

## Article

# Unraveling Power Relations: An Analytical Matrix for Territorial Brands

Giovana Goretti Feijó Almeida 

CiTUR, Polytechnic University of Leiria, 2411-901 Leiria, Portugal; goretti.giovana@gmail.com

**Abstract:** Cities are complex entities, reflecting an intricate system of relationships intertwined over time, development processes, and territorial planning, sustainability and management. Within this network of interactions among people and territories, the presence of territorial brands stands out. The central research question focuses on how the construction of an analytical framework can reveal intertwined power relations in a territory represented by territorial brands. The aim of this study is to develop and apply a unique analytical matrix, designed to highlight, and analyze the intricate power relations in a territory defined by territorial brands. Urban-geography and cultural studies approaches were incorporated into the case study methodology. Findings from the study revealed multiple layers of intertwined power relations in the territory, where territorial brands play the role of legitimizing mechanisms for the discourses of social actors in the produced territory. The conclusion emphasizes the effectiveness of the “territorial brand in regional development” matrix (TBRD) in highlighting the layers of power relations, as well as highlighting the contradictions between the local and the global in the space produced and represented by territorial brands. This study not only contributes to more effective territorial management but also enhances the understanding of the interaction between brand and territory, emphasizing the influence of these dynamics on the configuration and representation of urban space, including sustainability issues and their associated challenges.

**Keywords:** territorial brand; regional development; analytical matrix; urban and cultural geography; power relations; cultural studies; social actors; territorial representation; place, urban studies; sustainability



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## 1. Introduction

Across time and space, territorial brands influence regional development, people, territory, and the environment, playing a crucial role in the formation of power structures. The presence of these brands creates a complex network of symbolic values, explored in cultural studies [1–3] and urban-territorial studies [4,5]. This multidisciplinary scenario highlights the lived territory [6] as a context for in-depth analysis, integrating the territorial brands [7–9]. Symbolic-cultural values and beliefs intersect with the urban imaginary [10], and shaping the space [5,11]. Perspectives on urban-territorial contexts, development processes, planning, and territorial management are intrinsically linked to territorial brands, directly or indirectly. Inquiry into the motivations behind these brands and their role in social interventions, as well as investigations into power structures and relations, is a crucial point. Thus, the construction of an analytical framework emerges as a tool capable of examining the relations that traverse territories, unveiling how and why these relations are translated into dynamics such as brands.

The study is focused on exploring central and interrelated elements present in the territorial brand. It is based on the premise that the study on “territorial brand as a cultural product within the scope of regional development” [9], by constituting an analytical framework, investigates the brand itself and how the territory is reflected in this brand.

Commencing with contested and strategically articulated identities, the analysis encompasses intertwined relations in a collectively produced, consumed, and experienced space. It involves mechanisms that legitimize dual territoriality (brand and social actors),

utilizing discourses present in singular brands (the territorial ones). This context encompasses symbolic uses and appropriations of the territory, intersected by various power relations present in the simplified dynamics of product brands.

Territory, as per Lefebvre [12], is a social and collective product, and the application of marketing dynamics requires adjustments to the territorial context. This study proposes a cultural-territorial analysis where culture is understood as a structure of symbolic power [1,13] that delimits the territory through the power relations of social actors [6], extending beyond its geographic delineation. In this context, there is a contestation for space related to the value and construction of meanings about the place [4,14–16], including the urban regeneration of historic centers, the territorial planning of cities and regions, as well as images of the territory [17].

Therefore, a question emerges in this study: how can the construction of an analytical matrix highlight overlaid power relations in a territory represented by territorial brands? This inquiry arises from the need to fill gaps in the study of relationships between brands and territories [7,9,18], especially in the analysis of territorial brands from the perspective of regional development. Thus, this research contributes to advancing interdisciplinary studies on urban studies, place branding, regional territorial development, communication, international relations, economics, territorial public policies, urban transformations, territorial management, territorial-cultural identity, urban and cultural geography, and related discussions.

Consequently, this study proposes to develop and apply an analytical framework, named “territorial brand in regional development” (TBRD), aimed at analyzing power relations in a territory represented by territorial brands. Conceived as an innovative tool, the TBRD assists in interpreting the different layers of power present in territories. It considers elements such as contested identities, legitimization mechanisms, and the interaction between brands and social actors, including the environmental context. By employing a cultural-territorial approach, this matrix aids in a deeper understanding of underlying dynamics, providing significant insights for the analysis of power relations in urban and regional contexts. It involves a debate that extends to the comprehension of relationships between brands and territories and the contradictory processes between the local and the global. In this dynamic, pacts and disputes related to public policies [19], power relations embedded in territorial brands [9], the production of a lived territory [6], and urban imaginaries [10] are identified. Hence, it is a comprehensive discussion that integrates and expands urban-territorial theories, place branding, and regional territorial development.

The justifications for this research include evidence from studies on brands and territories, positioning territorial brands in regional development as cultural artifacts and mechanisms for legitimizing the discourses of social actors [9]. These pieces of evidence strengthen and play a role in maintaining hegemonic culture [1], creating planned and intentional urban imaginaries [10]. It is argued that the contradictions of territories [4] under the approach of territorial brands in regional development [9] reveal hidden power relations [6] in the territory, discourses of social actors, and competitiveness among territories [7], placing the city on a global map of places [20]. Various territorial brands implemented since 1980 [9] share urban-cultural components, driving competitive and collaborative practices among cities, regions, and countries. It is assumed that what happens in the territory (internal and external forces) influences the territorial brand (including its creation or non-creation), and the discourse of the territorial brand influences territorial dynamics, production, and reputation. Thus, it is believed that the TBRD matrix, as an analytical model, contributes to investigating the relationships between brands and territories on multiple scales and dimensions, extending to various contemporary realities.

