

# Image of the City

Urban Branding as Constructed Capabilities in Nordic City Regions



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<p><b>Abstract:</b> Nordic city regions are increasingly taking part in an international competition for skilled workers and mobile knowledge. Throughout the last decades there has been a growing awareness of the cities' role as an impetus for innovation and regional economic growth in Europe, and similarly a growing willingness to develop strategies for urban renewal and revitalization. Increasingly, efforts are made to create attractive urban spaces and to improve the urban environment in order to attract visitors, workers and companies. Yet little research has been conducted on how cities brand themselves; how cities succeed in creating or recreating a brand for the city as a good to be marketed and sold.</p> <p>Through selected case studies this project analyzes the various approaches and branding processes that are undertaken in the respective city cases. Based on the respective case studies the study has sought to map a range of success criterions in urban branding. The case studies comprise both Nordic and European cities that has undergone image transformations, either through a shaping or re-shaping of its image. The study implies a focus on to what extent urban branding strategies is paralleled by physical transformation processes.</p> <p>This report summarizes the various case studies accomplished in the project, and presents a range of 'commandments' that reflect the success criterions that have been brought forward from the case studies.</p>		
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## **Foreword**

The Image of the City is a research project primarily financed by Nordic Innovation Centre which ran during 2005 and 2006. The project team also gratefully acknowledges co-funding from other organizations including Uppsala University, Alborg University, Norconsult, The City of Helsinki, The City of Espoo and The City of Vantaa. The final report, edited by Johan Jansson and Dominic Power, summarizes the various case studies conducted and lessons learned by all the project participants from the Nordic countries. We wish to thank the expert group which kindly shared with us their experiences of urban branding processes. The contents and opinions expressed in this report are, however, entirely the product and responsibility of the research group. We hope that the knowledge and insights generated in this project will be of relevance and help to policy makers, urban planners and branding agencies both in Nordic city regions and beyond.

Markus M. Bugge  
Project manager

# Executive Summary

In recent decades there has been a growing awareness of the cities' role as an impetus for innovation and regional economic growth in Europe, and similarly a growing willingness to develop strategies for urban renewal and revitalization. Increasingly efforts are being made to create attractive urban spaces and to improve the urban environment in order to attract visitors, investments, workers and companies. As part of this renewed interest in cities role and the importance of having attractive urban spaces there has been a renewed focus on the role of reputation and image. It has become an integral part of urban and regional development strategies to think not just about the built or material infrastructure but also about immaterial things projecting a good image and building/maintaining a good identity or brand.

Despite the fact that city and regional authorities throughout the Nordic area are increasingly concerned with how their places are perceived and branded, the topic of urban branding still remains a rather unexplored and neglected aspect of urban transformation processes. To date relatively little research has been conducted on how cities brand themselves; how cities succeed in creating or recreating a brand for the city as a good to be marketed and sold.

The image of the City: Urban Branding as Constructed Capabilities in Nordic City Regions is a project that has aimed at studying cities' image, branding and advertising strategies as a comparative advantage in a globalized economy. The project has examined strategies of urban and regional branding in Europe and in the Nordic region from an interdisciplinary approach in order to better understand how cities and regions may brand themselves in order to their best advantage.

There are many reasons for thinking that branding and image improvement are necessary strategies in an increased competition in the global economy. Urban branding strategies can be seen as a vital component in the competition for:

1. Attracting inward investments and international venture capital
2. Attracting and retaining companies

3. Attracting and retaining skilled knowledge workers
4. Attracting new citizens
5. Attracting tourists and visitors
6. Sales and marketing of locally produced goods and services

Thus brands are not just about attracting investment, tourists, etc. to a place but also help the marketing and sales of the products and services such places produce. This list also gives a hint of the idea that urban branding strategies are working in two directions; inward and outward branding. Inward branding is concerned with identity building and strengthening the pride of the residents living in a place, thus creating an attractive environment with the ability to maintain its residents and business and in the long run also attract new citizens, tourists and business. Outward branding on the other hand is concerned with external communication and is directly related to attracting investments, knowledge workers, visitors and tourists to a place. Outward branding aims to help support the sales and marketing potential of goods and services produced in the local area.

