts to clarify the contribution of place branding instruments, from the organization of cultural events to a branding strategy capable of enhancing development, and discuss the links between them. Secondly, to what extent the ECC-2012 (short-term intervention) is embedded in a longer-term strategy to create a new regional dynamic of the northwest region of Portugal. Is the ECC creating momentum? Is place branding (i.e. as a spatial planning instrument) used to foster this momentum?

Keywords: *European Capital of Culture, Guimarães, Instruments of Place Branding, Northwest of Portugal.*

INTRODUCTION

The place branding theory has seen some developments in the literature around the world and also some practical applications, but less attention has been given in Portugal, specially, by interpreting the concept, as place management and planning tool.

Places, have long felt a need to differentiate themselves from each other, to assert their individuality in pursuit of various economic, political, social and psychological objectives [1]. The adoption of a “marketing philosophy in order to meet operational and strategic goals of places have been well established both in practice and in theory” [2]. The concept is thought to provide valuable tools for places to differentiate themselves, by managing their opportunities and transforming them into competitive advantages, thus gaining brand value and strengthening their global market position. The places are seeking for distinctiveness to the outside world. Therefore, “the search for differentiation is certainly one of the major forces that push places towards the use of branding techniques” [3] and place branding instruments.

The branding process for places needs to be thought of as a continuous process interlinked with all marketing efforts and with the whole planning exercise [4]. As quoted in [5] place branding is an attempt to form a unique selling proposition that will secure visibility to the outside and reinforce local identity, achieving competitive advantage in order to increase inward investment and tourism, and also for achieving community development, and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion. Taking into account that places, as cities, regions and countries exist within competitive markets, branding those places can be seen as a management instrument and efficient tool in pursuit of objectives that relate to the management and spatial planning [see reference 5, 6 and 7]. From the diversity of the literature, place branding has been, studied from several perspectives, namely marketing, brand theory, spatial planning, tourism, governance and regional networks [8]. There has been increased interest in the practice of promoting urban

development, to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability as a tourism destination through the hosting of major events [9]. During the last twenty years, the number of sports and cultural events designed to attract visitors, tourists, investors to places has multiplied many times over [see the references 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15].

We are talking about the organization of international exhibitions (e.g. Expo's), crafts expositions, themed markets, festivals (e.g. Festival de Cannes), fairs (e.g. Geneva International Motor Show), sport events (e.g. Olympic games) and cultural events (e.g. European Capital of Culture). This approach offers to the host places, usually cities, the possibility of 'fast track' urban regeneration, a stimulus to economic growth, improved transport and cultural facilities, and enhanced global recognition and prestige [9].

Frist, the paper focuses on the European Capital of Culture-Guimarães as the 2012 city host (ECC-2012), not to explore the concepts or justifications but about how the event can contribute to enhance development, increase the city competitiveness and her brand value and community welfare. Secondly, by understanding that place branding could be integrated into a wider planning and management strategies, analyse if the ECC-2012 could be embedded in a longer-term strategy for the city and the northwest region of Portugal or is single year event. More than answers we intend to rise more questions to open doors for future discussions and to the theoretical knowledge related with place branding with the focus in the northwest region of Portugal.

Place Branding to Reach Economic Development and Competitiveness

Our time is characterised by constants political and economical reforms of which main objective is the increased competitiveness which request for proactive attitude and an integrated place branding strategy. Shape the future, based in the present attitudes and decisions. It is well know that places, as cities, have been implementing marketing and branding tools, because they are in an endless competition for attention, investments, inhabitants and tourists and the main competitor is no longer the city located a couple of kilometers away, but any city across the globe. Despite the hunting process for competitiveness, can the place branding be one key tool to achieve development? In the context of a urban space, could a place branding strategy be sustainable in terms of urban regeneration and regional dynamics?

The places are acquiring a key geopolitical importance in the shaping of worldwide flows and exchanges, playing a role in modern socio economic relations, within the framework of the change [16].

The *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* [17], underlined that the major economies in the world are slowing. Economic and financial issues, related with the sovereign debt and sustainability in the European Union are becoming increasingly widespread. Unemployment remains very high in many OECD economies, as Portugal [i.e. the unemployment rate in the end of 2011 was 14%, 18] and, ominously, long-term unemployment is becoming increasingly common. Emerging economies are still growing at a healthy pace, but their growth rates are also moderating. The international trade growth has weakened significantly and the global economy is not out of the woods [17].

