Integrated city-brand building: beyond the marketing approach

Reporting note on the CityLogo-Eurocities thematic workshop
Utrecht, 02-04 October 2013

Miguel Rivas, lead expert for URBACT CityLogo
What really means the brand concept when applied to places? City branding and the urban question

For years city branding has been associated to launching of city logos and slogans and subsequent campaigns. With no doubt, this reduction has damaged the practice of place branding and also explains a certain lack of “intellectual stimulus” of the field at the eyes of many involved in urban management and urban studies. Moreover, some practitioners in place branding and marketing do not feel much comfortable with the term of branding, reflecting a somewhat fatigue due to an excess of corporatization of daily life, even a type of “do not brand my city” reaction. Increasingly, other terms such as strategic communication or urban internationalization are being used.

In this context, URBACT-CityLogo was conceived as a kind of “de-brandization of city branding”; an attempt for re-learning the field in order to overcome most common gaps. In fact, brand is a metaphor when applied to cities and places, as Simon Anholt said some years ago, and the true aim of place branding is about building up competitive local identities. In addition, a better understanding of the city and the urban question by the practitioners involved would be helpful for better positioning city branding within urban policies and urban management.

First assumption is that place branding is not only and primarily connected to attractiveness but also to place identification, even as a necessary condition. It opens a precious opportunity to re-think urban identities as a coherent (and optimistic) articulation in time between internal factors and external framework conditions. Actually, as in the Eindhoven case, city branding booming in the UK was closely connected to the economic and urban regeneration in core cities like Birmingham, Manchester or Glasgow.

Thus, realities (local backgrounds, assets and both emerging and declining processes) and possible utopias (urban projects, institutional expectations, people’s desires) have to combine for building up stronger narratives of the contemporary city. However, only when such a city narrative is “filtered” through communication codes and other drivers like reputation, uniqueness, fascination... or through a conscious policy of city representation (where visual components are equally relevant), we can consider we are fully approaching the field of integrated city branding. Then, the result will be duly

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1 Possibly, Michael Sandel and his discussion on the moral limits to markets is capturing better than anyone the expansion of a business logic (and of a business rhetoric) to every single aspect in society nowadays (“from a market economy to a market society”). See SANDEL, M, J. What Money Can’t Buy: the Moral Limits to Markets. Penguin.


3 Cultural geographers and urban sociologists have recently identified the concept of fascination as “emotional multiplier” of the local real assets in building the city image. At this point, a challenge would be how to properly use that kind of multiplier without falling into mere propaganda, fetishism or simple “postmodern aesthetization” of the urban landscape. See Schmid, H. et al. Editors (2011). Cities and Fascination: Beyond the Surplus of Meaning. Ashgate.
organized, socialized and delivered by means of place-brand toolkits, communication plans and ad-hoc management platforms.

From city narrative to the city brand. Source: M. Rivas, Grupo TASO

Fascination as “emotional multiplier” of local real assets.

Left: theatrical scenography for the new Hamburg © Herzog & de Meuron Architects. Right: Hong Kong, photo by Romain Jacquet-Lagreze ©.
WHAT CITY WHEN ‘BRANDING THE CITY’?

More powerful images of the city, better aligned to core values. Politics of city representation more focused in ideas than in facts. New visual culture

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reality</th>
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City brand proposition: big narrative articulated in detailed storytelling, showing a clear and unique path. Textual components of the city brand

Source: M. Rivas, Grupo TASO

As the second CityLogo Thematic Workshop was focused on city brand building, it was an occasion to test, through diverse case studies and subsequent discussions, different approaches for a sound practice of city branding nowadays, some of them opening relevant paths for the future.

Like in Oslo, where the thematic workshop was devoted to governance and organizational models in city branding⁴, the Utrecht workshop was also co-located together with the meeting of the Eurocities working group on city branding and attractiveness, which resulted in the participation of Linköping, Munich, Brussels, Ghent, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Eindhoven, Bologna, Birmingham, Timisoara, Nantes and Cardiff, besides the 10-member CityLogo partnership.

Welcoming words by Mirjam de Rijk, Utrecht Vice-Mayor for economic affairs, Haye Folkertsma from Utrecht City Council and representative of the CityLogo lead partner and Cesare Torre, chairman of the Eurocities working group in city branding, opened an intensive agenda that included case study presentations followed by debates, pitch sessions plus Q&A, interactive sessions and exercises and round table discussion.

⁴ http://issuu.com/grupotaso/docs/citybrand_management-citylogo_tw01

INTEGRATED CITY-BRAND BUILDING: BEYOND THE MARKETING APPROACH
It isn’t about branding, it’s about competitive identity. Perspectives on place branding nowadays

Beyond the marketing approach: integrated city branding as concise strategic planning?