The report concludes that the problem with branding cities is that they are very diverse products that can be difficult to fit neatly into a marketing campaign. Even if one can fit a city into one or a number of campaigns, running such campaigns can be difficult to manage and sustain. Added to this is the fact that the 'product' itself can react negatively to the wrong sort of marketing or branding. We feel strongly that it is clear that for diverse 'products' such as cities various strategies are needed and that there is no one solution and no model of best practice to copy.

However, even if we think that cities and regions need to find their own paths and solutions there is much to be learnt from the experiences of other places. Through our work during this project we found that certain points emerged as important. These points have been summarized into 10 commandments:

### **1. There is no recipe for success**

- There are various urban branding strategies and the choice of strategy needs to be adapted to local characteristics and assets.
- It is not clear whether one should aim for one meta-brand or for a portfolio of many brands with separate target audiences. However, there is a need for targeted marketing in both cases.

### **2. Urban branding is just a little part of community building**

- The brand needs to reflect and involve local assets and people.

### **3. Don't just tell it, show it**

- Physical changes are often as important as mental images in showing that a city really is changing.
- Branding is often most powerful when it is linked into and coordinated with physical transformation processes and urban (re)development initiatives (e.g. Drammen, Barcelona, Glasgow, Bilbao).
- The link between physical urban transformation and branding/the brand needs to reflect local assets and characteristics.

### **4. Uniqueness and innovation is key**

- Branding is ultimately about differentiating yourself from others therefore there it is important to be special and avoid copying what everyone else seems to be doing.
- A first step towards this is to identify local strengths and characteristics.
- It is important to be flexible in your thinking and understand that even local weaknesses can be turned into strengths (for instance, lack of light in the winter can be special to some people!).
- It is also important not to be blind to what others see and be ready to accept that outsiders' perceptions and needs might be very different to your own. It can be useful to see the city through the 'eyes of the stranger': e.g. by employing a non-local marketing bureau or by conducting visitor surveys.
- Both the brand itself and the method of communication can take many different forms: e.g. events, award ceremonies, conferences, supporting film industry, fashion locations, delegations, trade fairs, television, press, liter-

ature, signature buildings, and local ambassadors.

### **5. Branding is a long-term process**

- Avoid quick fixes; there is a need for long-term commitment.
- Branding can seldom be done without money
  - Facilitate a continuous flow of economic support and institutional anchoring (e.g. branding secretariat).
- Regular evaluation based on a clear set of success criteria is important.
- Brands develop slowly and the path is seldom smooth so be ready for set-backs and be ready to be involved in crisis management.

### **6. Top-down / Bottom-up branding strategies**

- There is a need to be aware that the branding process may vary along a top-down versus bottom-up axis.
- There may be a danger in fully outsourcing full control over a branding process to private agents; there may be advantages in local (public) governance and participation in the process.
- The more top-down a branding process the more difficult it tends to be to involve the local population.
- Small scale actions and hard to pin down feelings like civic pride are of great value. Thus it can be important to have the local population as brand ambassadors.
- Cities that use the same (top-down) branding agency may get 'mass produced' brands.

### **7. Well functioning organisational capacity and flexibility is important**

- There is a need to define local needs and characteristics.
- There is a need to define competitors/the competition and possible collaborators.
- It is important that there is an organisational map – to avoid duplication or conflicts – and that participants know where they stand and what their responsibilities are.
- It is helpful to have a clear aim, focus, strategy and good internal/external communication flows.
- Subcontractors, such marketing and branding firms, sometimes have expertise the public sector does not have but it is important they are given a very clear brief.

**8. It is not necessarily true that you are in competition with everyone else**

- Cooperation and co-branding can in many instances be more helpful in attracting the sort of attention and friends you are aiming at.