According to [6] the obvious desire of practitioners is to use branding as a fast, cheap, effective and highly visual *panacea* to all problems and their everyday challenges. The place branding has the potential to be the key to unravel the unsolved issues, but does not work instantly or with fast results [6]. However, the places should interpret and understand branding as a process, integrated and to better achieve the goals based in one consistent and sustainable strategy.

Place branding comprises a sequential and comprehensive series of steps that acquire their meaning when implemented as a whole instead of partially and also where the cross-border cooperation and joint place projects, becomes more effective [6,19]. The cultural and technological evolutions, the economic and financial relations between places are aspects to consider in a dynamic regional and urban environment, which necessarily implies one strategy [20] or, as suggested by Kotler [21], explore the competitive advantage of the places.

Defining a strategy based on place branding theory has been implemented into the field of territories, which are adopting these approaches to promote what they have to offer in order to manage and compete more effectively [22].

Investigate place branding strategies can be an effective way to set up strong relations, unsolved issues and achieving competitive place advantage and development. Besides competing, there is a need to cooperate and establish strategic networks and gain an outstanding position in the market [22].

Defining place branding strategies involves, strategic analysis, which is the task of the planning and management. One key responsibility of the management is to decide which markets the place will want to compete in, and which are the sub-markets, international, national or regional level in the context where join the global competition 'game' is a challenge for place managers. This decision will then determine the necessary strategies and implementation programmes in the places [23].

The place branding techniques are widely recognised as to provide valuable tools for geographical areas in order to manage their opportunities and transform the strengths into competitive place advantages [19]. The places, with the implementation of one branding process and brand strategy definition, should earn a position in the mind of the place consumers and be a significant factor when consumers decide [24].

A number of planning instruments can be found to better develop the places. As example, cities are increasingly using cultural events to improve their image, stimulate urban development and attract visitors and investment [25]. Previous research has shown that marketing and tourism have pointed to the increasing use of events as a means to market places and major cities in particular [see the references 26, 27, 28, 29, 30], in some cases with success, in other cases with little impact.

Instruments of Place Branding: Event Hallmarking

Place branding attempts to create uniqueness and authenticity which differentiates one place from others [31]. The concept when well implemented, or when based in objectives, could supply a competitive brand value. According with Ashworth [6, 31]. A range of local planning instruments are widely used by places in order to pursuit local or regional objectives. There are three particular instruments favoured by place managers and to formulate place branding policies:

- i) Signature buildings;
- ii) Personality association.
- iii) Hallmark events.

Events are increasingly used in place marketing [32, 33] and in other contexts to spatial planners, urban managers and urban designers [31].

Many authors attribute the increased importance of event-led development to wider transformations in the global economy, such as post-Fordism and globalization. Getz [33] identify two main advantages of organizing events:

- i) To attract tourists and visitors, both national and international;
 - a. In this regarding, some authors as Ashworth [34] argue that most events attract no tourists, but visitors from the same place. Some events are organized by and for locals. So, some different visions in terms of the events impact.
 - b. Brown [35] underline that the relationship between events and tourism can be mutually beneficial, but rarely will this be possible without an interaction between event planning and destination planning. Moreover, events and tourism continue to be treated independently.
- ii) To capture attention and promote attractions and infrastructures.
 - a. Brown [35], also highlight that events are able to contribute to the attraction of tourists, media coverage and promote awareness of the place (where the event

takes place) for future visitation. However, most events are small, with a limited duration in time and create minor impacts, but not necessarily insignificant.

According to Getz [33], the event impact can be summarized in the following dimensions:

- i) Economic;
- ii) Social;
- iii) Cultural;
- iv) Political;
- v) Environmental.

Furthermore, places organise and sponsor temporary events in order to gain recognition that they exist but also to establish specific brand associations [31,36]. According to [37], event-based tourism is a vital component of programs to attract tourists. He emphasizes the importance of economic performance, and social, cultural, political, and environmental effects as tools to achieve development and competitive goals of a place.

The category of cultural and religious events includes a diverse collection of activities which are held for non-commercial reasons but which provide important contributions to the tourism industry of the region involved, even though it may be unfashionable to openly admit to this fact [38]. Cultural events have much more attention due the visibility and wide acceptability of cultural products as merit goods adding value and desirable brand attributes to a place [31]. One example of culture event takes place has been implemented around Europe Union member states and boarder countries by the support from the European Commission – European Capital of Culture. Is expected that the European Capital of Culture to regenerate urban spaces, raise their international reputation and enhance their image in the eyes of their inhabitants and potential visitors, create dynamic and vitality to their cultural life and boost tourism. Cultural events appeared to be the panacea for the city's challenge to integrate its cultural policy with social and economic development. As urban geographer [39] has shown, cultural events and festivals look very promising in this regard. However, to what extent cultural events have succeeded?

