

Article

The Economies of Identities: Recognising the Economic Value of the Characteristics of Territories

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Abstract: The economic relevance of the characteristics of territories has been addressed by many approaches across different disciplines. While some consider them an important source for the reputation of territories, others rely on the fact that in a global mass market the territorial embeddedness of goods and services increase their market value through the assertion of their uniqueness and authenticity. In this article we propose the integration of these different interpretations on a common framework to better understand the underlying mechanisms and processes associated with the economic consequences of those characteristics that make territories unique and form their identity. We conduct a literature review to identify basic definitions, existing methodologies and core features of the most relevant studies on the topic to provide a broad conceptual framework for the analysis and economic promotion of the identities of territories. Additionally, two illustrative case studies are presented, covering successful strategies where identities have been put in the centre of an economic development strategy: the Way of Saint James (Galicia, Spain) and the Douro Valley (Portugal). Through the lens of the reviewed concepts, both strategies are assessed. Building on a broad repertoire of research approaches and disciplines, we conclude by outlining a new research agenda on the economies of identities and stressing the potentialities and limitations of mobilising the identities of territories as a resource for economic development.

Keywords: identities of territories; regional development; economies of identities; spatial differentiation; territorial embeddedness



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1. Introduction

For a long period of time, natural barriers and distances were determinants in shaping the interactions between communities. Physical characteristics of territories and the way people made use of them to satisfy their needs, help to explain the diverse mosaic of different political, cultural, and economic realities which characterises our world. This explains why the advances in transport and communication that ease the contact among different geographical contexts have always had an impact on certain characteristics of places. Nowadays, technologies facilitate the establishment of economic, cultural, and political links among different societies. Consequently, over the last few decades, the world has become deeply interconnected and globalised. People, ideas, capital and goods are now extremely fluid and the interactions among territories are simplified through better transport and communication infrastructure. According to Castells [1] these technological developments have caused the dominance of the space of flows over the historically constructed space of places. From different knowledge fields it was claimed that territory was no more a significant component in the organisation of economic, social, and cultural activities. However, globalisation seems to emphasize the continuing significance of territory. Nations, regions, and municipalities use their territorial singularities to guarantee their place in the world. The economic and cultural dynamics associated with the development

of globalisation have called the attention of academics and policy makers for the economic consequences of those characteristics that make territories unique.

In a hypermobile world, territory offers stability and remains a strong source of identity. Territorially rooted elements such as history, culture, heritage, landscapes and collective memory have been mobilised as engines for the economic competitiveness of products and places [2]. This relationship between economy and the characteristics of territories has been analysed and conceptualised by different approaches. Anholt [3] in his theorisation of the competitive identity concept mentions the importance of those elements attached to territories, such as culture, to the creation of soft powers. According to Scott [4], when products embody territorial values in their promotional strategies they create a kind of monopolistic power, making the replication of their characteristics by other competitors more difficult. Capello [5] stated that territorial identities should be considered a strategic asset for the promotion of the economic success of places, as they are fuelled by socio-cultural conditions which are difficult to reproduce elsewhere. Many other studies were developed based on the economic value of territorial embedded resources, as this article shows. Although focusing on different components, the reviewed concepts have in common the perspective that those characteristics that make a territory unique (and form their identity) are capable of creating economic advantages. We advocate that all these academic contributions should be considered under the same research agenda called the economies of identities.

The strategic usage of the identities of territories is still associated with several uncertainties [5]. In this context, the purpose of this article is to provide a broad conceptual framework for the analysis and economic promotion of the identities of territories. Associated with this main objective three specific goals were set: (i) to understand the relevance of territories and their identities in a context of cultural and economic globalisation; (ii) to identify the operative definitions and appropriated methodologies to facilitate the economic promotion of the identities of territories; (iii) to present real-case evidence from illustrative case studies of how identities can generate economic benefits. From a critical review of the main concepts and the identification of the complementarities between their conceptual and methodological approaches, the research agenda called the economies of identities arises. We believe that the development of this framework will contribute not only to provide a common ground for these different approaches, but also to overcome the barriers raised by the fact that the relationship between the identities and space remains ill-defined for the purposes of analysis and measurement [6,7].

The two illustrative case studies here presented as illustrative examples of how the economies generated by identities can be strategically used as drivers to generate economic benefits are: the Camiño de Santiago (The Way of Saint James) (Galicia, Spain), an old Christian pilgrimage route which is walked every year by thousands of people from different nationalities around the world; and the Vale do Douro (Douro Valley) (Portugal), a well-known territory by its cultural landscape and certified wines. Both the Camiño and the Douro Valley are inscribed in the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage List and they have been put at the centre of the development processes of their correspondent regions. In this study the strategies used to their promotion are reviewed and their main achievements and outputs are analysed through the lens of the economies of identities framework. Although many other examples could be used in this study, the selection of these cases was motivated by the fact that they have an international projection and have been subject of interest for many academic studies and publications.

The structure of the article is organized as follows. The opening section is devoted to the first specific objective and presents the theoretical framework of this study, by focusing on the most relevant debates on the social and economic relevance of territories and their identities. The next section is dedicated to presenting the methodological approach used. Aiming at addressing the second specific objective, the next section provides the operative concepts and definitions as well as the methodologies and strategies through which the

identities of territories can be promoted. This is followed by the presentation of the results of the two illustrative case studies, where real-case evidence is provided, approaching the third specific objective of the paper. The subsequent section discusses and interprets the results in the light of the reviewed approaches. A set of recommendations for the development of identity-based economic promotion are provided and directions for future research are suggested in the conclusion.

2. Research Review

Within the larger history of global capitalism, economic and political relations between countries have been always marked by the competition for resources. However, over the last several decades, the transnational flows of capital, labour, and technology have been intensified by new infrastructures, and places and societies have become increasingly interconnected [3]. The growing intensity of flows between different parts of the world during the last decades of the 20th century has produced vast economic, political, and cultural changes, in a process that is commonly designated by globalisation [8]. A characteristic which is frequently associated with this global process is the progressive establishment of economic and social patterns disembodied from territories [9]. This perception has generated debates on the significance and influence of territory on the global dynamics.