The introductory statement on the workshop’s main theme by Miguel Rivas, lead expert for the CityLogo project, paved the way for a day full of disruptive thinking and relevant insights. According to Rivas, strategic communication of cities (that is, integrated city branding) has the potential of taking up the role of local strategic planning of years ago. It must be much more than just marketing. Actually, conventional strategic planning as tree of objectives, actions, measures, duly budgeted and prioritized in time, is loosing its functionality in extremely volatile and changing scenarios as the current. A number of factors are fuelling this trend:

- City strategic communication (or integrated place branding) is based, or should be based, on an updated storytelling of our city model, projected into the future with optimism and intelligence. Hence the idea of "competitive identity". To attract, we must first shape our character, define or re-define our personality.

- Such a narrative (duly translated into core messages with impact, detailed storytelling, etc) has more power of seduction, of attracting willingness and collusion from different groups, than the traditional way of long-term strategic planning. That is, objectives, actions, measures, budget, calendars...
And it is more effective as roadmap to action since city branding also holds a politics of city representation. That is, a visual communication strategy, which is important in a visual world, as the world we live in. Therefore, those working in urban policies might learn to handle the communication codes at some extent, in particular visual communication. And vice-versa, our partners in the communication field should understand that communicating a city is not the same as communicating a shower gel or a pack of cigarettes.

Moreover, integrated city branding offers greater effectiveness in comparison to conventional strategic planning because it includes a segmentation exercise. A clear and detailed definition of target groups, within and outside the city, shaping messages and interaction channels to each of them. Our city project will depend, more and more, on how we attract and interact with visitors, investors and foreign talent and knowledge.

Finally, like strategic planning, integrated city branding heavily rely on active participation and engagement of all the stakeholders, public and private ones, with a role in the city’s attractiveness, and this requires commitment and co-responsibility, including financial co-responsibility.

Many innovative cities are already giving a central role to strategic and comprehensive communication policies. That’s the case of London and most of the core cities in the UK; Lyon or Nantes in France; Amsterdam, Utrecht or Eindhoven in the Netherlands... and many others, also medium-sized agglomerations. First and most fundamental is to overcome short-sighted views, with very little impact, on the meaning and scope of place branding. We must learn to use marketing and communication in a truly strategic manner, as tools for strengthening the attractiveness of our cities and territories.

From Eindhoven to Transylvania

Traditional headquarter of big corporation Philips, Eindhoven was the prototype of company-town that hit rock bottom during the decade of nineties, for then growing till present time when the city-region ranks at the top of the EU indexes related to innovation. So, while accounting 4.5% of the country population, the city-region hosts 52% of the patents in Holland, which means 4 patents per day.

This impressive productive and even societal change, from Fordist industrialism to a knowledge and creative economy, has been conducted under the concept of Eindhoven Brainport. The transition has been also accompanied by a relevant communication strategy, carried out from a dedicated agency, Eindhoven365, promoted by the municipality of Eindhoven, Brainport Development agency, province of Brabant, the campus cities of Best, Helmond and Veldhoven and neighbouring cities of Nuenen, Waalre, Oirschot, Geldrop-Mierlo, Son & Breugel.

According to Peter Kentie, EHV365´s director, their place marketing strategy is basically an “acceleration strategy” for the new development model designed for Eindhoven and based in values such as technology, design and knowledge5. This gives a clear idea on the strategic role assigned to city branding and marketing in the

“...The chosen city marketing strategy is an acceleration strategy”
Peter Kentie, EHV

5 In Kentie’s words “only in a few cities, like San Francisco or Helsinki, one can find such a perfect combination of technology and creativity as in Eindhoven”, also headquarter of Design Academy, the most renowned design school in Netherlands.
From a very different context, the way Alba Iulia is using city branding, also illustrates the strategic value of communication in urban management, no matter the town´s rank-size. With 60,000 inhabitants, Alba is a small town but an iconic place for its historic role in the building of modern Romania. For many it is the "spiritual capital", and undoubtedly is a pioneer in the country as regard place branding.

First, Alba´s logo was a brilliant exercise on visual identity that was rapidly socialized and appropriated within the city. Then, leveraging itself upon a rich heritage and the rehabilitation of its unique 17th Century citadel, the local government is now actively using a place-brand approach to address both its medium & long term development agenda and its positioning in the country and abroad. Thus, the Local Action Plan the city is currently drafting within the URBACT-CityLogo framework follows this perspective - i.e. a kind of concise strategic planning of 20 key actions where communication plays a central role⁶.

“We designed a logo that represents our citadel. The new identity was presented and applied everywhere. But beyond all the shiny bling bling, what matters is the strategic foundation”

Nicolae Moldovan, Alba Iulia city manager

⁶ Communication as cross-cutting driver building up concrete storytelling and shaping projects and actions around values like education, ecumenism (the town is crossroads for orthodox, catholic, protestant and jewish traditions), central place for public services (including the vision of the town as juridical capital of Romania), e-democracy and participatory democracy, entrepreneurship and creativity, and tourism.
Setting the basis: finding city’s DNA in Bologna, Amsterdam and Zaragoza

Bologna is now addressing integrated city branding for the first time, and 5-month initial stage was devoted to extensive research aimed at unveiling city’s core values. Roberto Grandi, professor of communication at the University of Bologna and coordinator of the Bologna City Branding Project, was in Utrecht to describe how that process was.