European Capital of Culture

More than forty cities have been designated as European Capitals of Culture. Athens was designated the first European Cultural Capital in 1985. The initiative has become one of the most prestigious and high-profile cultural events in Europe. Originally, the ECC event was geared to the European Council, later denominated European Union member-states, although non-EU

members such as Norway have since hosted the event (for example, in Bergen, 2000 or Istanbul, Turkey, 2010). From Athens to Glasgow, Stockholm to Genoa, Cracow to Porto, Rotterdam to Istanbul the event has rotated around the member-states of the European Union. According to the Culture Commissionaire of the European Commission (2012) up to 2010, cities from non-European Union countries were able to host the event (e.g. Istanbul, European Capital of Culture 2010), but, from 2011, only cities in EU countries are allowed to bear the title. Each year, two cities from two different Member States will be selected. The procedure for choosing a city starts around six years in advance. A group of experts in the cultural field will analyse the candidate cities must based in the role they have played in European culture, their links with Europe, their European identity. Also, the candidate cities must demonstrate the current involvement in European artistic and cultural life, alongside their own specific features. On the coming years, based on the Decision Number 1622, 2006, of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 [40]. Once designated, the preparations of the European Capitals of Culture are monitored.

The event was designed to:

- i) Highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures;
- ii) Celebrate the cultural ties that link Europeans together;
- iii) Bring people from different European countries into contact with each other's culture and promote mutual understanding;
- iv) Foster a feeling of European citizenship [41].

The candidate cities must elaborate and apply with a programme able to bring together local and European public. The city, in the words of the Decision 1622/2006/EC. The article 4 of Decision 1622/2006/EC also specifies that the programme must:

- i) Foster the participation of citizens living in the city and its surroundings and raise their interest as well as the interest of citizens from abroad;
- v) Be sustainable and be an integral part of the long-term cultural and social development of the city [41].

Our interpretation is that the nomination as European Capital of Culture should explore the culture activities of the city to the local, regional and national population and also to the potential visitors and future tourists from other countries. In that regarding the city host is intended to encourage cities to devise a programme with lasting effects a programme which impacts on the long-term development of the city. Some cases around the world did it, some others were far from that achievement.

According with [25] the development of the original event concept was also motivated by a wish to give the Community (later European Union, EU) an attractive image and pass a message of unity in diversity [42]. The event became an important aspect of EU policy to try bring together the EU member-states and their culture.

As case studies to do comparative analyses in this research we mentioned the cases of:

- i) 1994, Lisbon, Portugal;
- ii) 2001, Porto, Portugal and Rotterdam, Netherlands;
- iii) 2004, Genoa, Italy and Liverpool, United Kingdom.

These cities, as case studies are justified because of the geographical proximity in the case of Lisbon and Porto and also by the core literature on the topic.

The original European City of Culture (ECC) programme started in November 1983, during the first meeting of the EEC's culture ministers. Lisbon had initially been slotted as the 1996 City of Culture, Portuguese delegates endeavoring to combine the 20-year anniversary of the 1974 revolution with the ECC title. With the enthusiasm over Portugal's 1986 European integration. The Portuguese delegates to the EEC secured Lisbon's title as European Cultural Capital for 1994. The ECC Lisbon 1994 marked an important coming together of national and international agendas. It commemorated the Portuguese revolution while marking Portugal's cultural debut within the European Union and as European Capital of Culture [43].

In 2001, the city of Porto hosted the European Capital of Culture event. Communicated by the tag line - Porto 2001 a year-long programme was developed. Arts, cultural events and urban regeneration activities happened around the city. In 2012, Guimarães is the Portuguese city host of the European Capital of Culture, nominated based on the last Decision 1622/2006/EC which established the European Union action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019:

- i) 2012, Portugal and Slovenia;
- ii) 2013, France and Slovakia;
- iii) 2014, Sweden and Latvia;
- iv) 2015, Belgium and Czech Republic;
- v) 2016, Spain and Poland;
- vi) 2017, Denmark and Cyprus;
- vii) 2018, Netherlands and Malta;
- viii) 2019, Italy and Bulgaria;

By following the mentioned EU Decision and the programme presented by Portugal, Guimarães was nominated. The present research paper is an attempt to clarify the European Capital of Cultural as a event hallmarking as a tool for the place to obtain a wider recognition and to

establish brand associations [31, 36]. Special looking is given to Guimarães and some other examples we gathering from the literature.