Considering the multiple meanings associated with the concept territory it is important to stress that in this research we take into consideration the definitions developed by relevant authors such as Storey [10], Delaney [11], and others [12–14]. Accordingly, territory is interpreted as a unit of space which arises from the delimitation, appropriation and control of a certain area and allows the differentiation between what is “inside” and “outside”. But territory should be conceptualized beyond its material dimension, as it is socially produced [15]. Although the external and internal boundaries defined by nation-states and their symbolic system are considered powerful devices in the definition of the material and immaterial components of territories [16–18], individuals, institutions and collective movements also act as producers of territories through political, social and cultural practices and strategies. Among these are the (re)production of narratives about a territory, through which a set of tangible and intangible characteristics, that can be real or imagined, are used to affirm the singularity of a territory, in order to claim its place in the world system [19,20].

Several interpretations of the effects of globalisation on the political, cultural and economic spheres have supported the idea of the loss of relevance of territory. Some authors stated that globalisation was associated with a process of ‘de-territorialisation’ [21] where borders were no longer relevant [22] and this was allegedly contributing to the end of geography [23] and territory [24]. The characteristics of the economic model that prevailed during a significant part of the 20th century, based on mass production and consumption, led authors like Relph lamenting the “placelessness” of the world system, defined as “the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardized landscapes that results from an insensitivity to the significance of place” [25] (p. 2). This is associated also with a cultural homogenization process, where societies are condemned to the “eternal sameness” as exemplified by Adorno [26]. Parallel to this, the post-1970’s wave of globalisation put the role of nation states in question causing what seemed like the erosion of their sovereignty [27]. For decades a powerful narrative was made that the contemporary world had no borders, and the attachments and affiliations to nation-states had been replaced by other social identities based on gender, race, among others [28]. In a networked and interconnected world the relevance and utility of the spatial-based identities started to be questioned, however, contrary to what was expected, they gained a new significance.

Despite all forecasts pointing out that territories were no longer a significant component in the organization of a global world, according to relevant works from different disciplines, there are certain economic, social, and political behaviours that cannot be understood without considering spatial features. The importance of territories is clear when

considering the spatial distribution of wealth. While the internationalisation of the world economy has created an interconnected structure of spatial relations, it has contributed to an uneven development among territories and a growing international, interregional and interurban competition [29]. At the same time, the last decades have witnessed the rising importance of both sub and supranational forms of territorial organization. Thus, instead of globalisation being a force for des-territorialization, it can be associated with the appearance of new territorial patterns, explained by a reterritorialization process where sub and supranational entities have gained new powers and economic relevance [30].

In parallel, the changes produced by globalisation on the structural properties of the global economy have led governments and development agencies to become increasingly focused on the pursuit of competitiveness [31]. Highly exposed to a competitive environment, local, regional and national authorities make use of their unique characteristics to differentiate themselves from others and to attract investments, economic activities, highly skilled labour, residents and visitors [3,32]. Additionally, since the 1970s, the world has witnessed a shift of some economies away from Fordist mass production to the proliferation of new flexible industries, which has led to the emergence of increasingly differentiated forms of production and consumption [33]. In this context, and considering the rising importance of the endogenous perspectives of development, territorial attributes are often referred as being essential to construct effective responses to globalisation and the mass market [34].

It can be noted that all the above-mentioned transitions led to an integration between global and local scales. While local economies went through a transition towards a much more world-integrated economy, where they must compete for people and capital, the global economy has become more localised, as its local repercussions are shaped by territorialised characteristics. The integration of these two scales is base for several well-known concepts such as “new globalised localism” [35], “glocalisation” [36] or “the production of locality” [37]. Apparently, the global has not dissolved the local, instead it changed its role. Nevertheless, it should not be ignored that the Covid-19 pandemic crisis experienced since early 2020 has affected the above-mentioned phenomena, although the overall impacts are still to be fully understood. So far, it is known that the non-pharmacological measures adopted by state governments to control the spread of the virus, such as the borders closure and human mobility restrictions, have had huge impacts on the spatiality of the economic and social flows [38].

The described dynamics help to explain why the identities of territories and characteristics that constitute them have been used as tools to positively respond to globalisation [39]. Although since the second half of the 20th century cultural and economic globalisation has contributed for the erosion of some of these characteristics, over the last decades we have witnessed to the emergence of economic and political stimuli for territories to use their identities to claim their place in the world. These tendencies explain why policy makers and researchers who deal with development questions have become increasingly interested in spatial based identities and in their economic consequences. Nevertheless, there are methodological and conceptual limitations associated with the mobilisation of identity-related resources in development strategies, as it has been noted by several authors [5,40].

Considering the multiple meanings of the concept identity, its study and economic promotion requires the setting of a clear framework in order to define the object of analysis, the appropriate methods and the available data for their assessment. In this context, it is important to consider the distinction that was firstly noted by Relph [25] and further conceptualized by Paasi [41,42] that considers that “identity with” and the “identity of” are two separate but intertwined components of the spatial identities’ phenomenon. According to this view, on the one hand, “the identity with” refers to the inhabitants’ sense of belonging, which can be designated by “territorial identity”. On the other hand, the “identity of territories” is associated with the “identity of” that can be defined as the components of the inhabitants, nature and culture that distinguish one territorial entity from others. This is a fundamental distinction to build a common understanding of how identities can

be captured and incorporated in territorial development strategies, as it frames the object of analysis: the inhabitant feelings (identity with) or the territory characteristics (identity of). In this this research we centred our study on those characteristics that distinguish one territory from others, i.e., the identities of territories.

3. Methodological Approach

A mix-method approach [43] was used to achieve the study aim: to provide a broad conceptual framework for the analysis and economic promotion of the identities of territories. The combination of different methodologies is fundamental to overcome the limitations associated with this topic: its association with concepts with a controversial definition, and the fragmentation of the theoretical and empirical knowledge across different disciplines and approaches. We started by constituting a panel of 18 experts in order to define the research questions which would guide our literature review. The panel discussion took place in a workshop held at the Swansea University (Swansea, Wales, UK) organized by the Morgan Academy, in May 2018. The workshop involved academics and key players from diverse backgrounds, and whose work was associated with explore and/or understand the economic consequences of the identities of territories. The event debated the economies of identities as an emerging field of research, through the identification of the main associated issues and discussion on case studies. The conclusions of the debate were used as guidelines to conduct the literature review featured in this study.