The first part of the article introduces the themes, objectives, problematization, and justifications of the research. Following this, it progresses to the state of the art and the theoretical framework adopted based on the studies of Almeida [9], who coined the concept of “territorial brand in regional development,” elucidating each element that comprised the quadrants of the TBRD matrix. The proposed matrix also addresses the production

process of the territorial brand, relating it to the territorial context of the empirically investigated cases. The subsequent sections delve into the research methodology, data analysis, functionality, and applicability of the mentioned matrix, leading to the main findings and discussions. Finally, the study's conclusion is summarized.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Territorial Brands in the Scope of Regional Development

Grounded in the concept proposed by Almeida [9], the theoretical framework of this study was chosen for establishing a direct connection with theories of regional development. Specifically, this concept frames the territorial brand as a cultural product that plays a crucial role in legitimizing the discourses of social actors within the territorial and regional context. Furthermore, it stands out for its uniqueness in addressing the intersection between territorial brand and theories of regional development.

The understanding of a "territorial brand in the scope of regional development" encompasses the creation of symbolic-territorial value through an articulation among social actors, marked by pacts and conflicts related to the diversity of territorial identities and their role as territorial assets. It is a concept that transcends capitalist logic by entering the realm of regional development, establishing significant symbolic connections with territories and regions. These connections refer to narratives about the territory and the strategies adopted for the construction of this specific type of brand [9].

According to Almeida's [9] emphasis, a territorial brand represents a multifaceted concept, encompassing an intentionally organized articulation between discursive, verbal, and visual elements. Additionally, it manifests in conflicts and pacts between territorial identities and hegemonic cultures [21,22]. This dynamic is understood as mechanisms or urban instruments involved in the production of the lived territory [6]. It is a theoretical approach that provides a solid foundation for the analysis of the relationships between territorial brands and regional development, highlighting the importance of the brand as an intrinsic element to the production of the territory and the construction of territorial identities.

### 2.2. Territorial Brand in Regional Development Matrix: TBRD

The comprehension of the territorial brand matrix in regional development, referred to as TBRD, arises from three distinct movements within the territory: the territory of brands, brands in the territory, and territory as a brand [18]. The first two movements delve into the concept of potentiation, investigating whether brands enhance territories or if it is the territories that enhance brands. While each separately addresses the brand and the territory, they reveal correlations between these two thematic elements.

The third movement proposes contemplation on the territory as a brand, distinct, however, from the marketing brand [18]. When constructing a territorial brand, strategies are developed, mobilizing a complex network of social actors. In this sense, territorial brands, in the context of regional development, are intrinsically linked to power relations and the construction of strategic narratives about territories, articulating values and beliefs [9] involved in the utilization and appropriation of the territory [4]. These narratives do not evolve organically over time but are planned according to the interests of social actors in relation to the territory they inhabit.

To comprehend the territorial brand from the perspective of regional and territorial development, it is essential to consider not only the tangibility of the territory but also its symbolic aspects [3,23], the spaces of articulation [24], and the diverse set of social actors [25,26]. In this context, the territorial brand transcends economic development, incorporating more comprehensive concepts. Almeida [9,27] emphasizes that creating a territorial brand implies an awareness of the complexity of three strategic processes: productive, creative, and strategic. The approach to the territorial brand highlights four macro elements: (1) brand, (2) territory, (3) strategic articulation, and (4) territorialities (social actors and the brand itself).

### 2.2.1. Brand

The concept of a brand encompasses any perceivable sign, whether visual or verbal [28]. Its fundamental functions include manufacturer identification, product quality validation [28], the construction of symbolic values [29], interaction with the consumer [30], and fluidity in the discourses of social actors [9]. It is important to note that the logo is just one facet of the brand, serving the role of graphically representing it [9].

A brand is composed of various elements that characterize it visually, such as colors, fonts, patterns, slogans, and a logo. Without these elements, the brand does not become perceptible, compromising the construction of its identity [31]. The brand identity is crafted by strategists, directing its image to consumers, and facilitating the encoding and decoding of specific messages [32], even when the act of consumption is not explicitly manifested [18].

For a brand to be recognized, strategies are adopted to make it familiar to the consumer, intending to stimulate consumption [33]. The brand's touchpoints represent the means of interaction with the consumer, encompassing aspects such as social media, packaging, website, price, and business cards [31]. The territoriality of the brand is linked to its power based on a symbolic arsenal [18], constructed under a planned visual and verbal system [34].

### 2.2.2. Strategic Connections

Strategic articulation represents an intentional maneuver that influences the worldview of social actors, impacting both the dynamics of the territory and within it [27]. This type of articulation is intrinsically linked to the interests of social actors in the production of the territory [4], and the brand plays a fundamental role in this process. Considering the brand as a cultural artifact [9], it draws upon hegemonic culture [1] to perpetuate the discourse of hegemony [35], exerting influence on the use and appropriation of the territory [4]. It is emphasized that culture has a political aspect that strategically contributes to the formation and transmission of a specific vision of the city [36] and its territories.

The decision to associate (or not) a brand with a territory also constitutes a strategy employed by social actors. This decision is far from a trivial discourse, as it transcends mere advertising or marketing endeavors [30], thereby rendering the brand ephemeral or temporary in nature [9]. The presence of territorial identities [23] and a discourse accepted by the diversity of social actors, or one that is naturalized within the territory, are intrinsic characteristics of territorial brands. Frequently, this discourse can engender pacts, disputes, or conflicts within the territory [9] across various geographical and socio-spatial scales.

Moreover, territorial brands are strategically embedded in the creative economy, being regarded as cultural alternatives for the transformation of urban space, as exemplified in the regeneration of historical city centers [37]. The strategic articulation aims at promoting the image of a territory, irrespective of its geographical scale. If, for instance, a city seeks cultural recognition, the brand will be intricately linked to cultural events, historical heritage, and unique artistic expressions of the city. It may also encompass the organization of annual festivals, support for local artists, and the incorporation of these cultural elements into the visual identity of the city.