Two studies were carried out on the perceived image of the city by different audiences. The first one through a questionnaire to a sample of foreign/Italian citizens who have visited and/or stayed in Bologna in recent years, which obtained 400 valid responses. The second through a "reputational and sentiment analysis" of the Bologna’s presence on the net, which examined 20,000 texts during the period December 2012–February 2013: posts and comments made available on the internet - forums, blogs, micro-blogs, social networks, etc.

For professor Grandi, results of quantitative research provided a large frame to identify the characteristic features about the perception of the city’s identity; and the answers to these questions were helpful in detecting some clusters on the perception of Bologna by crossing answers to closed questions with answers to open questions - quantitative research and qualitative research. As for the reputational and sentiment analysis of Bologna on the Internet, they used a Crawler (programmes that visit web sites and read their pages and other information in order to create entries for a search engine index) and semantic search engine for automatic linguistic analysis of the textual documents.

A third study used the technique of focus groups to analyse the characteristics of the "desired identity" of Bologna by 90 significant “witnesses” from the city, representing the economic, cultural, social and institutional world. In addition, the #Caroamicolinvito project was set up – online contest to gather stories about the city in the words and pictures of its citizens. Obviously, the Metropolitan Strategic Plan was also taken into account.

By combining the outputs of these three processes, a set of city’s core values were defined. Among other applications, this seminal finding was used as main guideline for an open competition for getting a new visual identity for Bologna. Other approaches for building up updated city propositions can be more factual, instead of embedded into existing perceived images. That is, comprehensive strategic analysis by confronting internal factors with external framework conditions (see the figure above) with the aim to unveil not just city’s core values but an entire city narrative.

At some extent, the process in Amsterdam followed that way. In Egbert Wolf’s words, from City of Amsterdam’s communication department, as first thing “we defined where we were already strong (cultural city, canal city, meeting place) and what we had to strengthen (business city, knowledge city, residential city), in order to distil city’s core values (creativity, innovation, spirit of commerce) and DNA (open and tolerant; averse to authority, self-willed; a city apart, in Amsterdam everything is slightly different; informal and cooperative).

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7 When re-thinking urban identities, it seems more suitable to speak about unveiling city’s DNA, values or unifying narratives better than (arrogantly) producing them.

8 According to Wikipedia, sentiment analysis (also known as opinion mining) “refers to the use of natural language processing, text analysis and computational linguistics to identify and extract subjective information in source materials”. The basic method in sentiment analysis is classifying the polarity of a given text - whether the expressed opinion in a document is positive, negative, or neutral.
Extensive research was also a main pillar in Zaragoza when they started with integrated city branding in 2009-2010. Enrique Johnson, at the time heading the consultant team that designed the process, described in Utrecht the list of initiatives: analysis of existing writing material on the city; interviews with leading personalities and opinion leaders; specific survey on main city’s strengths in business and economic development; surveys taken from 39 relevant local stakeholders; discussion groups on citizenship, immigration, etc.; more than 3,000 international CAT interviews; focus groups on visitors and national and international companies, etc.

From big narrative to detailed storytelling: 25 stories about Aarhus

Elevated to the status of priority area in the Business Development Plan for Aarhus (Denmark’s second largest city with 315,000 inhabitants), city branding was founded upon the analysis of the city’s strengths, through focus groups with business clusters and a survey amongst the citizens. More precisely, 41 focus groups and meetings and a survey fed by 1,500 citizens were undertaken during spring 2011, to find “Aarhus’ DNA”.

In addition, city brand strategy is closely connected to the city’s long-term strategic goals, what makes easier bringing the overall city proposition (i.e. big narrative) down to a more detailed storytelling able to capture the attention of specific groups. One of the results of this “operational storytelling” is the booklet “25 stories about Aarhus”, where concrete stories have been drafted combining mini case studies, core messages, testimonials, facts and figures, powerful images, contact information, etc. The different stories have been organized around three main clusters: city development and sustainability; arts and culture; and business clusters.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY</th>
<th>ARTS AND CULTURE</th>
<th>BUSINESS STRENGTHS AND CLUSTERS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Historic building boom</td>
<td>The Old Town – a three-star Michelin Guide attraction</td>
<td>Unique concentration of architectural and design companies</td>
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<td>Run-down commercial part replaced by world-class architecture</td>
<td>Aarhus – festival – a cultural beacon in Scandinavia</td>
<td>Aarhus a world-leader on the energy front</td>
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<td>Aarhus to have one of Northern Europe’s top hospitals</td>
<td>Urban media center – world-class library of the future</td>
<td>A knowledge powerhouse for foods</td>
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<td>Leading position in sustainable energy</td>
<td>The Rainbow above Aarhus</td>
<td>International IT environment</td>
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<td>Ingenious refuse solution – concealing the city’s refuse underground</td>
<td>Spot the new music trends</td>
<td>Denmark’s undiscovered gastronomic gem</td>
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<td>Aarhus safeguarding against torrential rain-storms</td>
<td>Aarhus rethinks itself to become European Capital of Culture in 2007</td>
<td>Port of Aarhus - one of the most efficient ports in Europe</td>
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<td>Aarhus Cycle city – innovation and creative solutions</td>
<td>Successful Danish crime fiction becomes TV series in Aarhus</td>
<td>International beacon in Aarhus</td>
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<td>Aarhus to host Scandinavia’s biggest food festival</td>
<td>Denmark’s best education city</td>
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<td>Aarhus city hall - world-class architecture and design by Arne Jacobsen</td>
<td>An international research and educational environment</td>
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Line Gerstrand Knive, the project manager for the open-source city branding strategy in Aarhus, was asked for commenting the experience with detailed storytelling. She extracted the following lessons:

- Stories with facts are outdated quiet fast. So, the document or initiative should be dynamic. Some wiki method for spontaneous feeding of the collection of stories could be also considered.
- It works well as shortlist of projects or interface for moving from “big narrative” or city proposition to a more detailed storytelling with capacity to catch the attention of specific target groups.
- Stories do not sell themselves – you have to target a story and choose a relevant angle. In this respect and according to Roger Pride, from the agency Heavenly, stories should express a point of view to make an impact -belief and values.
- More targeted stories are needed.
- Press effort has to be continuous and prioritized.

**Place branding as tool for urban regeneration: the urban marketing project in the Brussels-Capital Region**

Besides the well-known “Be.Brussels” logo and related campaign, there is a much more interesting use of the branding and marketing approach to spatial development in Brussels, in this case at district level. ADT-ATO, the Development Agency for the Brussels-Capital Region, has been actively using place branding techniques within a large-scale integrated urban regeneration project for the deprived old-industrial neighborhoods along the canal, which has attracted a public investment of 160 million euros for the period 2007-2013. The “priority intervention zone” (PIZ) in Brussels is a huge area around the canal, in the very heart of the city, with a population of 160,000 inhabitants and heavily affected by high unemployment rates and bad image and reputation.

In this context, the Agency promoted the “Urban Marketing Project”, a four-member team and ERFD-funded budget of 3.2 million Euros, with the mission of contributing to change image of the area, mainly by increasing residents’ pride and sense of place. Team leader Alfredo Corbalan was in Utrecht to present the range of initiatives they developed. They first conducted a bottom-up identity study of the area by using different methods for collective place making, which led to a communication strategy targeting different groups: i) inhabitants of the canal area as top priority, particularly the youngsters; ii) users and commuters, since 400,000 people commute daily between central Brussels and the surroundings, mostly arriving through main railway stations located in the area; iii) inhabitants of Brussels and Belgium, via the media; iv) and investors and visitors from Belgium and abroad.

As for the communication channels and actions, besides BRU+ website, Facebook page, monthly newsletter, videos and poster campaigns, it is noteworthy the organization of two monumental street exhibitions and a photo book, enhancing a new visuality of the neighbourhoods by mean of big snapshots of their own residents. Brochures, time-lapse and participation in international real-estate big shows were used when targeting business and investors.

Communication of the whole area, named as “territoire du canal” (space canal), was directly based on clear core messages for each target group, without producing any logo or synthetic claim. A common
platform was also created, involving all the related public stakeholders, to co-produce and supervise the implementation of the marketing initiatives.

Place branding techniques are growing as part of the urban regeneration’s toolbox, and it shows new paths for the field in the context of urban management, far from the logo-motto-campaign conventional approach. The “Image Project”, an Interreg III-B project, also addressed branding as accompanying tool for neighborhood regeneration, bringing together experiences in deprived areas from Antwerp, Bristol, Delft, Dublin and Zurich.

Branding with/for locals. ADT-ATO’s Urban Marketing Project in Brussels

**No logo? Why place branding has gotten off to a wrong start, and how to adjust the course in due time**

Thas was the title used by Martin Boisen, lecturer in human geography at the Universities of Groningen and Utrecht and expert in place branding, for his presentation in Utrecht. That statement summarizes the need for sounder understanding and usage of the brand concept when applied to cities and places, in line with Eindhoven, Alba Iulia, Aarhus, Brussels and other ongoing experiences showcased in Utrecht.

Boisen put a focus on the difference between **place branding** (more strategic, from inside-out, dealing with building up of a unifying narrative, identity & image) and **place marketing** (more operational and focused on segmentation, targeting and action planning, from outside-in), for then posing the question “whether we should aim for the holistic approach to place branding, i.e. trying to shape and influence everything that makes a place that place, or a less ambitious approach that is centered around the different limitations that politics, organizational issues, stakeholder-management and the budget seem to prescribe”. In any case, in a globalized world like the one we are now living in,
the era of hyper information and hyper mobility, Boisen claimed for more efficient institutionalization of communication in city and regional governance\textsuperscript{9}.