Two economic consequences of the identities of territories were identified as being fundamental: firstly, they are essential to construct the reputation of a territory; secondly, they provide unique characteristics to products and services which generate competitive advantage in the global markets. Three research questions were defined: (i) how different concepts can be integrated in a same research agenda? (ii) what are the core definitions and appropriate methods to capture the identities of territories? (iii) what strategies can be used to promote the economic value of these identities? After the formulation of these questions and following the process proposed by Li and Wang [44], a search for the literature was performed through December 2021 on Scopus and Google Scholar databases using the following terms: “reputation” or “competitiveness” or “competitive” and “identities” or “identity” and “territory” or “territories” or “region” or “regions”. Among the collected literature, only those works which take identity as being the characteristics of territories rather than a feature of the inhabitants’ consciousness were considered. A total of 37 papers were selected for a detailed revision and the following concepts were identified as being relevant, considering their presence in several papers: “competitive identity” [3], “territorial capital” [5] “cultural economy” [4] “experience economy” [45] “country-of-origin effect” [46]. Core definitions and methodological tools were collected from the analysed studies, and the theoretical and practical knowledge were synthesized.

The reviewed concepts and the associated methods were applied in the development of two illustrative case studies, the Way of Saint James and the Douro Valley. Several studies dedicated to these cases were reviewed. Additionally, narratives about these two cases were collected from different sources: the strategic plans designed by governmental institutions (from Galicia the Xacobeo Strategic Plan [47] and the Master Plan for the Galician Tourism [48]; from Portugal the Integrated Territorial Development Strategy (ITDS) from CIM (Comunidade Intermunicipal) Douro [49] and the Portuguese “Strategy for Tourism 2027” from Turismo de Portugal [50]) an international travel guide (Lonely Planet Spain and Portugal’s best trips [51]), and the respective descriptions presented on the website of the UNESCO (<https://whc.unesco.org>, accessed on 12 January 2022). The content of these texts was qualitatively analysed using Atlas.ti software, version 8.4, and following a close, comprehensive, and organized reading of this set of texts the most transversal ideas used to promote territories in both cases were identified [43]. Secondary data from official sources (Pilgrim’s Reception Office and Instituto dos Vinhos do Douro e Porto) were collected to assess the economic effects of both strategies.

4. Results

4.1. Exploring the Economies of Identities

The political and academic interest in the economic value of the identities of territories can be associated with the recognition that in a hypermobile world the non-mobile or slowly mobile assets could play an important role in strengthening competitiveness [52,53]. The rootedness of specific assets gives territories certain monopoly powers that create entry barriers for similar products and services from other places [54]. The recognition of the economic relevance of these characteristics, that can be tangible and intangible, gave origin to many approaches and concepts. As stated above, we believe that the concepts that share this common ground can be integrated in the same research agenda to which we called the economies of identities. Without wishing to provide an exhaustive list of concepts that can be integrated in this research agenda, the ones which are approached here were selected among the papers collected in the literature review, considering their relevance and their usage in the development of case studies. Considering the nature of the economic value they rely on, these approaches were divided into two interconnected groups: the reputation of a territory and the territorial embeddedness of products and services.

The reputation and the differentiation capacity of territories have become important fields of political action due to the rising competitiveness among different geographies. Pasquinelli [32] stated that places need to construct their own competitive advantage to position themselves in a global “market of geographies”, an open territorial competitive space where places, regions and nations contend. The author considers that more than an incentive to compete, this context should be seen as an opportunity to promote the emergence of interterritorial brands based on the cooperation among different territories anchored in a same symbolic representation. Currently, territorial entities have at their disposal sophisticated techniques, such as branding and marketing tools, which allow the dissemination of images and representations which can influence their reputation. These tools help to shape the existing perceptions about a certain territory and can influence the economic choices of people, especially relevant for sectors like tourism [55].

Considering the importance of a territory’s image and the power that identities have in its construction, Anholt developed the concept of “competitive identity” to assert the importance of constructing and managing the spatial reputation based on identity [3]. This concept centres the importance of the uniqueness of a local culture and places physical resources as part of the spatial branding exercise, once they can be used to create unique advantages that are difficult for rivals to copy. The author underlines that we live in the age of competitive identity, where places need to implement branding techniques to enhance the distinctive features, assets, place-specific qualities, and facilities. Competitive identity concept goes beyond the conventional branding strategies and suggests that the identity of a territory should be communicated through different channels or areas of activity: external commerce, cultural exchanges, tourism, government and politics, investments, among others. This approach was applied in the development of several studies [56,57]. For Pike et al. [58] (p. 1258) factors such as “histories, legacies, institutions, and other distinctive characteristics that impart place dependencies and shape—*inter alia*—its economic assets and trajectories, social outlooks, environmental concerns, politics and culture” critically determine the capacity of territories to attract and embed globally competitive activities. These authors consider that the mobilisation of these factors is determinant for developing alternative formal and informal activities that may be more localised and support the resilience of places. In a similar line, Kavaratzis and Hatch [59] developed a new perspective of place branding based on identity. According to these authors the starting point for developing a place branding strategy should be its identity, which is the essence of the brand, especially relevant for internal audiences. The authors stress the importance of maintaining a constant dialog among stakeholders in order to develop an effective identity-based approach to place branding. The reputation of territories is also relevant for their internal mobilisation. In this context the identities of territories are considered important contributors for cohesion policies, as they act on the elements

of similarity among stakeholders, promoting the cooperation among them [53], and as an essential part of the social capital of territories, as authors such as Raagma recognised [60].

Regarding the group where the works dedicated to economic relevance of the territorial embeddedness of products and services are included, several approaches emerge. Capello [5] (p. 142) noted that in recent literature identity has been used “as the conceptual tool with which to grasp how globalisation reinforces cultural differentiation, and as a way to mark boundaries in the ongoing flux of globalisation processes.”. The author evokes the concept of “territorial capital”, considered a crucial element for the development of economy, as it represents an absolute non-transferable economic advantage. The territorial capital can be defined as being “the set of geographically and locally bounded assets, amenities and conditions that provide the competitive advantage of places and their uniqueness through an efficiency-enhancing contribution to growth” [61] (p. 233). Territorial capital concept can be considered an enlarged approach to interpret identity as an economic asset [5]. San Eugenio Vela et al. [62] also refer to the existence of resources that are context-specific and tied to a territory which can be called “place-based assets”. These are usually pre-existing physical objects or features which become connected to a territory through narratives. According to Van Assche et al. [63] the relationship between assets and places is usually reciprocal and interconnected, and can generate different positive impacts through different phenomena: products can benefit from the positive ideas associated to its place of origin; new products can be associated with an existing and prestigious product; physical attributes of a place can be turned into assets in and by the narratives of places. The provenance of products and services is growing in importance, as the rising competition and standardization in globalised markets made them useful tools for differentiation. In this context, the relationship between a territory and its amenities, in general, can be exploited as a unique or inimitable corporate strategy by products and services, as Scott [4] advanced.