**9. Brands work at many different spatial and temporal levels**

- There is a need to think wider than the municipality (coordination) (ex. Øresund, Paris-London, Barcelona-Euro-region). Cities need to find their position within the Regional/National/Global. Different cities (size, power etc) should address different target groups.
- Some cities/regions could gain from seasonal branding and awareness that different strategies for different seasons might be needed.

- Different actors could sit down with their calendars and plan the entire year, would need better intra-urban coordination.

**10. The role of key persons**

- Dynamic and charismatic branding advocates and individual driving forces should not be underestimated. Often dedicated individuals and civic entrepreneurs are important driving forces behind (or against) particular urban branding or (re)development processes. Identifying, including and supporting these individuals is important.



# 1. Introduction

This report deals with city images. In particular it deals with how images are used as brands and how these brands contribute to urban and regional development. Whilst cities, towns and villages – indeed all places – have always produced (or being saddled with) images and stories in recent years it has become clear that such places are no longer happy to allow these symbols, images and narratives emerge by themselves. Instead cities have started to view the way in which they are perceived as potentially very valuable assets in their survival and renewal. As assets, city images are therefore things that need attention and work; work best not left to chance.

That cities' images are increasingly viewed as valuable and malleable assets has much to do with our changing perception of the city as a place for innovation and economic development. During the 1990s, the dark images of violence and deprivation that large cities had been blackened with began to change. There was a growing awareness of the city's role as a driver of innovation and regional economic growth. Indeed a range of policymakers, academics and pundits drew attention to the economic benefits of thinking locally and regionally. In particular they drew attention to the benefits that accrue when activities and people are agglomerated together. If we are to compete in the knowledge economy, cities and regions must attract new influences, assemble existing strengths, and act as arenas for the exchange and development of new ideas.

Such thinking has helped create a situation where policy has been abuzz with terms such as clusters, creative cities, growth poles, innovative meeting places, technopoles and the like. This renewed focus on the city as an economic driver coincided with a series of generational and lifestyle changes that has pressured government and the private sector into improving the attractiveness and vitality of urban areas. Both in the public and private sectors there has been a growing willingness to develop strategies for urban renewal and revitalization. Increasingly, efforts are made to create attractive urban spaces and to improve the urban environment in order to attract visitors, inhabitants, workers and companies. However, these

policies have been coupled with an awareness that such change needs to be communicated to others if it is to have a real effect. Thus being attractive or well functioning is not enough: others must be convinced of your attractiveness and a strong image or brand is the most effective way to do this.

These ideas has also meant that cities have begun to see themselves as products to be aggressively sold in increasingly competitive global markets for foot-loose jobs, workers, investment and capital. In this development there has been a change from thinking that urban brands are useful for attracting tourists to seeing them as being of much wider value: of value to economic development in general.

Traditionally most regional and urban economic (re)development policies have focused on two key areas: Firstly, they have concentrated a large amount of time and money on building up the hard infrastructure essential to functioning regions (everything from roads to fibre optic cable networks). Secondly, they have focused on supporting the efforts of firms that exist in (or have recently moved to) the area. A wide range of policies for firm, entrepreneurial, sectoral and cluster support have been put in place in order to help bring out the potential of firms to innovate and compete. Indeed both of these types of policy focus have had wide-ranging effects.

Whilst all these sorts of policies are obviously vital for building and maintaining urban and regional competitiveness, there is a growing awareness that such tangible measures may not be enough. With ever increasing levels of globalisation and technological advances in communications and travel it appears that both businesses and workers are more mobile and footloose than ever.

Economic geographer Phil Cooke and Loet Leydesdorff (2006) argue that there has been a shift from competitive or comparative advantages of regions to a focus on *constructed advantages* between regions. Such a perspective can easily be transferred onto an urban context, where the urban region is a focus for interregional competition nationally or internationally. However, much of the research on regional development, especially in the Nordic countries, has

overlooked urban centres as crucial driving forces for economic growth and development (Halvorsen, 2004). There is a need to try as many different methods as possible to attract and retain the dynamic and innovative people, images, and organizations to our cities. In particular there is a need to be carefully aware how we construct (both unconsciously and consciously) the 'advantages' our cities and regions exhibit.