Other expert invited to the CityLogo-Eurocities workshop in Utrecht was Roger Pride, managing partner at Heavenly and former CEO of Cardiff & Co, the place marketing agency for Wales’ capital city\textsuperscript{10}. For Pride, city branding is about “the identification, nurturing and marketing of a city’s competitive identity”. Therefore, a sort of collective “place making” should always be a first stage, resulting in a \textbf{big narrative} with capability of: i) expressing city´s distinctiveness and a singular and concrete path for the future; ii) engendering support and capturing the pride, increasing sense of place and igniting ambition; iii) and being relevant (add value) to all the sectors in the city.

Such a city proposition, manifesto or big narrative, capturing city´s point of view and core values, will have then to be detailed into \textit{specific propositions} for key sectors and projects, and consequently linking to diverse target groups. Moreover, according to Roger Pride, both high-quality related imagery and “powerful motivating campaign idea to which everyone can get behind” will be helpful for the process.

\textbf{Promoting more powerful imagery for the European city. Are we extracting the best of our cities?}

CityLogo lead expert Miguel Rivas conducted an interactive session on the more visual side of place branding. In this respect, both \textit{public bodies and private agents frequently fail in taking full advantage of the iconographic possibilities that a city may offer}. Often, nobody pays enough attention to renew outdated and too much conventional images of the city. In other cases, emerging realities or new assets, still out of city´s prevailing imagineries, lack visibility simply because they have not emerged as images.

For delivering powerful images in the context of city branding, a kind of \textit{urban semiotics} can be used as set of elements that make full sense when combined among them and around specific stories (movement) taken from the city narrative. Those elements could be the following:

- \textbf{People}, since it is disappointing to still see official image banks comprised mainly of buildings and empty city landscapes.

- \textbf{Architecture and built environment}, as the city is also sum of “architectural artefacts” in Aldo Rossi´s words.

\textsuperscript{9} For the question of governance and institutionalization in city branding see Rivas, M. \textit{Integrated City-Brand Management: Re-Thinking Organizational Models}. Reporting note on the CityLogo-Eurocities thematic workshop, Oslo, April 2013.

- **City landscape**, with diverse challenges such as rising uniqueness\(^{11}\), looking for an aesthetic of the urban transformation or simply capturing the poetics of the cityscape.

- **City icons**: old and new ones.

An urban semiotics for city branding: set of elements to be connected around specific stories (movement)
Source: M.Rivas, Grupo TASO

Taking inspiration from De Chirico’s urban scenes

\(^{11}\) For instance, some urban textures can be used as source of uniqueness, like Dublin’s red-coloured brick facades or Bologna’s yellow-orange.
The catalogue of the exhibition organised by Dublin to commemorate the 48th general assembly of the Union of Capitals of the European Union\textsuperscript{12} gave Miguel Rivas the opportunity to check the “\textit{visual gap}” in city branding. That is, many local governments, even from big cities, still handle poor sets of images and therefore more quality-oriented politics of city representation are needed.

For that exhibition, country capitals from EU-27 were asked for sending a six-image selection along with related short comments to each of the images. A critical gaze raises different assessments. So, Dublin, London, Copenhagen or Helsinki, for instance, are remarkable for making good use of storytelling connecting the set of images to an updated narrative of the city. Athens, Berlin or Brussels offer excellent balance between their most recognizable icons on one hand, and the ordinary city and its people on the other hand. As for Paris, themes of selected images coherently support different city propositions (green spaces, culture & leisure, sustainable mobility, business), but better visual quality could be expected from a global city.

Bucharest still falls into the former communist countries’ typical style of representing a city with no people, basically through monuments and the building environment. Luxemburg is just the opposite, but equally in an unbalanced manner as the portrayed citizens seem to be in a non-place where city landmarks are not easy to recognize. Lisbon’s selection is a mere collection of panoramic views, with no people and total absence of city narrative giving sense to the set of images.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{Left: Bucharest, a city with no people, represented only by the building environment. Right: Luxemburg is just the opposite, but equally in an unbalanced manner as the portrayed citizens seem to be in a non-place where city landmarks are not easily recognizable. Images taken from the catalogue of the exhibition “The Many Faces of Europe’s Capitals”, Dublin, 2008.}
\end{figure}

Participants in the Utrecht workshop were also invited to a similar experience of selecting a maximum of five powerful images that can best capture identity/expectations of their cities, linking every image to

\begin{quote}
\textit{“Nowadays images already express more ideas than facts”}
Joan Fontcuberta, photographer
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} Dublin City Council, editor (2008). The Many Faces of Europe’s Capitals.
one single word or very short message. Then, the group was divided into small teams for commenting the different slide shows according to the following criteria:

- Are the sets of images really making the most of architecture, city landscape, icons and people of the cities they represent?
- Are they raising feelings like fascination, attractiveness, uniqueness?
- Are they clearly connected to specific core messages?
- What about the distinctiveness and clarity of the core messages?

The exercise was funny and revealed that promoting a more robust and attractive visuality of our cities requires method, a kind of urban semiology. One could say that two thirds of the textual material supporting city branding strategies in Europe lay upon the same arguments, e.g. knowledge, creativity, sustainability, competitive clusters. In this context **visual aspects can make a difference**.

**Visual communication strategies: Birmingham and Dundee**

Actually city brand building is about aligning detailed storytelling and core messages to powerful images towards specific target groups.