Territory is also considered a resource for product innovation and a reference to create experiential products and artefacts [64] or provide products with the quality of authenticity, attributes that contribute to enhancing their market value [65]. The concept of “experience economy”, developed by Pine and Gilmore [45] which supports the idea that consumers seek unique experiences beyond merely consuming products and services is useful to explain why territorial attributes have an impact on economic choices. Accordantly, the value of experiences relies on the fact that memorable events have the capacity to engage individuals in an inherently personal way. The relevance of the experience of consuming certain products and services from a specific location relies on the fact that consumers develop mental correlations between territories and real or imagined attributes. The reputation of German engineering and the Japanese electronics are good examples of this phenomenon, to which several academics called the “country-of-origin effect” [3]. The economic impact of the association of the physical attributes of territories to their products can be verified by the importance that the geographic origin certification has been acquiring as a quality scheme. This association is particularly relevant for food and gastronomy, which are considered important identity markers [66]. In the European Union (EU) geographical indication was established as a form of intellectual property rights, and they are associated with certain products whose qualities are specifically linked to an area of production [67]. A study recently published on the economic value of EU quality schemes, geographical indications (GIs) and traditional specialities guaranteed (TSGs) estimated that the sales value associated with these certifications in 2017 was EUR 77.1 billion (EUR 74.8 billion excluding TSGs) [68].

Considering that although the reviewed works lie in different economic values of the specific characteristics of territories, they have a common understanding of what constitutes the singularity of territories and the perspective that it should be integrated in the development strategies of places. In this context, we propose the usage of economies of identities as the research agenda which synthesizes the prior work, identifies the common background, and points new directions for future research. Following are presented useful

definitions and appropriate methodologies for the understanding and promotion of the economic values of identities.

Conceptualizing the Identities of Territories

The relevance of the identities of territories as umbrella category under which the spatially anchored characteristics can be interpreted and promoted is given by the definition of the concept. According to one of the most cited works in this field, from Paasi [69] (p. 4), the identity of a territory, or what the author designates by the “identity of a region”, can be defined as being “... those features of nature, culture and people that are used in the discourses and classifications of science, politics, cultural activism, regional marketing, governance and political or religious regionalization to distinguish one region from others.”. The author argues that these identities are a key part in the institutionalization of regions, the process through which regions (or territories) gain significance both to their inhabitants and to those living outside them [42]. Roca Mourão [70] (p. 88) uses a very similar definition saying that identities represent “the set of cultural, social, economic, technological and other specificities of a territory that make it different from other territories”.

According to Terlouw [20], the identities of territories are originated through the interaction between different geographical layers: physical ones, such as soil and climate, and then move upwards to human activities, like economy and culture, among others. Taking into consideration the already mentioned knowledge about the formation and manifestation of identities, and based on what Haartsen et al. [71] considered as being the consensus in the academic debate about identities, the following ideas were identified as being crosscutting among different disciplines and perspectives:

- Rather than being natural or objective characteristics, the identities of territories are social constructions [72,73];
- They are discursively constructed through the selection of certain characteristics of a specific area. In each moment, territorial agents select those characteristics that are compatible with their interests and ignore others [74]. Those characteristics that are used to represent a territory are usually called identity markers [75];
- Identities are constantly changing, and they are cumulative [76]. They combine different elements, and although history and the past are considered valuable resources for representing a territory, elements associated with the present and their perceived future are also part of the identity discourses [77];
- They reflect the existing power geometries, as the prevailing identity narratives are those defined by those groups which have more power. In this sense, they are contested, contradictory and multiple [78];
- As identities are modelled by events and political strategies and are instrumentalized for different purposes, they must be analysed considering their social, economic, and political contexts.

Considering the above-mentioned clarifications, the identities of territories are geographically based classifications and categorizations that distinguish territories from each other. They are discursively constructed and deeply associated with the way territories are presented and perceived by their own inhabitants and institutions as well as by outsiders [79]. As McSweeney [80] (p. 90) noted, the identities with a collective dimension are not “... ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered. What is ‘out there’ is identity discourse on the part of political leaders, intellectuals and countless others, who engage in the process of constructing, negotiating and affirming a response to the demand (...) for a collective image”. Considering this, the analysis of the identities of territories should focus on the narratives circulating through different kinds of material and assess the collective image they project. Although this definition brings close the concepts of identity and of image, Zimmerbauer [81] (p. 246) calls the attention to what distinguish them: identity is more permanent and genuine “whereas an image can be seen as a communication-based, marketing-created entity of regional pictures and representations”.

Not all the characteristics of territories are considered relevant for identities. According to Paasi [69] (p. 3) identities are constructed through narratives which “lean on miscellaneous elements: ideas on nature, landscape, the built environment, culture/ethnicity, dialects, economic success/recession, periphery/centre relations, marginalization, stereotypical images of a people/community, both of ‘us’ and ‘them’, actual/invented histories, utopias and diverging arguments on the identification of people.”. These elements, which can be considered identity markers [82], are the most visible components of the identity of territories, and result from a selective process which emphasises certain characteristics and ignore others. These assumptions are helpful for the definition of the methodologies that can be applied in the analysis of the identities of territories, essential to their economic promotion. In the literature review, different approaches were identified, and most of the reviewed works use nations or regions (from different origins) as units of analysis.

Starting with data collection, it is common to apply questionnaires to the users of a territory, residents, or visitors, aiming at obtaining the most transversal ideas people have about a specific territory [7]. Approaches such as focus group or individual interviews with different target groups (residents [83], local experts [84], local authorities [85]) are also implemented. Other studies analyse written narratives materialised in documents such as planning documents, official websites, marketing material, but also newspapers and other media, textbooks, novels and even poetry [76,86]. This kind of material provides interesting insights to study the institutional identity narratives, and to examine the wider connections between identity narratives and power relations [87].

Regarding data analysis, the most common technique used is the content analysis. Quantitative content analysis [88] is considered a useful research technique for gathering and analysing the content of texts. Two main types of analysis can be performed using this technique: descriptive analysis, through the provision of frequency counts of both key words or categories; or cluster analysis [89], where words are grouped together considering the correlations between them. Other researchers have applied qualitative content analysis using methods such as critical discourse analysis [6], and semiotic analysis [90] to identify relevant regional symbols. Aiming at addressing the complex nature of identities, and their multiple manifestations and transformations over time, there are studies applying mixed method approaches [74,91,92].