In recent years cities such as Barcelona, Bilbao, Dublin and Manchester have shown that by changing their image and brand – or the ways in which both the outside world and their own citizens/businesses perceive the place – economic redevelopment and reinvention are greatly helped. On a wider level writers like Richard Florida have shown that in the knowledge economy both firms, creative workers and entrepreneurs are drawn to places with strong and dynamic images and brands. In a highly debated study of economic growth and business innovation in the USA, Florida (2002) shows that in the last 50 years the regions with the highest economic growth and innovation records are those with strong brand identities as open, tolerant and dynamic milieus. Even venture capital seems today to be highly susceptible to the lure of strong regional brands that give resident companies the mark of quality and innovation: e.g. the power of 'Silicon Valley' as a brand in motivating and attracting venture capital. Thus creating a strong regional brand makes it easier to attract not just tourists but most significantly mobile knowledge workers, inward investment and venture capital. It may also help in building feelings of civic pride and accomplishment; that can in turn help existing firms and residents stay in 'their' place.

The Nordic city regions, just like any other city regions, are increasingly taking part in an international competition for skilled workers, inward investment, tourists, etc.: markets where there are many strong brands. The realisation of the competitive realities they face has driven many, if not most, Nordic cities of various sizes and locations into more or less extensive image and branding work.

There is no common definition of 'brands' or 'branding', however, most commentators agree that any definition should include both tangible and intangible attributes of a product: e.g. both functional and emotional characteristics. Brands are the result of a

branding process whereby one attempts to charge a product (or set of products) with ethereal qualities: qualities that primarily function as marketing arguments. A brand's value is thus in the way people end up thinking and feeling about it and the product it is linked to. The aim of branding is to make an almost indistinguishable link between the character of an object and its branded image or form.

However, even experts in product marketing and branding can attest to how difficult creating, building and sustaining brands is. These are complex processes and failure can have long-term consequences for the product's survival. This is equally true for cities and regions which can become trapped in negative images that only help to accentuate ongoing processes of deindustrialisation or outward migration. It is therefore essential that we begin to understand the processes by which regional brands can be built and maintained, how they are anchored into the business community, how they are sold to their target markets, and what international best practise can tell us about these processes and the efforts of our foreign competitors. Strong brands take time to create and build, but are still vulnerable and relatively easy to ruin. To maintain a strong brand it takes continuous care and attention in order to remain strong. Urban branding, just like any other branding, has to be considered a process rather than a stable state of being and e.g. it continuously needs investments and reinvestments in order to avoid misinterpretations and remaining fresh in peoples mind.

This report builds upon a study of various urban and regional branding initiatives. In particular it looks at how they can contribute to constructing competitive advantage. Through selected case studies in the object is to analyze the various approaches and branding processes that have been undertaken in Nordic and European city regions. Furthermore, the aim of the study is not only to focus on brands in the form of symbols or logos, but also on how urban branding strategies are/can be paralleled by physical transformation processes. The results presented are not meant as a template for developing a branding strategy or as an uncritical rallying call for branding. Rather it is hoped that the practices we observed can help policymakers and planners, public and private, develop image and brand strategies that contribute to balanced and sustainable growth.

## 2. Why brand the city?

Before going on to looking at how exactly city branding occurs and how it can be done (for better or for worse) it is important to understand more clearly why a city might want to consciously brand itself and what one can realistically hope to be gained. Part of the answer to why cities are consciously engaging in urban branding and what they hope to gain can be found in macro-level changes in the global economy and division of labour cities find themselves caught in.

Pioneering European urban branding strategies must be seen against the background of increased globalisation and structural adjustments that have meant the relative decline of traditional manufacturing in most western economies (Begg 1999:795). Rapid industrial change has meant that many of our cities and regions can no longer guarantee that what traditional industry is left will be a sustainable source of future growth. This has forced them to support or attract new types of jobs and industries that on the face of it seem to be more sensitive to intangible elements of places.

