Abstract

This study seeks to understand the logics behind the making of promotional place representations in the branding of the third-tier city Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in order to expand the literature on the role of representations in constituting place. I take the official 2010 “City of Lancaster: A City Authentic” campaign as my case study. In the process, I also address the representational logics that underpin other place-making narratives and their institutional origins. According to Johansson (2012: 3613), a city-sanctioned branding campaign functions “as a unifying device [that] is an expression of the interests of a particular group, or groups … and hence it is always a political act that is intended to produce particular effects.” Representations are linked to particular agents in institutional settings who created them. Through making and deploying these representations, agents put to work certain normative ideals and rationales. These representations are always spatially embedded. Storytelling through branding can be read as a way to understand the logics and (political) processes at work in constituting place. This study also examines the notion that the production of promotional place images is driven by the need to establish and maintain a place’s competitiveness.