Considering the constructed nature of the identities of territories, their economic promotion is deeply dependent on narratives, as it is through their representation that certain characteristics are valorised and others ignored [19,63]. However, narratives about territories are difficult to fully control. The dynamic nature of identities and the fact that there are different territorial representations associated with the same area poses challenges to the promotion of the economies of identities. According to Terlouw [93] (p. 17) the existence of gaps between the identities projected by different stakeholders, especially between administration bodies and population “restrict the ability of a community to successfully promote its interest towards other communities”. To bridge these identity gaps, it is important to identify the existing differences and create coherent narratives among them, which depends on the capacity of capturing the visions and perspectives of different stakeholders. That is why participatory methodologies are essential for the economic promotion of identities and the legitimacy of the official identities should be constantly assessed. Capello [53] (p. 501) calls the attention to the fact that territorial identity instead of being built by external interventions should result from “social rules rooted in the history of local areas that require time to be formed and to be adjusted”. That is why the mobilisation of the past, heritage, traditions, among other territorial rooted elements, is commonly used to build singular, appealing and embracing narratives [94].

Strategies and tools such as marketing, branding and touristic promotion are effective ways of producing, disseminating, and consolidating images and symbols as it was empirically verified in several places [95,96]. Through identity-based narratives these tools are often used as economic engines in endogenous development strategies [97,98]. Classification and certification schemes provided by international bodies such as UNESCO, the

European Union, among others, are also used as powerful means for territories to legitimize certain elements of their identities. Through these certification schemes territories can claim the international uniqueness of certain characteristics and achieve a higher visibility of their cultural heritage resources, landscapes, traditions, routes, and other characteristics. In the context of the above-mentioned rescaling process, these and other promotion tools are currently accessible for municipalities and regions [99,100].

4.2. Illustrative Case Studies

The above-presented conceptualisation of the identities of territories was applied in the analysis of two illustrative case studies which aimed at identifying the underlying mechanisms through which the identity-based development strategies were formed and the main achievement obtained. The reviewed approaches on the economic values of the identities were fundamental to interpret the results and identify the success factors of both strategies.

4.2.1. The Way of Saint James

Also known as The Camino, The Way of Saint James (O Camiño de Santiago) is a network of itineraries that currently many pilgrims travel to reach the tomb of St. James in Santiago de Compostela (Galicia, Spain). The Camino is one of the most important pilgrimage and cultural routes of our times, and its origins can be traced back to the 9th century, when the remains of the body of the Apostle St. James were allegedly discovered and authenticated. During the 12th and the 13th centuries a pilgrimage movement from different parts of Europe towards the tomb emerged [101]. After centuries experiencing periods of peaks and valleys in terms of its religious and cultural relevance, in the 20th century initiatives and strategies of rebuilding the pilgrimage traditions of the route were implemented by both the Church and the State [102]. From the second half of that century, a greater interest from different spheres of the society in the Camino was observed, and huge investments were done to recover the material and immaterial heritage associated both with Santiago de Compostela and to the Way and to better its use and conditions [103]. In parallel, the cultural value of the Camino and of its city of reference, Santiago de Compostela, was officially recognized by different institutions.

- Strategies: In 1985 the historical centre of Santiago de Compostela was designated as World Heritage Site by UNESCO; in 1987 the French route of the Way of Saint James was declared the first European Cultural Route and in 1993 integrated the World Heritage Site list by UNESCO. In parallel the Galician Regional Government created a brand called “Xacabeo” through which powerful promotional campaigns based on cultural programmes aimed at leveraging the Way in the Holy Years (whenever the patron saint’s day (25 July) falls on a Sunday) were carried out [104]. Relevant investments and efforts were channelled to monuments and cultural facilities along the route to improve its heritage value and to raise the attraction capacity of this touristic product, as it is described in Lois González et al. [102]. Together with the applied certification schemes and the recovery investments done, campaigns promoting the city of Santiago and its pilgrimage routes were run, inside and outside borders, through social media channels, cinema, textbooks, advertising, exhibitions and conferences. All these initiatives contributed to position the Way as the main European pilgrimage route [105].
- Narratives: To the construction of the Camino as a touristic destination identity-based narratives composed by tangible and intangible assets deeply rooted in the places through which it passes through were essential. The analysed texts revealed that the Camino is presented as being deeply associated with the cultural values of its territories, as having an ancient origin and as being authentic. As might be expected, references to pilgrimage and to the apostle are transversal to narratives from different sources. Its importance as place of cultural exchange between the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe is also referred in the studied narratives. The following sentences

taken from the first paragraphs of the studied texts are representative of the existent alignment among narratives from different stakeholders:

“The Route of Santiago de Compostela is an extensive interconnected network of pilgrimage routes in Spain whose ultimate destination is the tomb of the Apostle James the Greater in Santiago de Compostela, in Galicia.” UNESCO

“The Camino de Santiago (Way of St James) originated as a medieval pilgrimage and ever since people have taken up the challenge of the Camino and walked to Santiago de Compostela.” Lonely Planet (p. 154)

“The Camino de Santiago or Way of Saint James, is the Europe’s oldest pilgrimage route and also the most travelled. We propose seven different and unique experiences along the seven historic itineraries that make up The Way.” Turgalicia

“Since the Middle Ages, people of all origins and conditions have often walked towards Santiago de Compostela along the Jacobean routes. They advance bringing us their culture, their language and their idiosyncrasy. Leaving us, therefore, his mark, but also receiving something from us.” Xacobeo Strategic Plan

- **Outcomes:** The success of this route can be verified in the temporal evolution of the number of pilgrims arriving in Santiago. In 1989 there were 5760 requirements of *compostelanas* (Document which certifies the completion of the pilgrimage), in 1999 these number raised to 154,613 and in 2009 there were 145,877 registered requests, as it is showed in Figure 1. This figure reveal two phenomena. On the one hand, a continued steady increase in the number of pilgrims arriving to Santiago and, on the other hand, peaks of increase in certain years which correspond to the Compostela Holy Years. In 2019 the number of pilgrims arriving to Santiago de Compostela reached the 347,578 people (Pilgrim’s Office). Considering the data collected, in 2019 there were registrations of people from almost every country in the world, with Italy, German, United States, Portugal, France and United Kingdom being the most representative origins after Spain. In 2019 the French way, the one which links Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in France, to Santiago de Compostela, was still the most important route, as it was chosen by 54,65% of the pilgrims, followed by the Portuguese inner-way, the one chosen by 20,82% of people arriving at Santiago. A recent study [106] revealed that each pilgrim bears the same economic impact as 2.3 domestic visitors and each euro spent by a pilgrim generates up to 18% of additional employment. This can be explained by the differences in the average stay, average expenditure, and the multiplier effect.