### 2.2.3. Territory

According to Raffestin [6], territory is a space delimited by power relations among social actors, whether established or constantly under construction. Additionally, the territory is considered a conducive space for strategic articulations [24]. Evolving over time, the interests of social actors in the territory impact the production, use, and appropriation of this space [4,23]. Based on beliefs, the creation of narratives about territories [38] generates mental messages [31] transmitted through various languages, images, and representations. These narratives play a crucial role in building the territory's reputation [9], contributing to the formation of a symbolic-territorial market [18].

#### 2.2.4. Territorialities of Social Actors and Territorial Brands

The territorialities associated with the territorial brand transcend the typical circulation and scope of market brands, also incorporating the territorialities of social actors. They encompass identities, tourist attractions, cultural aspects, and the physical structure of the territory. This realm of symbolic-territorial consumption [9] empowers the territorial brand, being intrinsically related to the use and appropriation of the territory [4,23]. It results from how people experience and take ownership of this produced space [6].

One way to quantify the territorialities of the territorial brand is through urban rankings, which generate a reputation for the territory – whether positive or negative. To enable the discourse of the brands, a symbolic arsenal is elaborated specifically for each brand [18]. This arsenal is anchored in a set of values, myths, and ideas formulated by strategists, involving persuasive skills, and encompassing elements such as infrastructure and a sense of belonging [3]. By articulating ideas, possibilities, and meanings, combining them with narratives (emotional and/or rational) and sensory experiences, the message contained in the brand is potentiated, allowing its role to reach a more complex level.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Method

The methodology employed in this study follows Yin's [38] guidelines for the case study method and utilizes an integrated qualitative approach, combining elements from cultural studies and urban geography. A case study allows for a comparative and in-depth exploration of power dynamics in different contexts, even though it focuses on a single case. The research is grounded in a profound and holistic understanding of territorial brands, considering their recurrence since the 1980s. Thus, the methodology aids in unveiling the multiple layers of influence and interprets the complex power relations in a comprehensive manner.

The integration of the cultural studies approach allows for a profound analysis of the symbolic and discursive representations associated with each territorial brand, while the perspective of urban geography contributes to a comprehensive understanding of territorial dynamics. Conducted iteratively, the construction of the proposed analytical matrix incorporates four key elements identified in the theoretical framework: brand, territory, strategic articulations, and dual territorialities (social actors and brand). These elements were extracted from Almeida's [9] study, which considers territorial brands as cultural artifacts in regional development, embedding culture as a power structure. The matrix was designed to capture and organize macro and micro variables reflecting the diverse manifestations of power in the territory, encompassing both visible and symbolic dimensions of territorial brands.

#### 3.2. Research Phases

The research unfolded through six phases, following Yin's [38] guidelines, which focus on specific aspects of structuring and developing the investigated case study.

- (1) **Definition of Conceptual-Theoretical Structure:** In this initial phase, we mapped relevant literature and outlined fundamental propositions that guided the research.
- (2) **Case Planning:** The second phase involved detailed planning of the case, including the selection of units of analysis, definition of methods for data collection and analysis, development of the research protocol, and establishment of means for effective study control.
- (3) **Pilot Test:** The third phase encompassed conducting a pilot test to assess the application of procedures, verify the quality of collected data, and make necessary adjustments to the process.
- (4) **Data Collection and Recording:** The fourth phase focused on executing data collection according to the established protocol, recording pertinent information for subsequent analysis.

- (5) Data Analysis: The fifth phase was dedicated to a meticulous analysis of the collected data, applying the TBRD matrix to comprehend the dynamics and relationships present in the investigated case.
- (6) Research Report Generation: In the final phase, we crafted the research report, documenting obtained data, outlining theoretical implications, and reviewing the methodological structure to facilitate potential study replicabilities.

### 3.3. Data Collection

This study employed mixed qualitative techniques for data collection, incorporating document analysis, consultation of official city websites, semi-structured interviews, and direct observation. Interviews were conducted with representatives from various sectors of the social actors involved in territorial practices related to brands, providing crucial qualitative insights for the research.

Data were collected in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, chosen due to the presence of a set of territorial brands competing for different representations of the city.

#### 3.3.1. Brand Selection

The choice of Porto Alegre as the focus of this research was carefully considered, considering its historical context, the productive process of its territorial brands, and the strategies employed over time. As the capital, Porto Alegre developed a distinctive territorial brand aimed at differentiating its identity from that of the state. A detailed analysis of this brand is incorporated into the application of the proposed analytical matrix, allowing an understanding of the power relations between brands and territories.

#### 3.3.2. Sources of Evidence

Various sources of evidence were utilized in this study, including:

- Territorial brand of city (logo and visual materials publicly available).
- Press releases (published in newspapers and in the written, spoken and digital press).
- Semi-structured interviews with two representatives of the local government (mayor and city hall communications coordinator, both active at the time the city's brand was created) and the agency responsible for creating the brand (2 designers who created the aforementioned brand were interviewed).
- Facebook and Instagram pages of cities investigated.
- Official city website Porto Alegre.
- Historical-territorial context of Porto Alegre.
- Triad of processes (productive, strategic, and creative) of territorial brands.

The cited sources were chosen for their public accessibility and their provision of information for each of the four axes of the MTnoDR matrix (TBRD in English translation), which specifically analyzes the power structure of territorial brands. This way, there is a distinction between place branding (market-focused brand) and territorial brand (development-focused brand).

### 3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis was conducted systematically, employing the analytical matrix as a tool for the categorization and interpretation of territorial brands. A triangulation of methods and data sources was adopted to ensure the validity and reliability of the results.

Throughout the analysis process, a methodological protocol anchored in a set of guiding questions derived from regional development theories was utilized. These questions examined the categories of the four macro quadrants or axes of the TBRD matrix, establishing triangulation between them. The investigation delved into the power relations present in territories with territorial brands, incorporating perspectives from territorial-regional development, cultural studies, and urban geography.