European Capital of Culture – Guimarães 2012

The origin of the city of Guimarães goes back to the tenth century. Was in Guimarães, in 1128, that the Portuguese nation was founded and *Dom Afonso Henriques* was recognised as the first king of Portugal. The national castle and the statue of *Dom Afonso Henriques* are elements of the identity of the city. The UNESCO world heritage inscribed city centre of Guimarães, a traditional textile industry and know-how, might support a future branding strategy effort. Guimarães and the villages around have been identified as the main area where the cotton was transformed.

Guimarães is a city host of the European Union event – European Capital of Culture in parallel with the city of Maribor, Slovenia. The city will be the promoter of Europe's cultural diversity, revealing its creations and welcoming those from other countries. Guimarães 2012 European Capital of Culture is built on three goals:

- **Development of human capital** – Empower the local community with new human resources and professional expertise, by encouraging their proactive involvement in the European Capital of Culture programme/initiative;
- **Development of a creative economy** – Transform the city's economy, based on an industrial economic model, into an internationally competitive creative economy;
- **Generation of a new geography of the senses** – Transform a space that passively preserves memory into a space that constantly offers new and surprising cultural and creative experiences.

This is the third time that a Portuguese city has been designated with this title, First, with Lisbon 1994 and in 2001 was the city of Porto.

Figure 1: ECC Guimarães 2012 logo and pictures from Guimarães [44]

ECC Guimarães 2012 Identity	Guimarães National Castle	Dom Afonso Henriques Statue
		

The ECC Guimarães 2012 is coordinated by the *Fundação Cidade de Guimarães*. This institution is a collective body of public interest governed by private law of no prefixed duration, created and was constituted by the [45]. We underline the role of the organization to the period after the 2012 event:

- Management of the cultural legacy, the cultural facilities, owned by the municipality of Guimarães with the aim of promotion the culture, the creativity and its dissemination [46].

The importance of its cultural worth and investment in its heritage resulted in a network of high quality infrastructures and renovation of the historical centre.

The city of Guimarães as historic city and cultural tourism destination as the opportunity to enhance the image of the heritage in order to result in in the social, cultural and economic well-being of the city.

We may post the question about why European Capital of Culture and a place branding strategy? There are caveats, which dampen any belief that event hallmarking is a simple path to successful place branding. However, hallmark events in a isolated context are unlikely to have much impact upon a place brand [34]. The following discussion will attempt to some clarifications.

Discussion

Hallmark events have assumed a key role in international, national and regional tourism marketing strategies [36]. One of the goals of the mega or special events, as the European Capital of Culture is to provide the host community with an opportunity to secure high prominence in the tourism market place [see the references 38, 47, 48, 49]. Such events rely for their success on uniqueness, status, or timely significance to create interest and attract attention [49]. Cities are increasingly using cultural events to improve their image, stimulate urban development and attract visitors and investment [25].

The European Capital of Culture event is also attractive not only as a means of developing the cultural infrastructure of a city, but as an economic development tool and the means of enhancing the image of the city-host. Previous studies mentioned the impact of the ECC in their places and is fundamental for our study that overview:

- i) Athens hosted the event in 1985 and concentrated on big foreign names and ignored ancient Greek art;
- ii) Florence highlighted its own historical importance;
- iii) Amsterdam projected itself as a European art city;
- iv) Berlin was criticized for having an elitist approach [50].

The attribution of long term economic and social effects to one-off cultural events is questionable both on methodological and theoretical grounds [51].

In their study of Porto 2001, Santos [52] concluded that the event had not been as successful in attracting visitors as the 1994 Lisbon ECC event, but it had succeeded in widening the cultural audience for Porto. However, Porto 2001 invested far more than Rotterdam 2001, but obtained fewer benefits in terms of either image change or economic impact [25]. Sjøholt [42] identified common elements in the approaches adopted by the earlier host cities:

- i) Glasgow in 1990, an example of the 'infrastructural implementation' prototype;
- ii)

Brugge [53], mentioned that:

- i) In the Belgian city of Brugge (ECC in 2002), the major aims was to convince more day visitors to stay overnight, thereby increasing the economic impact of tourism. At the same time the event was organized to add elements of contemporary culture to the city.