Nowadays the Camino is a contemporary touristic product with an immense power of attraction. The importance of this route has transcended its religious origins, and it is now considered a complex and open polysemic space in which faith, tourism, and heritage coexist [107]. This success is often associated with the capacity of transforming this pilgrimage route into a contemporary phenomenon, and for this the identities of territories played a fundamental role, as recognized by Lois González [108]. Together the routes that constitute the Way provide a physical and symbolic infrastructure capable of integrating different characteristics from the places crossed. Moreover, pilgrims travel on foot or cycle for many days, and slow mobility is considered one of the main attractions and one of the keys to its success [109]. In this context, although integrated in the same resource, each place along the Camino has the chance of showing its distinctive characteristics and endogenous resources, such as landscapes, tangible and intangible heritage, gastronomy, crafts, and traditional products to hundreds of thousands of pilgrims that pass through every year.

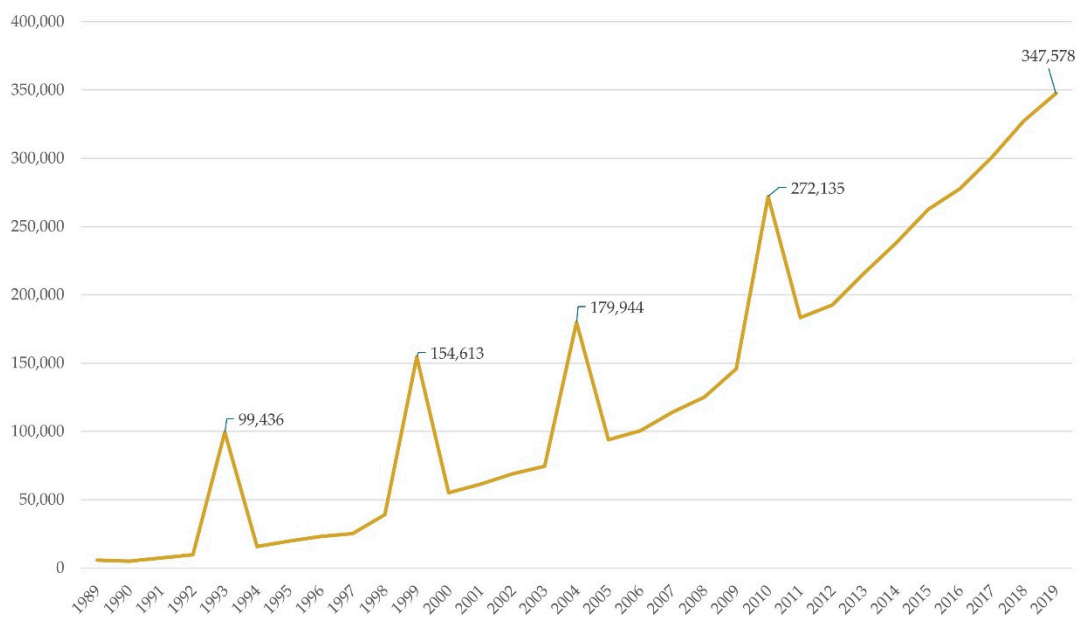


Figure 1. Number of pilgrims arriving at Santiago who received the *compostelana*, 1983–2021. Source: Own elaboration based on data obtained in the Oficina del Peregrino (Pilgrim’s Reception Office).

4.2.2. Douro Valley

The Douro Valley (Vale do Douro) is located in the north-east of Portugal along the Douro River and hosts one of the oldest demarcated wine regions in the world, the Alto Douro Wine Region (Alto Douro Vinhateiro). This region covers 250 thousand hectares of which 48 thousand are occupied by vineyards. This demarcation date from 1756 and its origin lies in the production of a famous product: the Port wine. Given the unique character of the human transformed landscape that Douro Valley presents, characterised by old vineyards in terraced slopes, this space was included in the list of the UNESCO World Heritage in 2001. This recognition was motivated by the living and evolutionary character of Douro’s landscape, stressing specifically that the “long tradition of viticulture has produced a cultural landscape of outstanding beauty that reflects its technological, social and economic evolution.” (<https://whc.unesco.org>, accessed on 12 January 2022). Together, the reputation of its wines, the received certifications, and the specialization of the touristic supply in specific demand segments have projected the region worldwide. Products from Douro, mainly wine, are sent to different parts of the world and people of different nationalities arrive to this region every year. Douro has evolved from being the name of a wine, or a territorial entity designation, to be considered a prestigious brand to which different territorial agents want to be associated with [110].

- Strategies: Douro has currently different types of certifications schemes for its territory and products. Douro’s terroir (term used to refer to the unique configurations of environmental conditions in a vineyard (microclimate, topography and soil) considered fundamental to the taste and character of the product [95]) is the basis for the existence of two designations of origin of wine: Port Wine and Douro. The characteristics that guarantee the authenticity of this landscape and are recognised by the UNESCO are also protected by the Portuguese law, under a special protection zone (Zona Especial de Protecção (ZEP)) designation. Moreover, this area is integrated in the Douro International Natural Park, an area of about 860 km², along the banks of the river, a cross-border natural protected area between Portugal and Spain. The singularity of Douro’s territory relies on the fact that it is considered an example of integration between the human activity and nature, and it testifies the joint development of geographical and historical factors [111].

- Narratives: The analysed narratives about Douro show a strong convergence in the discourses about this territory: elements such as wine, landscape and the river are present in all the analysed territorial descriptions. We have identified that independently from the nature of the narratives, from territorial planning documents to travel guides or to heritage certification documentation, the association of the Douro Valley with these elements is constant, as it can be verified in the following quotes taken from the first paragraphs of each source:

“Wine has been produced by traditional landholders in the Alto Douro region for some 2000 years. Since the 18th century, its main product, port wine, has been world famous for its quality. This long tradition of viticulture has produced a cultural landscape of outstanding beauty that reflects its technological, social and economic evolution.” UNESCO

“This UNESCO World Heritage region is hands down one of Portugal’s most evocative landscapes, with mile after swoon-worthy mile of vineyards spooling along the contours of its namesake river and marching up terraced hillsides. Go for the food, the fabulous wines, the palatial quintas, the medieval stone villages and the postcard views on almost every corner.” Lonely Planet (p. 513)