Alignment of both textual and visual aspects. Source, M.Rivas, Grupo TASO
Co-ordinator for Dundee’s brand Jennifer Caswell described the efforts promoting a new visuality of the Scottish medium-sized city, far from the extended image of a declining working-class midsized town impacted by old industrialism. They commissioned new image bank for visually translating updated city storytelling and feeding subsequent PR campaign, poster series, etc. This conscious top-down attempt for a new visual culture of the city might lead to more spontaneous and crowd-sourced ways of delivering energetic images of contemporary Dundee. Anyhow, today, strategies of city representation everywhere should be revisited in the current scenario of massive production and circulation of images.

For Tim Manson, operations & policy director in Marketing Birmingham, a PPP which targets both visitors and business, integrated city branding is basically about creating unity amongst diversity. To that aim, the set of textual and visual pieces comprising the city-brand, which describes, summarizes and illustrates our competitive local identity, should be available at a wide extent. It might be socialized as much as possible, inside and outside the city. That is the function of the so-called brand toolkits and the Birmingham brand toolkit is a good example of it.

They have developed a mix of storytelling, stats, images, videos, facts, case studies and other communication-oriented pieces, coherently assembled into a web platform, serving the second largest city in the UK’s big narrative under the claim “The home of the new industrial revolution”.

“This is not about big launches and big campaigns, this is simply about changing behaviours and creating unity in the way stakeholders talk about the city when promoting the benefits to residents, visitors and businesses alike”

Tim Manson, Marketing Birmingham

For instance, the Apex City Quay Hotel in Dundee commissioned an art-photo booklet of the city, available to all the hotel guests.
“Imagine how powerful it would be if everyone across the city was saying not only the right things but also the same things. We want to help everyone respond consistently and with confidence to this simple request to talk about the city. One voice, one message – one in demand city. This is the reason behind the Birmingham Brand Toolkit” (T. Manson).

**Logo & motto: angel or devil?**

When promoting visual communication strategies for our cities, logos and visual identities can play a role, but not always and never the main role. Some towns and cities may be needed of a unifying sign, with the result of a reasonable level of **appropriation**, as the cases of Dundee or Alba Iulia for instance. Other ones embarked in city brand strategies have consciously refused to create any logo or motto. There is simply no need of it. In any case, logos & claims are a risky issue and reality is plenty of failures, lack of uniqueness and low usability.

Sometimes, logos & mottos can be approached as **Big Bang** in order to draw the attention of stakeholders and citizenship on the need of more strategic communication and updated storytelling for the city. It is about addressing the production and launching of a new visual identity as engine factor for a comprehensive city branding cycle, including building up of updated narrative, related imagery, specific governance model and concrete communication plan with the concourse of relevant stakeholders. **Genoa** in Italy is now proceeding in this way.

Halfway there can be found new **“open-source models”** for visual identities, which offer high level of adaptation and flexibility in design or regarding the accompanying claim, without losing unifying character. The aim here is to facilitate logo´s usability within the city as much as possible. Aarhus and more recently Bologna are working in that way.
After having conducted systematic research on the perceived and desired image of the city, Bologna City Council launched an international competition for ideas to create a common visual identity for the city. The competition was organised by Urban Center Bologna and the Italian Association of visual communication design. The winner idea proposes not just one specific logo but as many as stakeholders, projects and even residents in the city by mean of a specific visual alphabet which translates letters into pictograms and colours. The result is brilliant, very powerful from the visual point of view and unifying.

The process for getting a visual identity for the city matters. Public agency Eindhoven365 promoted a crowdsourcing process that involved a panel of around 80 local professionals mainly from graphic design but also from other related areas like branding, web-design, computer..., aimed at working together for Eindhoven’s new visual identity. The result was quite satisfactory, a logo plus typeface, no claim, that reminds the “energy” and “electricity” which is part of the city’s DNA, but at the same time its dynamism and willingness for change. The direct engagement of the local community of professionals in design resulted in high acceptance and appropriation of the new visual identity. So, a good start.

Engaging artists and local creativity for enhancing city visuality: pool of local designers and creatives producing new visual identity for Eindhoven http://www.merkeindhoven.nl/

Images are powerful tool to “stamp a collective identity”\(^{14}\). So, programmes for getting and disseminating images and representations, aligned to the city narrative, are much more relevant than simply producing a logo & motto. The way to do that may comprise a variety of both top-down and bottom-up initiatives. Some non obvious initiatives related to this can be highlighted:

- Years ago, Seville’s perceived image was too dominated by the tourism-leisure dimension. However, the city also hosted some competitive business clusters, in aeronautics, logistics, etc., some of them with a 70-year background, which remained “hidden” even for many locals, simply because they did not flourish through images. It was necessary a poster campaign, within the city, to increase the visibility of those consolidated and also emerging productive realities.

- The initiative of Vienna to re-fresh city merchandising by means of an international contest in 2012 on the design of the 21st Century souvenir (“European Home Run”), can be seen as a contribution to enhance city’s visual culture.