The research emphasizes that in formulating the matrix, there is no recognition of an initial or final moment in this process, nor is there a hierarchy among the quadrants. Like a



circuit, the format of the quadrants adopts a dynamic of overlap between macro and micro, depending on the power structure that the brand sustains.

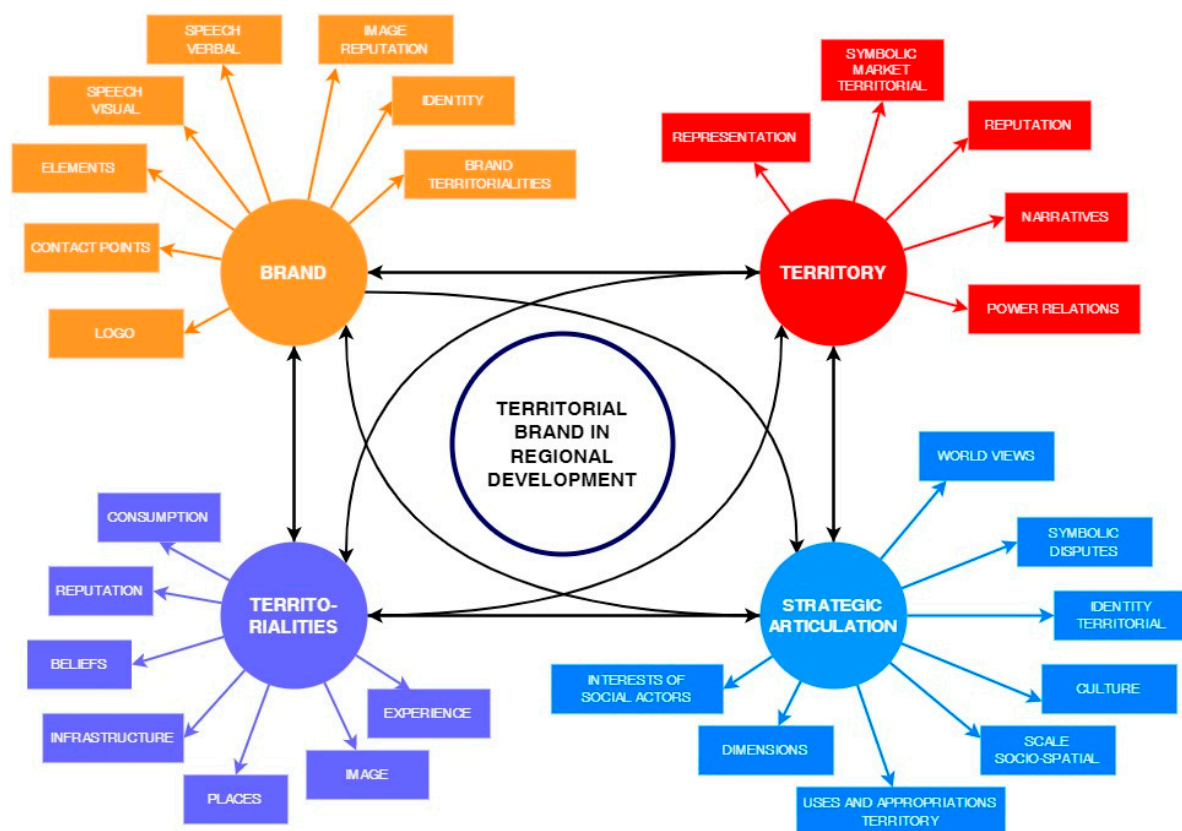
### 3.5. Research Period

The research development took place from January 2019 to January 2024, delving into theories related to territorial brand.

## 4. Proposal and Functionality of the TBRD Analytical Matrix

The TBRD matrix articulates four central elements, as outlined in Almeida's concept [9], arranged in quadrants or axes. This structure allows for the individual analysis (1 quadrant) or combined analysis (four quadrants) of a specific reality as a cultural artifact of the territory. Within the matrix context, the patterns of the "brand–territory–regional development" triad are investigated concerning socio-spatial and symbolic organization, examining the processes (productive, strategic, and creative) that lead a territory to being identified by a territorial brand. According to Feijó-de-Almeida [27], these brands also generate a representation and reputation for territories through a web of relationships that make them more competitive.

This proposal goes beyond merely describing the presence or absence of a brand in a specific space. The TBRD matrix enables more in-depth analyses, revealing layers of power relations in the territory, interwoven within a territorial brand, or highlighting these layers in the evolution or conflict among the social actors who create and deactivate them, activating other brands in their place. Each quadrant of the TBRD matrix also presents a set of micro quadrants, allowing for a detailed analysis of the relationships between brands and territory (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Methodological matrix of territorial brand in regional development – TBRD. Source: developed by the Author based on Almeida's study [9].

Thus, each quadrant depicted in Figure 1 includes between six and eight variables, referred to as micro quadrants, whose function is to unfold analytically the four macro quadrants of the TBRD matrix: brand, territory, strategic articulations, and territorialities. Therefore, the analytical matrix TBRD, developed based on Almeida's concept [9], proves to be a robust tool for the analysis of territorial brands considering regional development theories.

#### 4.1. Applicability of the TBRD Matrix

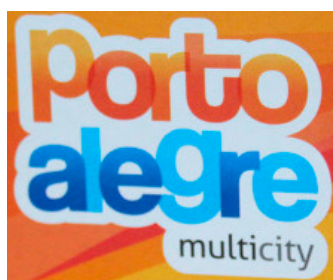
As highlighted by Almeida [9] (p.186), "The study of territorial brands allows us to interpret the dynamics of territories, their actors, strategies, uses, and (re)meanings, contributing to understanding the productive process of brands in the context of territorial and regional development." Thus, the application of the TBRD matrix is crucial to deepen the analysis of the territorial brand of Porto Alegre Multicity, unraveling its complexities through a specific analytical approach.