“Departing from Porto, where the river flows into the sea and where the Douro wines (table wines and Port wine), produced on its hillsides, also end up, there are various ways to get to know this cultural landscape, listed as a World Heritage Site: by road, by train, on a cruise boat and even by helicopter.” Turismo de Portugal

“The Alto Douro Vinhateiro, where a wine has been produced since the 18th century, the port wine, generating an high creation of wealth, has promoted the development of a cultural landscape of enormous natural beauty and which reflects many social, economic and technological developments” ITDS Douro

- Outcomes: Facing serious socioeconomic problems such as depopulation and ageing [92], this territory has put its distinct territorial resources at the service of regional development. Keeping wine culture in the centre of the action, new economic functions and usages have been created around this phenomenon, revealing the multiple nature of the economic values of the identities. The efforts done to protect and promote this territory have positioned Douro both as a wine region and a tourist destination. The Douro valley is considered an outstanding example of a traditional European wine-producing region [89] and is currently one of the most important wine regions in Portugal, being responsible for about 1/3 of the total Portuguese wine exports [112]. The results of the development of Douro as a wine producing region are showed in Table 1. Although between 2007 and 2019 variations in the volume of wine production and its sales in euros were registered, the average price per litre of the wine increased 27% in this period. According to the same source, between 2011 and 2019 the number of official wine producers in Douro increased from 785 to 1121.

The worldwide projection of these resources has transformed Douro valley into a tourist destination with high potential, as it is recognized by the Portuguese Government who classified it as a priority area for tourism [113]. As can be observed in Figure 2, the number of guests arriving to Douro (NUTS III) (the nomenclature of territorial units for statistics of third level (NUTS III)) Douro has 18 municipalities among which are all the 14 municipalities which constitute the Alto Douro wine region) has been increasing every year since 2012. The number of guests amounted to 331,669 in 2019, representing an increment of 156% when compared with data from 2009. Although an increase in tourism activity has been observed in most of the country, the annual growth rates registered in Douro were higher than in Portugal in 7 of the 10 years under analysis.

Table 1. Evolution of the wine production in Douro between 2007 and 2019 (available data). Source: Own elaboration based on data obtained in the Instituto dos Vinhos do Douro e Porto, I.P.

	Production (Litres)	Sales (Euros)	Average Price (Euros)
2007	131,752,869	498,771,604	3.8
2009	112,960,747	444,229,451	3.9
Δ 07/09	−0.14	−0.11	0.04
2011	111,281,371	455,589,128	4.1
Δ 09/11	−0.01	0.03	0.04
2013	111,357,571	482,314,384	4.3
Δ 11/13	0.00	0.06	0.06
2015	115,487,955	508,650,708	4.4
Δ 13/15	0.04	0.05	0.02
2017	122,195,264	553,524,763	4.5
Δ 15/17	0.06	0,09	0.03
2019	118,711,162	569,689,479	4.8
Δ 17/19	−0.03	0.03	0.06

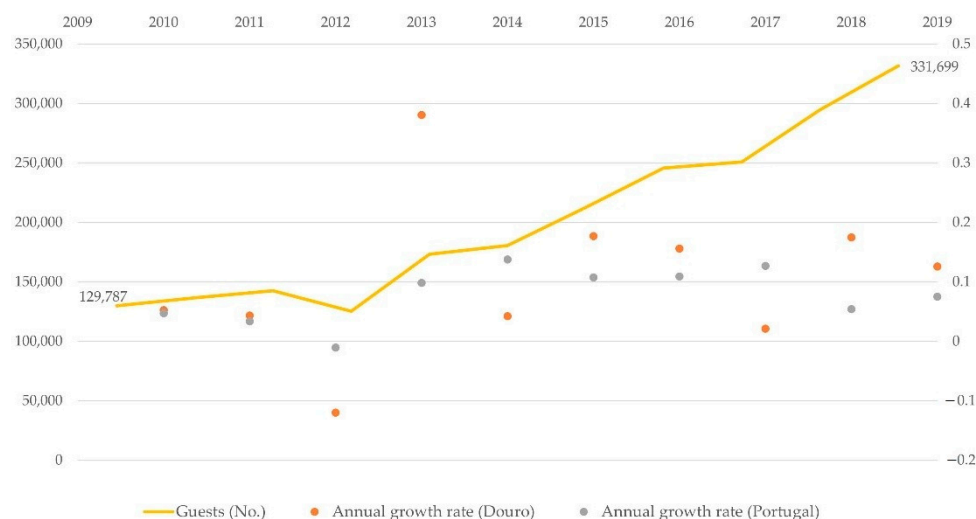


Figure 2. Guests (number and annual variation) in hotel establishments of Douro (NUTS III). Source: Own elaboration based on data obtained in the Instituto Nacional de Estatística.

5. Discussion

The way people make sense of space and the images that associate to territories have an impact on several economic decisions. These are usually ideas acquired by personal experiences or/and through the ways other people or institutions represent the territory. The set of characteristics used on these representations and on the affirmation of the singularity of a territory is its identity. The literature review presented here showed that different economic values can be associated to the identities of territories. On the one hand, they are considered a fundamental resource for the construction of spatial differentiation strategies and to the promotion of a territory's reputation. On the other hand, in a globalised economy identities facilitate the territorial embeddedness of products and services which is considered an important source of quality and authenticity and, at a same time, a guarantee that the economies generated by these assets are difficult to move elsewhere. Considering that State institutions and other social or economic organizations are producers and influencers of these representations, it is fundamental to stress that identities can be strategically used in discursive practices to assign meanings to a territory. In this paper

we presented the core definitions, methods and strategies that can be deployed to facilitate the strategic usage of the identities of territories in order to create economic opportunities for communities.

The two presented case studies are illustrative of how the identities of territories can have a relevant role in the construction of geographically rooted development strategies and what economic consequences can result from such strategies. Using the economies of identities as conceptual framework proved to be useful for both to understand how identity-based development strategies can be successfully undertaken and what economic benefits they generate. In the case of the Way of Saint James, the strategy followed succeed in connecting different territories through a same narrative based on the existence of a common symbolic resource. This can be considered a successful case of interterritorial brand as it was defined by Pasquinelli [32]. Although having ancient origins, the Camino has been object of renewed interest over the last decades, becoming one of the most famous pilgrimage and cultural routes of our time. Every year people walk these paths in the search for authenticity and real experiences through a connection to the past and to the culture of territories [114]. In fact, the phenomenon of the Camino as it is known nowadays is a result of joint efforts done by the economic and political interests from different places, and much of its success is explained by the consensus this heritage generated. Even though the singularity of this route relies especially on its past and cultural and religious symbolism, the attractiveness of the landscapes, the gastronomy, the cultural heritage, among other rooted elements which are associated to the Camino, are fundamental to explain its attractiveness.