- “Lima-Peru” is a photo book edited by renowned Peruvian photographer Mario Testino. It can be found in most of the bookshops around the world. On the motivation for this book Testino says “I wanted to capture Lima's positive chaos...I wanted to find a book which conveyed this-- the way Lima's artists and photographers have captured their city's colour and complexity, its art, its people and its buildings, its street life and its interiors. But no such book existed, and so I decided to edit one myself”. That is, promoting new visuality of the contemporary city by engaging local artists and creative talent is highly recommended.

04 Does branding Europe make sense?

The working day came to an end with a round table discussion on branding Europe, as response to the Eurocities Working Group on City Branding´ special interest for introducing such topic during the workshop in Utrecht.

Round table´s moderator Hans Sakkers, head department of Citymarketing, International and Subsidy Affairs of Utrecht City Council, enquired panellists on how Europe and the European dimension play a role in their city´ storytelling, and if so, what kind/image of Europe is being communicated. The panel was participated by Maria Schicht, deputy director of Public Communications Centre in the City of Warsaw, Cesare Torre, chairman of the Eurocities-WG on City Branding and director of city promotion in Genoa, Øyvind Satvedt, director of The Oslo Region Alliance and Robert Nesselaar, brand director of Rotterdam Marketing.

Diversity can be a value but a barrier at the same time for building up coherent and distinctive narratives and it is a fact European cities compete among them for international talent, investment and tourism, e.g. Dublin´s city indicators and international benchmarking project clearly identifies its “key European competitor cities” - Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Vienna, Manchester etc. On the other hand, it´s clear that Europe and the European Union are suffering a long triple crisis: economic, institutional and crisis of identity. In this context, does branding Europe make sense? The unanimous response is absolutely yes 15.

In spite of diversity and some vagueness, there is some consensus about the still non-existing brand Europe would add value for many place branding strategies at city and national levels. But, as place branding is basically a matter of competitive identity, has anyone ever promoted the building of a common narrative for Europe, a sort of European brand toolkit in our jargon? The answer is not yet.

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15 Maria Schicht organized a focus group in Warsaw on this theme weeks before the Utrecht’s workshop, also including representatives of brand consultancy, and they reached the same conclusion. In the Warsaw meeting three kinds of Europe were identified: the geographic region, the European Union as political entity and the Europe of common values - freedom, tradition, maturity, responsibility, openness...
We mean a systematic attempt, with method, by using place branding techniques to raise a number of common attributes, values, assets and expectations that are common to Europe, and trying to articulate them into a coherent and energetic narrative and imagery. That is, in a communication mode. Thus, different city and also nation branding strategies across Europe could pick contents and arguments up from that complementary toolkit to enrich their own place brands. And vice-versa, European cities could feed the common European toolkit with their own values, stories and images.

That would be the challenge and according to the panel **cities have to play a crucial role in branding Europe**, not only because they “represent themselves European culture and tradition”, but just for making the most of the background accumulated in the last years for many European cities in the field of integrated place branding. Cities, notably the community of practitioners in city branding, are in a position to tackle the question of unveiling a European identity and codify it into a kind of Europe brand toolkit, since no one has seriously tried this so far. For moving into action, some entities and networks would be legitimated enough for taking the lead and backing a Europe wide process of research, consultation and engagement.16

Besides most recognizable European metropolises, there is a number of core cities that can refresh and give new qualifications to the brand Europe in the global arena, e.g. Tallinn, Porto, Krakow, Bilbao, Nantes, Turin, Malaga, Bratislava and a long etcetera. Other medium-sized agglomerations, yet with a natural tendency to internationalization in their DNAs, like Utrecht, Aarhus, Trieste, Reggio Emilia... would certainly take benefits from the brand Europe when marketing in the Far East or North America. Anyhow, this rank-size category of EU cities should also explore more extensively alliances for co-marketing at global level, pooling both strategies and resources.

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16 Committee of the Regions, Council of European Municipalities and Regions, Eurocities, Union of the Capitals of the European Union, for not mentioning the European Commission.
Another reason for cities taking the lead in building up the brand Europe is that horizontal transnational cooperation between European cities is generally more spontaneous and frequent than between regions or vertical cooperation between different levels of administration which used to be more rigid. In any case, cities seem to be in better position for co-branding than States, and in fact recent experiences of cross-border co-branding have been mostly undertaken by cities. That is the case of the ONE BSR project, by which a number of capitals such as Helsinki, Hamburg, Riga, Stockholm, Warsaw and Saint Petersburg are prospecting to pool resources for jointly branding and marketing the Baltic Sea Region.

05 Learning from Utrecht

As usual in this series of thematic workshops, second day in the morning was devoted to learn and discuss about the host city, by means of site visit and in-door session. The setting was the Utrecht Science Park, a 300 ha. central located area which hosts 20,000 employees and 50,000 students daily.