Structured in quadrants, macros, and micros, the TBRD matrix emerges as a tool capable of capturing territorial dynamics, agreements, disputes, and the intricate power relations embedded in the production of the territory. In the context of territorial brands in regional development, it is essential to understand that, beyond distinctive signs, brands also create an image of power, or more precisely, the power of dominant actors [6].

In this sense, the TBRD matrix not only analyzes brands as isolated elements but contextualizes them within a complex network of power relations, absorbing the discourses of the social actors involved. It goes beyond the surface, unfolding layers of overlapping power relations, allowing for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of power legitimization present in territorial brands. By exploring the territorial brand Porto Alegre Multicity with the TBRD Matrix, we seek to unveil how this brand becomes an intricate mechanism of power legitimization, traversed by discourses of social actors, agreements, disputes, and notably, a dual territoriality composed both by the brands and the actors themselves. This analytical approach provides a more holistic understanding of regional and territorial dynamics, highlighting the inherent complexity in the intersection between brands and power in regional-development processes.

#### 4.2. Porto Alegre Brand and City

The practical application of the TBRD Matrix in the city of Porto Alegre, focusing on the Porto Alegre Multicity brand (Figure 2), provided an in-depth analysis of the complex power relations engendered in this context.



**Figure 2.** Porto Alegre Multicity Brand. Source: Almeida [9].

The brand was conceived between 2012 and 2013, capitalizing on the global visibility of the 2014 FIFA World Cup, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The goal was to internationalize the territorialities of the brand, seeking acceptance not only locally but also among international social actors. The study pertains to the timeframe during which the city's brand was conceived, spanning from 2012 to 2013, capitalizing on the global visibility of the 2014 FIFA World Cup. It's noteworthy that the brand wasn't devised solely for the 2014 World Cup but rather to embody the ideology of its creators. However, by 2016, the brand began to wane in influence due to a lack of comprehension among public officials regarding



its management, which extends beyond mere logo usage. Hence, the study focuses on this specific timeframe due to the shifts and challenges encountered by the brand during this period.

In an attempt by the local public authorities to gain acceptance from various social actors, the private sector, and civil society, the territorialities of the brand evolved from a local to an international scope. Thus, the visual-verbal discourse of the brand was grounded in the ethnic plurality that contributed to the formation of the city. The ensemble of social actors who created the brand used the concept of multiculturalism in the slogan, referring to the multiple ethnicities present in the Porto Alegre territory, deviating from Hall's [3] concept of multiculturalism.

The graphic elements of the brand referenced various parts of the city, particularly the historically and touristically central zones such as Parque Farroupilha (Redenção), Usina do Gasômetro, Fundação Iberê Camargo, Mercado Público, Estátua do Laçador, and the waterfront of the Guaíba River. Additionally, the brand's logo and its advertising campaign glorified these locations situated in the central areas of the city. Furthermore, the brand's image conveyed the plurality of territorial identities, distancing itself from the hegemonic Gaúcho identity, and establishing connections beyond the territory, notably with the internationally recognized Fundação Iberê Camargo.

The brand's touchpoints included urban furniture installed along the route from the city center to the stadium, where the 2014 World Cup matches took place, and international promotion materials (Multicity kit). Even after the World Cup, this furniture remained in place, now associated with another brand, Caminho do Gol. An identity for the Multicity brand was crafted through a promotional kit comprising a box, two postcards, and a booklet. In this kit, one of the symbols of Gaúcho culture, the Estátua do Laçador, was not initially activated. However, during the campaign, the Laçador illustration was incorporated into the advertising pieces on Porto Alegre's urban furniture.

As the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre boasts a rich history, dating back to its establishment in 1772, culminating in its status as a metropolis. The city serves as a cultural embodiment of the gaúcho heritage and, over time, has been a stage for power dynamics that have shaped its local, regional, and international identity. Throughout its history, Porto Alegre has been marked by both symbolic and tangible disputes, thereby influencing its present reputation and identity. While the brand narratives underscore the plurality of identities that have contributed to the city's foundation, the visual identity of "Multicity" has predominantly focused on generic tourist and cultural elements, lacking a connection with the local ethnicities. Despite the brand's attempt to highlight the city's ethnic diversity through the adoption of multiculturalism, it has not succeeded in creating a distinct identity separate from the dominant gaúcho culture. The revered symbol of the gaúchos, the Laçador Statue, was later incorporated into the brand campaign, albeit in a forced manner.

The strategic articulation of the city and the "Multicity" brand unveiled various tactics and maneuvers, including development strategies that shaped the social and cultural space of Porto Alegre. One of these strategies aimed to positively redefine the figure of the "gaúcho," linking it to the Farroupilha Revolution. This historical 10-year war solidified Gaúcho culture, which has been hegemonic ever since. In the symbolic struggle to create a brand representing a multicultural identity, "Multicity" lost momentum and had to forcibly incorporate a symbol representing the "gaúcho," the Laçador Statue. These symbolic strategies highlight the power play and worldviews of social actors in the production of Porto Alegre, compelling it to engage with diverse social groups and the identity of the state.

Another contemporary strategy was the city's participation in an urban brand ranking in 2013, where Porto Alegre ranked seventh, with a value of BRL 20.8 billion, representing 48% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This ranking contributed to "Multicity" gaining prominence during the 2014 World Cup, expanding its reach from local to global. The city's history revealed interests, uses, and appropriations of the territory, marked by wars,

political pacts, and symbolic disputes. The worldviews of social actors evolved over time, reflecting interests in the production, use, and appropriation of the territory, with the strategy of using brands as a representation of this process (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Territorial brands of Porto Alegre from 1989 to 2018. Source: Almeida [9].

Thus, a participatory, social, citizen-focused Porto Alegre emerged, intended to be appreciated, celebrated, and preserved, embracing LGBT diversity, multiculturalism, and representing “all peoples and all colors”. Each of these facets of “Porto Alegre” refers to specific sets of forces, both internal and external, intertwining with other territorial dynamics on various scales and dimensions. The cultural focus of “Multicity” incorporated graphic elements from previous brands into its logo, as well as distinctive physical and symbolic features of the city. For example, the sunset of Porto Alegre and some of its tourist attractions stand out.