Underlining the case of Rotterdam 2001 based in [25]:

- i) In Rotterdam, therefore, culture has long been a major theme of tourism marketing, and the general cultural policy has shifted away from the traditional Dutch model of decentralising and subsidising cultural resources [54].

Important for our research is underline the aims of the Rotterdam 2001 ECC organization. According with [25] the desire was enriching the cultural life and profile of Rotterdam, to compete more effectively with other 'second-tier cities' (e.g. as Barcelona, Frankfurt and Milan) in attracting tourists, investment and jobs. As a result of this cultural event-led strategy, Rotterdam recorded the highest event attendance growth rate of all Dutch cities in the 1990s, but many local visitors [25].

The question. The authorities in charge of Guimarães as European Capital of Culture (i.e. Municipality of Guimarães) planned the event in a long term development perspective, as Rotterdam?

Richards and Wilson [25] mentioned that Rotterdam developed a programme with the aims of stimulating internationally orientated culture, building the image of Rotterdam as a cultural festival and event city, and supporting the applied arts, such as architecture, design and photography.

The data collected by [25, 55] indicate that positive changes occurred in the image of Rotterdam, among residents and external audiences, at least immediately following the event. The general satisfaction of the stakeholders with the return on investment in the event. Thus, justified, particularly when compared with the results of the Porto 2001 ECC, which invested far more but obtained fewer benefits in terms of either image change or economic impact [25, 55]. We could not identify a place branding strategy by reading the literature related with Rotterdam ECC 2001, but the image of Rotterdam were strongly improved, after the event, and also associated with the city character, such as multicultural, working city, international and dynamic. Rotterdam ECC 2001 event has had a positive impact on the image of the city in the short term [25, 55].

The cases of Genoa European Capital of Cultural, 2004 and Liverpool European Capital of Cultural, 2008 mentioned that both cities used their European Capital of Cultural title as a tool for:

- i) Creating a long-awaited identity;
 - a. Both, Genoa and Liverpool had very strong identities even before the event.
- ii) Positioning themselves as centres of culture.

Genoa and Liverpool have used the European Capital of Cultural 2004 and 2008, respectively, as a 'trigger' to initiate their branding exercises and the image has been transferred to the city's image, as happened with Glasgow European Capital of Cultural 1990 [i.e. Glasgow is still known, at least at a UK level, as a city of culture, 56].

Most events, as the ECC are relatively small and have little lasting promotional impact and also limited impact upon a place brand. Our argument is that the ECC in Guimarães could be undertaken as effective instrument in a strategic policy and be a demonstration of a change regarding the future. **The ECC in Guimarães maybe as the potential to enhance the reputation of the city and the region, but for itself does not produce results, must be integrated in a wide place branding strategy.** Highlighting the words of Ashworth [31], in some cases the events have resulted in increasing brand recognition. One solitary instrument acting alone is rarely successful. Many more conventional place planning and management measures are essential for the success. While hallmark events, associated with more place branding instruments are integrated in a strategy or into a process then place branding becomes a valid and highly effective from of place management and to introduce a new place dynamic [31].

Conclusions

The purpose of this communication is to discuss the importance of Place Branding instruments as the organization of hallmarking events, like the European Capital of Culture as tool to create a regional dynamic and as a part of a long term strategy, by taking Guimarães as one of the two 2012 city host as a case study.

The ECC event is also attractive not only as a means of developing the cultural infrastructure of a city, but as an economic development tool all depends on the capacity to explore local synergies, and implement a regional dynamic by exchange information amongst actors and stockholders.

The effects of mega-events to the host place, as a city, in the long term, will benefit from the increased awareness and enhanced image, which will provide a stronger position and competitive advantage [57].

According with Ashworth [31] there are some success stories, where places have successfully used events branding (e.g. Niagara and Lake cities in Ontario, Canada). In both cases a cultural events branding offered a possible reorientation in terms of enhance the local economy and build a strong image. Another example comes from Stratford, a city on the Avon River in Perth County in Ontario, Canada. This city was characterized by the railway engineering and launch the annual Shakespeare festival [Stratford Shakespeare Festival, 31] wish had a strategically impact in the re-brand process of the city – city of engineering with a ‘blue-collar’ ethos to a city of culture on a continental scale [31].

Usually, the big cities that host the cultural festivals or mega-events takes good and future economic benefits, but a number of more modestly sized places have achieved notable successes [31]. Ashworth [31] clarified that the organization of events in itself are unlikely to introduce spectacular changes in places and produce a higher impact upon a place brand. The hallmark events are most effective as instruments in a strategic policy, often as demonstrations that a change in direction has already occurred and will be maintained through other policy instruments [31].