The increased awareness and importance of urban branding strategies is partly fuelled by the idea that competitiveness is no longer solely reliant on material conditions like natural resources or built infrastructure. In the so called knowledge economy it is no longer costs for production and labour that is the core of competition. Rather competitiveness between regions and cities is a consequence of intangible measures – the ability to attract and retain talented and creative labour, to provide interactive milieus where new ideas can grow, etc. The problem for cities and city authorities is that it seems that Europe (and indeed elsewhere) is full of places that have great creative potential and lots of educated, skilled labour. In addition, many of these places have much greater political willingness and ability to offer other types of incentives and stimulants to new business – such as tax breaks – than seems to be possible in the Nordic region.

Branding and marketing seem against this background to be a realistic way of differentiating yourself from the competition.

The importance of city branding and regional de-

velopment strategies is confirmed by OECD which in 1999 created the Territorial Development Policy Committee in order to study and spread innovative territorial development strategies and governance. In this initiative data is collected with the aim of publishing rankings of top European business sites (OECD 2006). For example Stockholm is ranked number 23 (Figure 1.40). In the report on the competitiveness of Stockholm as a site for business attention is paid, amongst other things such infrastructure, to the importance of developing the city's reputation and brand as a site for business.

“To play an even bigger role in Europe and globally, the Stockholm region will need branding to increase its international visibility. Compared to many other European cities, Stockholm is far less known. Stockholm may have to rely on regional branding to attract foreign resources (businesses and workers). Regional branding could serve to overcome the disadvantages of being located at the edge of European and global markets as well as increase its currently low international visibility” (OECD 2006, p80).

Such ranking have become increasingly common and are also gaining respect and considerable international media attention. It is therefore important that cities and regions pay attention to such rankings and attempt to move up in them.

In general, such rankings are based on the idea that brands are important to places' ability to attract business. However, there are also other reasons for thinking that branding and image improvement are necessary strategies in an increased competition in the global economy. Urban branding strategies can be seen as a vital component in the competition for:

1. Attracting inward investments and international venture capital
2. Attracting and maintaining companies
3. Attracting and maintaining skilled knowledge workers
4. Attracting new citizens
5. Attracting tourists and visitors
6. Sales and marketing of locally produced goods and services