These are realities that delineate two distinct forms of territoriality: the territoriality of the brand and the territoriality of social actors. The territoriality of social actors is intrinsically linked to the uses and appropriations of the territory, involving the consumption of this space through the experiences promised by a brand, aiming to experience a multicultural city. The adjective “multicultural” gives the city a reputation that dissociates it from the hegemonic identity of the State, indirectly alluding to the city’s previous brands. This approach is based on a set of beliefs, traditions, and infrastructures, such as the Centers of Gaúcho Traditions (CTGs) and monuments, centered on Gaúcho culture, to create an image of a strong and courageous people that exalts the qualities of the state and, consequently, of the city.

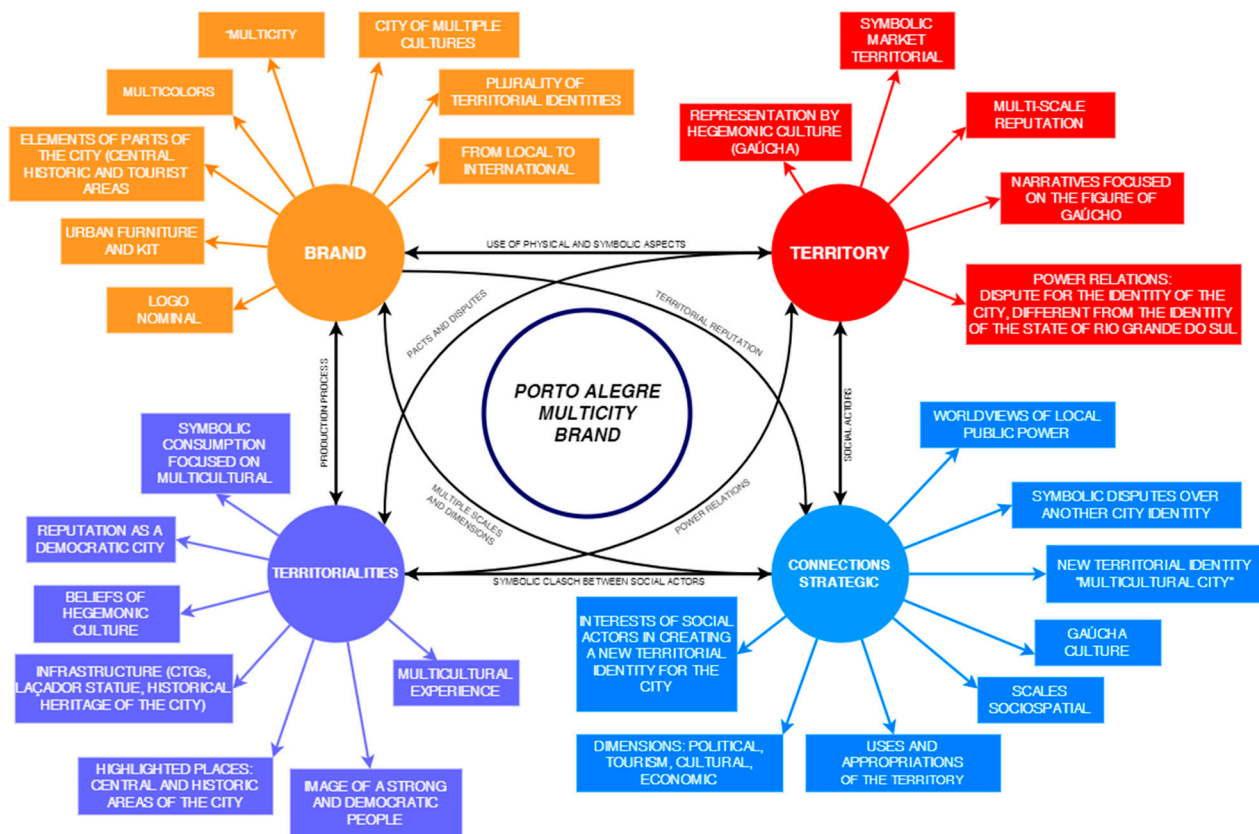
The territorialities of the brand encompass the power of that brand in multiple dimensions. Thus, the locations marked in “Multicity” refer to the historical and cultural context of the city, represented partially and graphically in the verbal-visual logo of the brand. More than a mere visual expression, “Multicity” is a discursive brand that proposed an alternative identity for the city, distinct from the identity of the State. In this symbolic struggle, “Multicity” lost strength, being discontinued in 2016 by the same government that created it, revealing a lack of understanding of the complexity of managing a territorial brand, specifically in the realm of place branding.

The application of the TBRD matrix in Porto Alegre revealed overlapping layers of power relations inherent in the Multicity brand. By delving into the theoretical framework of territorial brands and their relationship with the represented territory, the analysis of Porto Alegre Multicity using this methodological matrix enabled an integrated approach, linking macro and micro quadrants. This allowed analyses at different levels, contributing to a more comprehensive and continuous understanding of the process at hand.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The adjectives associated with city names, in the context of territorial brands in regional development, often lead to simplifications of the territory due to the dynamics of brand formats. When the brand of the city of Porto Alegre self-identifies as multicultural, it is not necessarily referring to the specific concept of multiculturalism as defined by Hall [3]. According to Hall [3], multiculturalism is an approach to observe and interpret the social

and cultural processes of a specific territory. In the case of Multicity, the term multicultural was used to address the diverse ethnicities that contributed to the formation of the city, although it does not directly represent the ethnicities present in contemporary times. Thus, by applying the TBRD matrix to the Porto Alegre Multicity brand (Figure 1), various layers of power relations and articulation strategies that influenced local urban transformations became evident (Figure 4).