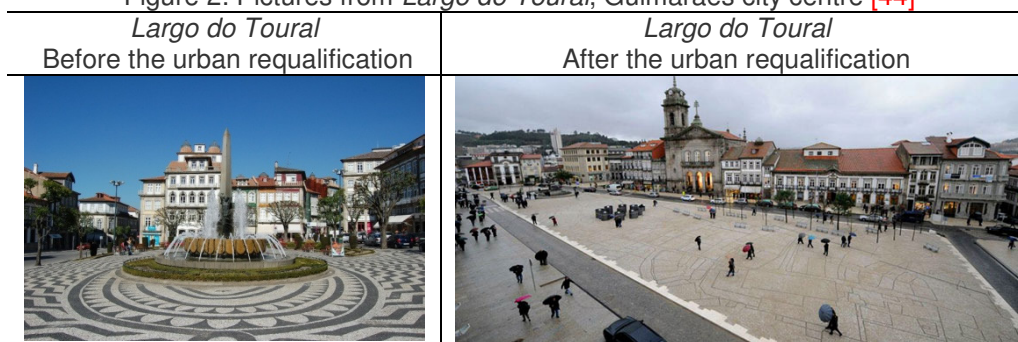
Some of the European Cities of Culture have seen a short impact in their brand recognition, despite the capability of the vent to enhance the image of the place, like in the case of Rotterdam. Anyway, in branding terms brand recognition alone, regardless of the attributes acquired, is worse than useless; it is counterproductive [31].

By reading the words of the organization of the Guimarães 2012 European Capital of Culture we underline the aims of the event:

- i) Promote the cultural diversity;
- ii) Development of the city and surrounding region;
- iii) Improve the quality of life by contributing to the city’s urban, social and economic renewal;
- iv) Promoting comprehensive access to culture and enhancing the region and its collective public heritage.

Is also objective of the Municipal Council of Guimarães implement the ambitious programme of urban regeneration, as the square – *Largo do Toural* (see pictures on the figure 2).

Figure 2: Pictures from *Largo do Toural*, Guimarães city centre [44]



The question to be explored in the future studies and after this communication is to understand the extent of the impact of the event in the city of Guimarães and whole northwest region. Was the event used as an opportunity to enhance the image of the city as a geographical place where people live, work and develop actives, as arts, culture sports? Could the event underpin a brand strategy to implement a new dynamic in the region?

Our desire with this communication is to contribute to the academic discussion around the place branding as a process and reinforcing the concept as a place management and planning tool by emphasizing the role in terms of developing and strengthening the competitiveness of regions against a backdrop of economic and social weaknesses. We have been analysing the strengths

and opportunities of the northwest region of Portugal, as the green tourism, in our previous work, and here with the culture related with the European Capital of Culture – Guimarães 2012 as part of a potential place branding strategy for the future.

This study has some limitations regarding the qualitative and quantitative information. We will present during the conference the latest information collected in the world wide web and widespread by the social media which are promoting the ECC-2012. Future developments, regarding the evolution of this research, will consider field work to enhance the quality of the information.

Before celebrating any success in modifying a city's image following a major cultural event, it is pertinent to ensure that more than just the overt, dominant representations of image are considered. The event planning should not be viewed as a strategy on its own. Rather, it must be built into a nation's or city's social and economic development plan as a whole. Most cities, even nations, fail to capture long-lasting benefits from events.

The organizations and institutions in charge of the events implementation and management the after event time, to achieve the success could incorporate a cohesive strategy that advances social and economic development, local passion and pride while building an international reputation. It is also critical to secure funding and support.

The ECC Guimarães 2012 should attempt to a future improvements in a regional dynamic of the northwest region of Portugal by avoiding the current mistake in viewing the special events only in terms of the time period when they happen for the consequences of the event carry forward.

This was an exploratory study. Therefore, further research should be undertaken to go one step forward on the above discussion. The analysis conducted in the study serves as a primary starting point for a more comprehensive empirical research, and further discussion of the use and definition of the terminology of place branding related with a new regional dynamic in the northwest region of Portugal should be explored. Additionally, research should consider using multi-method data collection, which may include surveys, focus groups and interviews with academics and the municipality undertaking place-branding research in order achieve our goals in terms of place branding strategy research in the northwest of Portugal.

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