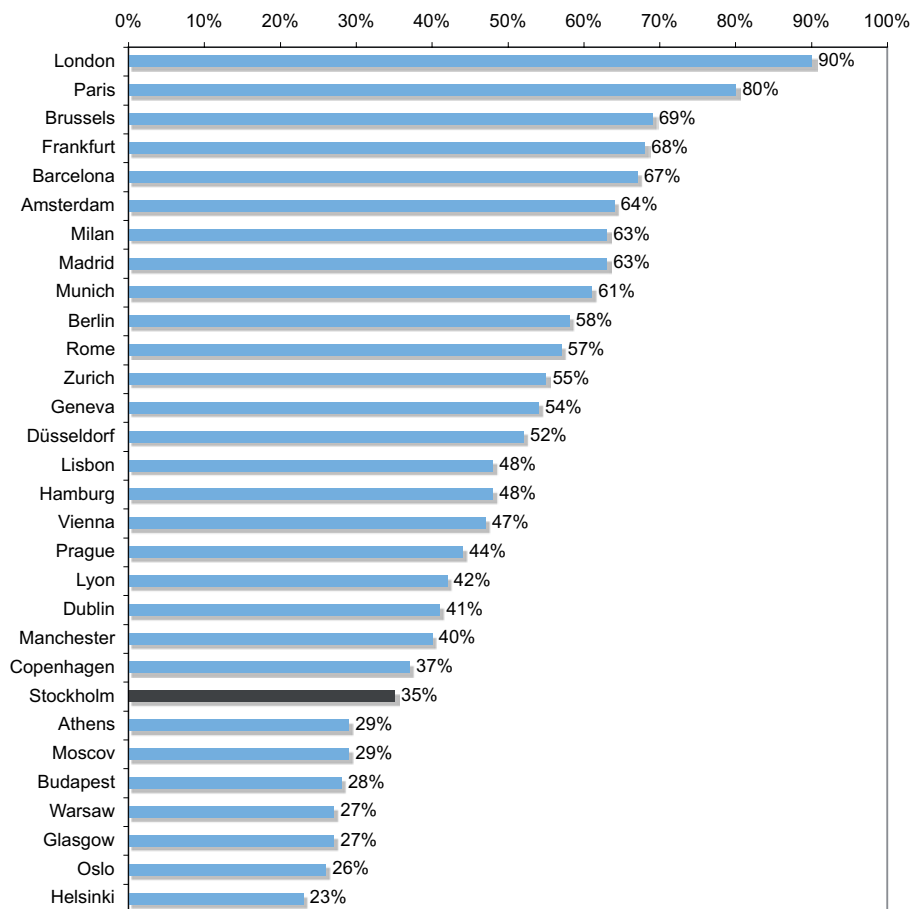


Figure 1: 'Familiarity with cities as a business location'. Source: *Cushman, Wakefield and Baker (2004); in OECD (2006, p81)*.

As can be seen from the above list, urban brands can help not only attract things into to the area but also be important to how things produced in the local area get received elsewhere: i.e. in export markets. It seems that more and more varieties of products and service are reliant for their competitive edge on intangible and symbolic elements such as their identity, marketing, brand, symbolic and aesthetic merits. If industries such as tourism are entirely reliant on the image and brand to which an area is associated, it is also true that many manufactured products are equally sold on the basis of regional and urban brands. An example, of this is the added value that the brand 'Paris fashion' gives to French clothing and luxury goods manufacturers: or that 'Danish Design' gives to Danish furniture exports.

The six areas in which we suggest brands can make a contribution to urban economic development and competitiveness are mirrored in other academic work. For instance, Lever identifies five basic targets for cities' competition: for mobile investment; for

added value to the gross domestic product; for population; for public funds; and for hallmark events and major pieces of infrastructure (Lever 1999:1029).

Evidence from across the Nordic region suggests that for smaller (and rural) places after the attraction of investments and firms it is the attraction of new residents that is judged by local authorities as the highest priority. In a recent survey of 220 Swedish municipalities Niedomysl (2004) found that the majority of municipalities had conducted place marketing activities and that attracting new inhabitants was a high priority. The smaller the municipality the more important the attraction of new residents was considered. All the municipalities stated that the quality of the built and lived environment was most important to their ability to attract new residents. This suggests that authorities are keenly aware that marketing exercises need to be backed with a competitive environment on the ground.

However, municipalities in Sweden were particularly interested in attracting families with children.

Table 1: *Engagement in marketing to attract in-migrants. (Niedomysl, 2004)*

Municipality type	Undertaken any kind of marketing (%)	Undertaken marketing campaign especially to attract in-migrants <sup>b</sup> (%)	Three most important factors to attract in-migrants
Large cities <sup>a</sup>	na	na	na
Suburban municipalities	28	17	the built environment, quality of life, commuting opportunities
Other larger cities	81	66	higher education, the built environment, communications
Medium-sized cities	81	51	living environment, quality of life, communications
Industrial municipalities	63	48	costs of living, quality of life, living environment
Rural municipalities	82	59	living environment, quality of life, commuting opportunities
Low-density rural municipalities	75	66	living environment, quality of life, costs of living
Other larger municipalities	91	63	quality of life, living environment, great natural beauty
Other smaller municipalities	79	41	quality of life, living environment, great natural beauty
Average	70	49	living environment, quality of life, outdoor leisure opportunities

<sup>a</sup> na – not available (the large cities do not market themselves to attract in-migrants).

<sup>b</sup> Any campaign to attract in-migrants during 2002–02.