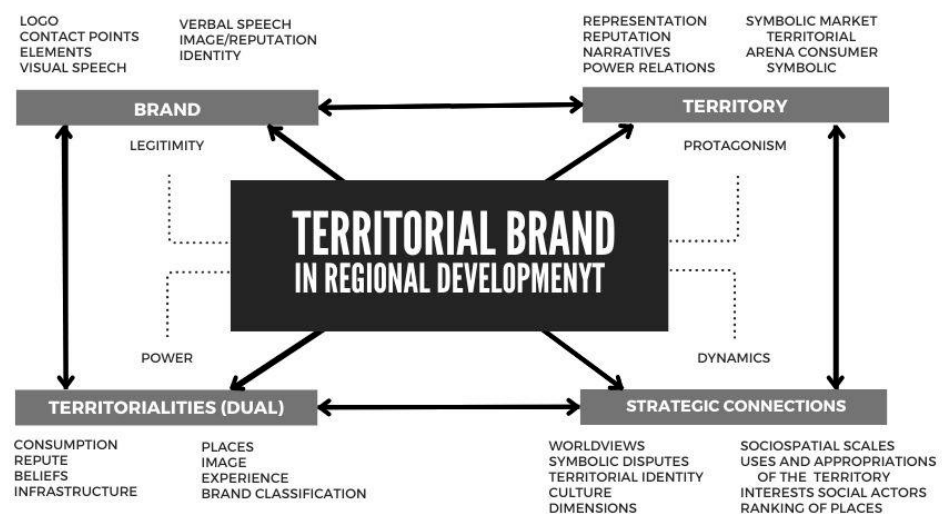
**Figure 4.** Methodological matrix TBRD applied to the Porto Alegre brand. Source: Author (2024).

Initially, during the analysis of Multicity, it was believed that the economic relationship (the most evident layer) drove the brand, as its launch coincided with the 2014 FIFA World Cup held in Porto Alegre. However, as we delved into the productive process of Multicity, another layer revealed itself: the cultural layer, related to the diverse ethnicities that contributed to the city's formation. The local government, the main actor in creating the brand in 2012, questioned the dominance of the hegemonic culture (Gaucha) over other cultures present in Porto Alegre, such as Arabs, Italians, Germans, Spaniards, and Afro-descendants. Thus, the brand, driven by a global sporting event, sought to highlight the cultural diversity of this territory, using the adjective multicultural adapted to the format of a brand.

The advancement in the study through the methodological matrix revealed an additional layer of power relations that went unnoticed in the Multicity brand: politics. This brand provided the local government with the opportunity to discuss why the territorial identity of Porto Alegre remained linked to the same territorial identity as the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Upon discovering the political layer of the brand, the strategic alignment of forces internal and external to the Porto Alegre territory became evident, resulting in a political clash between the capital and the state. The aim of this clash was to preserve the hegemonic territorial identity of the state, dissociating it from the territorial identity of the capital (Porto Alegre) and giving it a more "plural," more multicultural identity (Multicity).

The proposed methodological matrix highlighted a complex set of relationships between brands and territories, revealing several overlapping layers of power that conceal other dimensions. The four macro quadrants of the TBRD matrix revealed a political-cultural clash, with an emphasis on tourism associated with economic development. In addition to the economic and touristic layers, more visible in the Multicity brand and strategies, a cultural layer emerged that underpinned the advertising campaign. However, a hidden layer was identified, the political layer, which triggered a political conflict over the distinction of Porto Alegre's territorial identity in relation to the state's identity. This conflict was driven by the public authorities, which since 2009 sought to create a more democratic identity for the city, overcoming the dominance of a single culture, the hegemonic one. Only in 2012, with the proposal for Porto Alegre to be a host city for the 2014 World Cup, did this intention gain strength. However, the attempt to detach the city's identity from the state's identity was unsuccessful, requiring the forced inclusion of one of the symbols of Gaúcho culture, the statue of the Laçador.

In 2016, the government that originated Multicity deactivated it, an unusual action. However, the creation, maintenance, and deactivation of territorial brands over time are part of the process involving the power relations of these brands. Furthermore, the subsequent government of Porto Alegre did not fully adopt Multicity, replacing its name with Caminho do Gol (another brand created at the time that symbolically competed with Multicity). However, the graphic elements and urban furniture of Multicity remained in the "new" brand. This indicates that the idea of a multicultural city was introduced but has not yet managed to symbolically compete with the hegemonic identity of the state, reflected in its capital, Porto Alegre. Thus, the TBRD matrix reveals, in addition to its quadrants, four underlying connections: protagonism, legitimacy, power, and dynamics (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Subagent connections to the TBRD matrix. Source: developed by the Author (2024).

These identified connections refer to each of the axes of the TBRD matrix and its micro variables. It is not a new matrix but another way of understanding Almeida's theory [18] about "territorial brands as a cultural artifact of regional development". With this perception, it is understood that territorial brands are more than simple logos (graphic representations of brands) applied to territories; they are cunning strategies of social actors to legitimize their ideological discourses. In the process of discursive legitimation facilitated by the territorial brand, the territory gains protagonism, often strategically concealing social actors as subjects of action. This occurs when, for example, it is stated that "the city" aspires to be "multicultural" or any other interest, even though the city cannot be the subject of action as it is not a human being. With this artifice, social actors create dynamics that generate convenient interconnections to realize their interests in the territory. In doing so,

power relations intertwine with social practices and often go unnoticed, although they are present.

The TBRD matrix plays a crucial role in facilitating the identification of power relations associated with the creation, maintenance, and even deactivation of territorial brands. It is essential to understand that when deactivating a territorial brand, a new one is often activated in its place, with new interests and frequently involving a new set of social actors. Therefore, even though Multicity was deactivated in 2016 by the same government that created it, this is not a unique case but rather a recurring phenomenon in various other territorial brands, including those with long-term existence.

