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## BOOK REVIEW

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By Kavaratzis, M., Giovanardi, M., & Lichrou, M (Eds). (2017). *Inclusive place branding: critical perspectives on theory and practice*.

Critical views of place branding which focus on its unexplored consequences on the physical and social fabric of places are emerging. Place branding is now seen as an essentially political activity, serving hidden agendas and marginalizing social groups and is transitioning from a response to the competition between places to a truly inclusive and participatory process to support the advancement of both the economy and social fabric of places alike. Kavaratzis, Giovanardi and Lichrou present an edited much-needed volume introducing critical approaches to place branding to assist the development of inclusive models and frameworks in both theory and practice. The book explores the tensions inherent to the politics of place representation and place discourse, ultimately exposing the political nature of place branding, its power dynamics and particular interests. The contributions within argue for more responsible and socially-oriented approaches with greater stakeholder engagement, acknowledging the collective ownership of place identity in a form of activism in favor of residents' right to participate in decision-making affecting their places.

The book presents 14 chapters analysed here in chronological order. The *foreword* discusses how place branding is often a response to inter-place competition and discussed as if it operated in a vacuum, ignoring the needs of local communities, developing methods that are applied as quick-fix solutions regardless of geographical and socio-political contexts and calls for a careful consideration of the profound implications of place branding for societies. In Chapter 1, *Introduction*, the book critically engages with and problematizes the conventional wisdom of place branding and place marketing, challenging the idea of place-product based on the complexity and intangibility of the place construct and the influence of the managerial marketing management literature. Chapter 2, titled *Democracy in participatory place branding: a critical approach* problematizes the link between inclusiveness and consensus in participatory place branding and calls for more democratic, legitimate and truly inclusive long-term participatory models. Chapter 3, titled *Critical perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism: towards Indigenous-led approaches* discusses to what extent indigenous-led approaches to branding destinations contribute to increased inclusiveness. The authors conclude that this culturally-led approach is a positive model to foster interactions and understanding beyond marketing the destination. Chapter 4, *Place marketing for social inclusion*, introduces a comparative approach to the study of neighborhood and city place promotion questioning the value of place branding for place residents and antagonizes the current neo-liberal model of place development calling for increased levels of local democracy through participatory models of place branding. Chapter 5, *A service ecosystem approach to representing a place's unique brand* draws from a recent shift towards a service ecosystem perspective based on the Service Dominant Logic of marketing and reclaims the right for humans and their interactions to be placed at the heart of place brand communication processes that better represents the diversity and uniqueness of the sum of ecosystems forming place branding. Chapter 6 *Spaces of identity in the city: embracing the contradictions* illustrates the complexities of participation in place branding by observing the process of place identity formation through Lefebvre's production of space triad in an empirical study of a participatory place branding project on an Instagram account of a Swedish city. The study reveals how the tourist gaze offers an opportunity to improve certain aspects of the city and how tourists' imagery influenced how locals re-imagined their own city.

Chapter 7 *Revitalizing the damaged brand: place (re)-branding in post-Katrina New Orleans* highlights the absence of residents' participation and the interrelation between formal and informal branding efforts in times of image crisis and critically discusses the tensions between creating positive touristic experiences and the conflict and struggles embedded in local traditions and culture. Chapter 8 *Maps and tours as metaphors for conceptualizing urban place representation for marketing/branding purposes* employs de Certeau's conception of maps and tours to argue that top-down approaches to place branding follow a visual and static (material) conception of places whereas bottom-up approaches are based on the actual experience of place suggesting an inclusive approach grounded on a collective narrative of place users. Chapter 9 *Brand conformity in a food place context* compares the attempts of four Danish destinations to achieve distinct food-based brands to conclude that they engage in promotional 'monologues' instead of a 'relationship building dialogue', which hinders the development of authentic brands and argues for a broader approach to local cultural capital as a way forward. Chapter 10 *Stockholm: the narcissistic capital of Sweden* adopts an organizational and brand orientation perspective to conclude that single branding efforts by public administrations might result in 'trademarked imperialism' suggesting a relational brand orientation as an alternative, in line with the main argument in this book.

In chapter 11 the case in *A branding strangehold: the case of Florida's orange tie* shows the intentional and unintentional effects of business-oriented branding, focused in changing a place's image and suggests collaborative public management visual rhetoric to develop inclusive place branding strategies based on strong place identities. Chapter 12 *Place Branding as political research: from hidden agenda to a framework for analysis* offers a timely appraisal of the lack of critical political approaches to place branding and the need to observe place branding as a policy process, its ideology and politics of power in order to move beyond the dichotomy of production-consumption for the development of more inclusive arrangements. Chapter 13 presents the volume's conclusions and proposes an integrative agenda.

The editors problematize current inclusive place branding practices in light of the contributions towards a conceptualization of inclusive place branding. They suggest a provisional research agenda (comprised of three main dimensions: strategic, cultural and socio-political) based on empirical studies of the practical implications of the critical approaches suggested here, a more systematic effort to develop comparative studies that transcend cultural and institutional contexts and the importance of developing measurement frameworks beyond interpretivist (mainly qualitative) approaches. Chapter 14 offers a *Closing commentary: between brand utopias and lived experience* in which the role of markets in the social lives of places is questioned and the need for a critical research agenda based on the complex relationship between promoting and 'living' in a place based on the concepts of performance and performativity or the difference between utopias and lived experiences, illustrated by the case of Mexico's Day of the Dead Parade and its connection to a Hollywood blockbuster.

Although the reader might feel a certain lack of 'system' due to the multidisciplinary nature of the contributions in the book and despite the lack of a commonly agreed definition of 'inclusive place branding' as a common base, the editors and contributors successfully contextualize and even politicize the origins of this field of place branding and the consequences of its practices for places. They call for more democratic approaches to stakeholder engagement and thus contributing to further advancing the field. The volume successfully offers the reader a broad picture of international trends and pragmatic challenges to participation in place branding through a good mix of conceptual and case-based chapters introducing innovative theoretical frameworks and practical recommendations, along with establishing a research agenda to advance the field further. It will be a great contribution to the place branding literature and of interest to researchers, practitioners and advanced students of branding, critical marketing, critical tourism, planning and environmental design.

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