Indeed young families and even long distance commuters were deemed to be of higher importance than the sort of mobile single knowledge workers pundits such as Richard Florida suggest are important to attract for areas interested in economic growth.

The study of Swedish municipalities also highlights the fact that municipalities are spending increasing amounts on place marketing, and they are becoming more advanced in the branding techniques they use in addition to rebuilding and redevelopment. Indeed information and marketing strategies are now seen by most Swedish municipalities as necessary parts of social and economic development spending and planning. Furthermore, Niedomysl found that in general municipalities were positive to the use and effectiveness of marketing techniques in relation to the goal of attracting new residents.

Whilst Niedomysl found that policymakers themselves were highly positive about the effects of marketing in attracting new inhabitants, statistics on new migrants to the areas in question gave a less positive picture. In general, Niedomysl concludes that at present there is little real evidence that such campaigns have, to date, been effective. Though he suggests that it might be too early to say what the long term effects of such initiatives and he is also suggesting that the picture might look different if the municipalities had done nothing at all.

The example above on attracting residents also highlights the different levels of competition that dif-

ferent cities face. Competition between regions and cities is happening on different levels and it is up to the individual city or region to assess who or whom they are competing with; what level or segment of cities and regions they are competing with. Three different levels of competition and competitor can be identified:

- Global cities
- Regional centers
- Smaller peripheral cities

Cities are competing on different scales and are trying to attract different things; e.g. they are communicating with different audiences. Rainisto (2003) notes that one key task for the management of an urban branding strategy is to decide in which market or level they want to compete. This decision will have a direct influence on the chosen strategy. The place-based brands, just like product brands, need to be developed and changed according to the customers' needs and the differentiation of the branding strategy competing places use. In short it is crucial that cities understand the competitive environment and position themselves in relation this in a realistic way. While global cities might be competing for the headquarters of multinational enterprises or to be international centers for fashion, film, biotech or computer science, regional centers on the other hand might be competing for the location of national companies,

Table 2: *Categories of in-migrants stated as being attract. (Niedomysl, 2004)*

Category of in-migrants	Percentage of municipalities
Families with children	52
Highly educated or equalified labor	30
Potential return migrants	16
Students	15
Entrepreneurs	9
Low-educated caring labour	7
People about to retire or newly retired	6
Second-home owners	5

public departments and organizations or national events. Smaller peripheral cities might not be able to compete for big companies, organizations or events. They might instead aim to attract in-migrants and tourists.

Even if strong brands can be seen to offer many benefits the idea of branding a city or a place in the same way as one might brand a commercial product is far from unproblematic. Just as in the USA, the language and rhetoric of business is now commonly used in the public sector in relation to Nordic cities and regions. It has become common practice for those working in urban affairs in the public sector to talk about how cities and regions can ‘compete’ and how they can sell themselves. It is clear that this represents a commodification of urban space: the city becomes a product to be sold in competition with other similar products. This commodification can be seen to be part of a changing relation of urban government to its subject – the city and its citizens. Government becomes an organiser for the sale and marketing of the city (and its product) and is evaluated (both internally and externally) by its ability to package and sell its product in the most efficient form. Cities that are successful in applying the logic of commercial sales and marketing are rewarded by accolades from the business world and the business press; and city fathers proudly boast of these rankings when they outline their accomplishments.

City authorities are increasingly phrasing their relation to urban development in terms synonymous with firm or product development. This can be seen to be worrying in a number of respects. Whilst firms are ultimately driven to deliver profits and shareholder value, it is by no means clear what cities or regions should aim to deliver. The danger is that by attempting to commodify the city and build on its

competitive strengths (as all good businesses do) many interests and groups can be left out or marginalised. In fact cities aim to deliver a whole range of public and private goods – encompassing everything from clean streets to economic growth to democratic participation – to a wide range of stakeholders. In addition, whilst neo-liberal dogmas suggest that the private sector knows best and its methods should be widely adopted by the public, firms and businesses do fail (often at an alarming rate).