USP’s director Floris de Gelder and manager for marketing and communication Nicoline Meijer introduced the Park as a joint venture between Utrecht University, Utrecht University of Applied Sciences, University Medical Centre Utrecht, the City of Utrecht and Utrecht Province. USP covers a range of knowledge specialties around the concept of “healthy and sustainable cities”, including public health, cancer and regenerative medicine and stem cells on the life sciences’ side; and innovative water management, product based on biomass, climate knowhow, renewal energies and sustainable urban management in what respect sustainability.

In a short period, USP has become the top-3 national campus and key infrastructure for the Utrecht city-region that was ranked in 2013 as the most competitive region in Europe, ahead of the London area, Ile de France, Amsterdam or Stockholm (EU Regional Competitiveness Index, produced by the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre). But better alignment between both communication strategies, USP’s own marketing policy and integrated place branding at local and city-region levels, is a challenge. It seems Utrecht’s strong assets as one of the most advanced knowledge local economies in Europe still remain unknown for many. On the other hand, Lonely Planet recently ranked Utrecht as one of top ten unsung places in the world for visitors. So, despite being a flourishing economy, Utrecht is not very clearly positioned in the mind of many potential targets yet; and integrated city branding could certainly fill such communication gap. This was the focus of Utrecht coordinator for city marketing Ank Hendriks’ presentation and subsequent discussion.

First, she introduced the impressive array of city assets and ongoing emblematic projects that have been approached under the concept “city of knowledge and culture”:

- Excellent accessibility within Holland and Europe: 25 minutes by train from Schiphol Airport - 4th EU airport.
- University city - 43% of the labor force has university degree. Unique and lively historic city centre.
- Large-scale developments in course: Utrecht Science Park, Jaarbeurs convention center, Utrecht station area re-development and Leidsche Rijn, the largest housing and industrial development site now in the country.
Fastest growing city in the Netherlands in terms of population. Utrecht is also increasing directional functions at country level: more company headquarters, national consulting companies, etc.

However, the Council’s city marketing team is aware of “city of knowledge and culture” does not work well as a brand proposition nowadays. Basically it lacks of differentiation, since other quite similar claims are circulating across Europe in the last years. At this time the city is not looking for a brilliant motto or new visual identity, as Utrecht is simply needed of more systematic (collective) work in order to build up an updated and unifying narrative bringing together city backgrounds, assets and ongoing projects along with the city ambitions.

That is, a **big narrative** to be then detailed into different city propositions. Two approaches were raised by Ank Hendriks to succeed on this: trying to “define values and emotions instead of positioning on themes”; and bridging more efficiently between the knowledge-business ambit and the culture/tourism side in a variety of aspects, from content to management and governance, making the most of the well known Dutch willingness to flexible collaboration.

Other working lines in their agenda are the following:

- Raising awareness towards the importance of integrated place branding amongst stakeholders, citizens and the local media.
- Consideration of the city-region as more suitable scale for branding, positioning and marketing, as well as shaping a more positive win-win relationship with nearby Amsterdam.

After that, the Utrecht city marketing team organized an animated peer-review session with all the participants on the real/perceived image of the city. To that aim participants were split in four groups and invited to prepare and pitch their own stories about Utrecht. They were also encouraged to imagine themselves in different situations, like pitching about Utrecht in a party with friends and family; or at work, in the context of a professional conversation with colleagues. The idea was to extract common themes that could be of value for the Utrecht city marketing team.
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2 key study visits | Peer review | Case study | Final conference

A Local Action Plan in each of the participating cities
URBACT CITYLOGO

CityLogo is a partnership within the framework of the URBACT programme, led by the city of Utrecht and including Zaragoza, Genoa, Aarhus, Dundee, Warsaw, Oslo, Vilnius, Coimbra and Alba Iulia. It is a network on Innovative Place-Brand Management, launched as a reaction to the most common gaps in the way cities address branding and marketing. The rationale is that city-branding should be embedded in broader and participatory processes of re-thinking urban identities to be then filtered by urban-driven communication codes, resulting in more powerful brand-toolkits. In addition, more effective formulas for stakeholder involvement and management, also in terms of financial co-responsibility, should be widely promoted.

During the period 2012-2015, CityLogo will work at two levels: locally, shaping specific platforms for stakeholder involvement and management in each of the participating cities, with the mission to strengthen a strategy on integrated city branding; at network level, CityLogo will display a range of transnational activities, including thematic workshops, study visits, peer-reviews and reports. Initiatives at network level are also open to other interest cities and third parties.

Such “learning by interacting” itinerary will cover a range of key topics grouped into four main sub-themes, namely: integrated city brand management: re-thinking organizational models; integrated city brand building: beyond the marketing approach; channels & communication tools revisited: the impact of the digital shift; and new segmentation strategies: visitors, business, talent, locals.

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EUROCITIES WORKING GROUP ON CITY BRANDING AND ATTRACTIVENESS


The working group on City Branding and Attractiveness has been recently included inside the Eurocities Economic Development Forum. Such a choice was due to the need of reinforcing the plans for growth by attracting both new investments and visitors.

Chairman of the Eurocities-WG on City Branding: Cesare Torre, director of city promotion in Genoa c.torre@comune.genova.it