This study, while focusing on investigating the case of the Multicity brand, extended its analyses to other brands through the application of the TBRD matrix during the construction and applicability phase of this matrix. This approach allows for the replication of the study in relation to other brands and contexts. However, the choice to dedicate the study to a specific case was motivated by the complexity of interdisciplinary discussions involved in the productive process of a territorial brand. The pioneering work of Almeida [9], addressing territorial brands from the theories of regional development, gave rise to a new theory in this field, culminating in the creation of the TBRD matrix.

## 6. Conclusions

The TBRD matrix, conceived as an analytical protocol, proved to be an effective tool for exploring the complex relationships between territorial brands and the territories they represent. This study confirmed the premise that events in the territory exert a significant influence on shaping territorial brands over time and space, during their processes of development and territorial management. The analysis extended to various scales and dimensions, encompassing realities beyond the specific case studied.

The proposed objective was fully met, as the TBRD matrix provided a comprehensive understanding of the power relations present in the territory, arranged in overlapping layers, some consolidated over time and others in the process of construction. These relations were identified as symbolically incorporated elements in the territorial brand.

### 6.1. Main Findings

The results highlighted the overlap of layers of power relations in the territory, facilitated by territorial brands, which anchor themselves in specific parts of a city's (or another scale's) territory, without covering all territories of the city, state, region, or country. The analysis of the evolution of territorial brands in a specific territory revealed overlapping layers that, when confronted with territorial reality, exposed the discourses of various sets of social actors, which transform over time.

This research addressed the relationship between brands and territories in the context of regional development [9], proposing the application of a specific analytical matrix (TBRD). When applied to an individual reality or a set of realities (city, region, and country), the matrix highlights the contradictory processes between the local and the global that occur in the territory, produced by sets of social actors who adopt different approaches in the production of lived space.

Considering competitiveness and reputation in territories, territorial brands can be understood as mechanisms for legitimizing symbolic discourses, creating a planned and intentional (urban and territorial) imaginary. This may not always correspond to reality but reflects the worldview of social actors in the competition and appropriation of the territory. Thus, the territory represented by territorial brands assumes a certain protagonism as the subject of an action.

### 6.2. Contributions

The contributions of this research are significant in deepening the understanding of the relationships between brand and territory(ies), developing the concept of territorial brand in the context of regional development, and expanding the theoretical framework



surrounding brand-territory-regional development. For the city of Porto Alegre, public administrators, and territorial brand strategists, the TBRD matrix represents an opportunity for insights into the set of relationships present in the territory, extending to regions and the country.

It is important to emphasize that the study is not limited to the specific reality of Porto Alegre but provides theoretical insights into the symbolic meanings of structures and power relations generated by territorial brands in the context of regional development, involving territorial management. Thus, the research can be generalized to other empirical realities, investigating the power relations of social actors in a geographical-territorial delimitation that uses the strategy of a territorial brand. The TBRD matrix exposes the dynamics of strategies adopted by social actors in the production, use, and appropriation of the territory, regardless of its geographical scale. The case analysis of Porto Alegre allows for examining the layers of overlapping power relations in that territory, aligning with Almeida's [9] perspective that the territorial brand is a cultural artifact and a result of the dynamics of the territory in productive, strategic, and creative processes.

This research can be considered a complement to Almeida's [9] studies, confirming the existence of power relations through territorial brands. However, it differs by describing and analyzing different levels of overlapping power layers, strategically articulated by social actors, using territorial brands as mechanisms to legitimize the discourses of a particular set of social actors. This approach acknowledges the presence of power relations in territorial brands but highlights their arrangement in overlapping layers, some visible and others intentionally hidden. The study also contributes to the understanding of interactions between people (social actors), place (territory), and the environment, using appropriate methods, introducing the novelty of a matrix that explores the nuances of power relations through territorial brands.

### 6.3. Implications

#### 6.3.1. Theoretical

The study contributes to the expansion of understanding about territorial brands, highlighting them not only as graphic representations but as cultural artifacts that reflect complex dynamics of power, the legitimation of discourses, and the production of territorial meanings. The application of the TBRD matrix allows for a deeper analysis of the relationships between brand and territory in the context of regional development, providing a theoretical foundation to understand how territorial brands are linked to the productive, strategic, and creative processes of the territory.

#### 6.3.2. Social

By highlighting the underlying layers of power in territorial brands, the study draws attention to the social construction of territorial identities, showing how different social actors seek to influence and shape these identities according to their interests. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the symbolic struggle that takes place in the creation and management of territorial brands. This can raise awareness in society regarding the symbolic implications of brands and their connections to local power and politics.

#### 6.3.3. Practical

Public officials and territorial brand strategists can benefit from the TBRD matrix as a practical tool to understand the dynamics and power relations involved in the creation and management of territorial brands. This can inform strategies that are more aligned with territorial and social realities. The analysis of power layers can empower decision-makers to consider more deeply the social and cultural implications when developing, maintaining, or deactivating territorial brands. This can result in more informed decisions that align with community interests. The study can stimulate public discourse on the construction of territorial identities, leading to more conscious and active participation by society in defining the image and identity of their territories.

#### 6.4. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The limitations of this research are related to the number of territories investigated, indicating the need for future research to expand the possibilities of the proposed matrix. From this study, new lines of investigation may arise, such as the analysis of territorial interventions through territorial brands from the perspective of territorial-regional development. As a suggestion for future research, the application of the TBRD matrix in multiple cases is proposed to identify similarities and differences between the power layers present in territorial brands. Furthermore, the matrix can be used as a practical tool for managers, providing a more comprehensive and effective assessment of the power dynamics involved in these initiatives.

#### 6.5. Final Considerations

In conclusion, it is reaffirmed that the TBRD matrix proves to be appropriate for highlighting and understanding the overlap of layers of power relations in the territory, as well as the local and global contradictions in the space shaped and represented by territorial brands, extending to socioterritorial interventions. Furthermore, the understanding of the relationship between brand and territory is broadened, providing insights for a more effective territorial management of these brands. The research not only reinforces the importance of brands as indicators of power but also highlights their potential to shape and disseminate ideologies among the various social actors present in the territory.

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