5th Annual Conference

International Place Branding Association

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Book of Abstracts
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Public Diplomacy, Place Branding, and Refugee Settlement

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Abstract

Background
Nowadays, not only countries but also cities and regions communicate directly with residents in other countries using public diplomacy. Public diplomacy includes all official efforts to convince targeted sectors of foreign opinion to support or tolerate the strategic objectives of the government of a state, region or city. By branding your place to residents in other countries, you can make your place an attractive place to move to. On the other hand, you can also demolish your place brand reputation among other target groups and stakeholders.

Aim
This paper aims at discussing the role of public diplomacy in place branding for attracting new residents. We will focus on refugees. Once the refugees have obtained the right to stay in Sweden, they have the right to settle down wherever they want. However, they do not settle down in different parts of Sweden by random, but as a response to municipal public diplomacy communication strategies in branding places.

Design
We use an exploratory case study design to discuss how the two cities Borlänge and Malmö work with public diplomacy and place branding

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in attracting refugees to settle down in these cities. Both cities relied on immigrant labour but entered a painful deindustrialisation process in the late 1970s. However, in the 1990s the cities’ development took different turns. We develop a conceptual framework based on public diplomacy and place branding. The empirical material is based on policy documents decided by the respective city halls, statistics from Statistics Sweden and previous research.

**Findings**
The place branding of Borlänge targets just the residents. For non-residents the brand is weak and for refugees unattractive. No public diplomacy communication is reported in the policy documents from Borlänge. Malmö works actively with place branding and public diplomacy to attract new residents from abroad, and refugees re-settling from other parts of Sweden. The city is seen as a multicultural and superdiverse, a city where natives are a minority population. Unfortunately, by targeting one group of new residents so hard makes Malmö unattractive for other potential target groups.

**Policy implications**
Public diplomacy and place branding matters. Local and regional politicians can make their place attractive for new residents from other parts of Sweden as well as abroad, for labour migrants as well as refugees. It depends on the chosen target groups as well as place branding strategy. Place branding and public diplomacy are highly political activities and as such, they are political sensitive.

**Keywords**
Public diplomacy, place branding, residents, immigrants, refugees, Sweden

**References**


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The UPF Department of Communication is hosting this fifth conference with the desire to give Barcelona the opportunity to position itself as a leading city, not only in the practice of place branding but also in research on this topic. Barcelona, Spain, Europe and the whole planet are experiencing difficult moments, but also moments that demand solidarity and collaboration from all of us. The world is not as it is, the world is as we make it, and the place branding academic and professional community can undoubtedy contribute to the creation of a better future for all.