In the case of the Douro Valley, a slightly different development process can be identified, as the reputation of this area is deeply associated to the production of a world-famous product, the Port wine. Both public entities and the private sector have used the projection of this product to shape an international reputation and image highly associated with the wine culture. Together public and private efforts and campaigns facilitated the projection of the territory as a tourist destination. This facet of Douro allowed the emergence of a demand for territorial-based products and services deeply associated to exclusive experiences, as wine tours, charm hotels, gastronomy routes, among others. The strong character that the wines give to the region of Douro has enabled the structuration of a powerful brand and the consolidation of a cultural context for political action. The analysis here presented reveals that in Douro the prestigious of the wine was fundamental to delimit, name and symbolize the territory and make it recognisable.

The analysis of both cases shows that territorial-based characteristics and resources are powerful engines for development. Nevertheless, their economic potential depends enormously on the capacity of stakeholders to share a common vision and adopt convergent narratives. These are among the most relevant requirements to develop a competitive identity, as it was conceptualized by Anholt [3]. Heritage, traditions, collective memory, and culture, among other rooted elements, are important ingredients for this kind of approaches as they are effective ways of strength the bonds between the community and the territory. The past is considered an effective resource for the construction of territorial images [94] as it feeds a sense of shared purpose among stakeholders and affirm uniqueness. Both cases show that, when properly promoted, resources with ancient origins, such as the Port wine and Santiago's pilgrimage routes, are fully compatible with the current needs of consumers.

Three main economic benefits that can be associated with the economies of identities in the two analysed cases were identified: an increment of the demand for the Camino (the route) and Douro (the wine and the touristic destination) caused by their national and international projection; the creation of non-transferable economic advantages for these territories guaranteed by the existing certification schemes; the emergence of new products and services associated to the Camino and Douro such as gastronomic products, tourist services, handcrafts, among others. Another effect generated in both cases by the identities of territories which has indirect economic consequences is the internal mobilisation and the

strength of the cooperation among stakeholders revealed by the expansion of the network in the two analysed cases: both the number of certified paths of the Camino and the number of certified producers of wine from Douro are increasing. These effects have been possible thanks to a clear and shared identity that in both cases was structured and communicated to project these territories at the international scale.

Although using different mechanisms and acting in different contexts, both cases are good examples of how territorial characteristics can be mobilised to create contemporary and appealing goods and services. Moreover, the revision of their development process put in evidence that the economic promotion of the identities of territories is done through different kinds of processes through which territories affirm their difference towards others and, at the same time, reinforce the similarities among their members. In this context, coherent narratives function as integrators of all these processes. To finalise, we believe that the conceptualisation of the economies of identities presented in this article facilitates the understanding of the identities of territories and their economic promotion, as it offers basic definitions, methodologies and strategies which allow public authorities to integrate identities in their regional development strategies.

6. Conclusions

The development of this research was guided by the aim of providing a broad conceptual framework for the analysis and economic promotion of the identities of territories. Considering that the existing knowledge on this subject is currently fragmented through different concepts and approaches, we advanced with an embracing research agenda called the economies of identities. This research agenda collects contributions, definitions, methodologies, and strategies of diverse works from different disciplines. This is particularly relevant considering the complexity of the relationship between territories, identities and economic development, and the existing difficulties in its study and strategic usage by policy makers, as mentioned by different authors. Aiming at overcoming the barriers posed by the complexity of these phenomena, this research offers a synthesis of the major issues related with the economic consequences of identities, and methods that can support researchers and policy makers to promote new economic functions for those tangible and intangible characteristics that are rooted in territories.

The identities of territories can be mobilised both to benefit the reputation of territories and their capacity of attracting economic activities, residents, and visitors, and to add value to services and products through the assertion of their authenticity and uniqueness. In these processes the creation and projection of narratives embedded in the tangible, intangible, real or imagined characteristics of territories is fundamental for creating economies based on identities. Nevertheless, and as the illustrated case studies here presented showed, the creation of economies based on the identities of territories requires actions on many fronts that can range from physical interventions to the obtainment of official accreditations and certifications for natural and/or cultural resources, and includes marketing campaigns, the creation of complementary products and services, among others. All these actions should be aligned through coherent territorial narratives.

The creation of economies based on the identities of territories depends on the capacity of territories to capture those characteristics that, because of their maintenance in time and in space, are socially relevant and capable of asserting the distinctiveness of a territory. In this sense, it is important that these strategies are built upon the combination of different methodological approaches such as the revision of historical and artistic material, the creation of panels with experts from different specialization fields, the implementation of participatory methodologies where different communities must be involved, the analysis of the physical, social, economic, and cultural characteristics of territories, among others. The main goal of using these methodologies is to identify what characteristics should be mobilised and used as identity markers to assert a certain territory as a singular unit of space and make it attractive. It is important to mention that considering the described properties of identities these processes must take into consideration the following aspects:

they are social constructs and not fixed facts; their successful mobilisation depends on their capacity of being shared by wide range of stakeholders including policy-makers, economic operators, development agencies, associations and inhabitants; they should be used as promoters of cooperation and not as instruments of exclusion; the economic promotion of the identities of territories must not endanger their cultural value.

This article has limitations that need to be acknowledged. As has already been stated, the fact that the topic under analysis has been conceptualised differently by diverse researchers from several research fields interfered in the objectivity of the criteria used in the conduction of the systematic research of literature. Considering this, instead of pretending to incorporate all the existing conceptual and empirical findings on this topic, this article aims at providing robust definitions, available methods and strategies which facilitate the analysis and economic promotion of the identities of territories. Additional research is required to explore deeper the conceptualisation and strategic applicability of this research agenda.

To conclude, our study showed that there is sufficient reliability and valid evidence to conclude that the economic values of the identities of territories have multiple origins and can be improved if the appropriate strategies are taken. Considering that a robust common research agenda is lacking, the aim of this article was to give a first indicative map of what have been the most relevant research advances to date and, based on real examples, what strategies can be devised and implemented to create territorial-based economic value through identities. The variety of approaches indicates the importance of applying multidisciplinary strategies capable of promoting the multiple economic values of the identities of territories and their social acceptance. The empowerment of territories through identity building strategies is economically relevant and planners should take them as a field of action as a way of promoting the well-being of their communities.

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