Jensen (2005) argues there are at least four differences between branding a product and a city. First there is a difference in the number of stakeholders and their related interests; branding a city includes a complex web of preferences. Second, it is a hard task to negotiate a legitimate local value base with local participation. This is almost never an issue when branding a product. Third, branding a city or a place usually has to follow the paths of existing notions or historical identities of a place. Most products do not have the same depth of history or associations to consider. Fourth, the consumers of an urban brand are often more diverse than the consumers of a normal product since urban branding has to serve diverse groups of potential investors, residents and tourists.

An often cited spokesman for the idea of competitiveness between states, regions and places is the business economist Michael Porter. He argues that the national, regional and local environments directly affect the competitive position of firms (Porter 1990); and thus need to be just as competitive as the firms they serve. However, Paul Krugman, another economist, has been vocal in his criticism of the idea that states (and regions) are necessarily in competition with each other for resources, trade, etc. He notes that countries are not firms and that their access to trade in resources, citizens and new ideas is not a zero-sum game. He notes that countries’ welfare has less than we think to do with the development of other countries and often much more to do with policies and events at home. Added to this, history has shown that what is good for individual countries is good for their trade partners: that cooperation and alliances between countries pay dividends.

Krugman concludes by suggesting that thinking in terms of competition at a national level can lead to bad policies. In particular it can lead to trade wars and to backing only certain sectors/branches/strategies (that may fail). One may wonder if Krugman’s warning about using the logic of business competitiveness at the level of the nation state might not also

apply in some measure to city and regional levels. Krugman is, however, far from an enemy of business or economic development. Rather he suggests that the language of competition might usefully be substituted (or complemented) by the language of cooperation and alliance. An implication of this in the context of urban branding is that it might be most productive for individual cities and regions (especially those in the periphery) to work together rather than see themselves as competitors. As we shall see later in this report many smaller municipalities in the Nordic region have indeed chosen to cooperate with

their neighbours when branding or marketing themselves.

We should be careful then about what sort of commercial methods and logics we try to adapt to complex urban areas. This, of course, does not mean that we should neglect the importance of image for cities or regions. Neither does this mean that we should ignore the fact that everyone else seems to be busy improving their images. It simply means that we should be acutely aware of the differences between selling a product and improving a city's image or brand.

### 3. Urban branding strategies

Despite the complexity of the branding task both public and private actors have in recent years been busy branding cities and creating new images for them. There are multitudes of different ways in which such processes can occur. In general one can say that the strategies used tend to either focus on material aspects of the place – its built environment and infrastructure – or immaterial aspects of the place – its slogan, its identity, etc. Our research into city and regional branding in the Nordic region suggests that there are three main strategic areas in which actors have tried to enact change aimed at creating new city images and brands. These strategies are categorised into a simple matrix building on its material respectively immaterial character.

The three categories are: 1) Branding through signature buildings, events, flagship projects etc; 2) Branding through planning strategies, urban redevelopment, institutional and infrastructural support; 3) Branding through advertising, myths, slogans, logos etc. The first category is about advertising a city through spectacular buildings or events. Also these buildings and event works at different levels (on a local, national or international level). There are a number of famous and notorious buildings, both his-

torically and contemporary, that placed a city on the public's mental maps. Not the least, sports events like the Olympic Games have caused enormous attention and economic revenues for the organisers over the years. The second category alludes to the idea that thorough structural and planned transformations of the city can be used as urban branding strategies. One example of this could be how some, formerly industrial cities, actively working on changing its structure to oblige the demands of a new cultural or knowledge intensive economy. The third category refers to pure advertising with the aim of changing the attitude or an external and/or internal audience. These categories are not to be looked upon as separate or divided. Occasionally, a single category is used as an urban branding strategy, but more frequently the categories are used as interrelated processes where the three dimensions are integrated.

The main part (and work) of this project has been put into research on various kinds of case-studies. These case-studies cover a wide range of different urban branding strategies. The case-studies have been accomplished to be able to give examples and descriptions of urban branding strategies in different levels, and different scopes and scales. Evidence

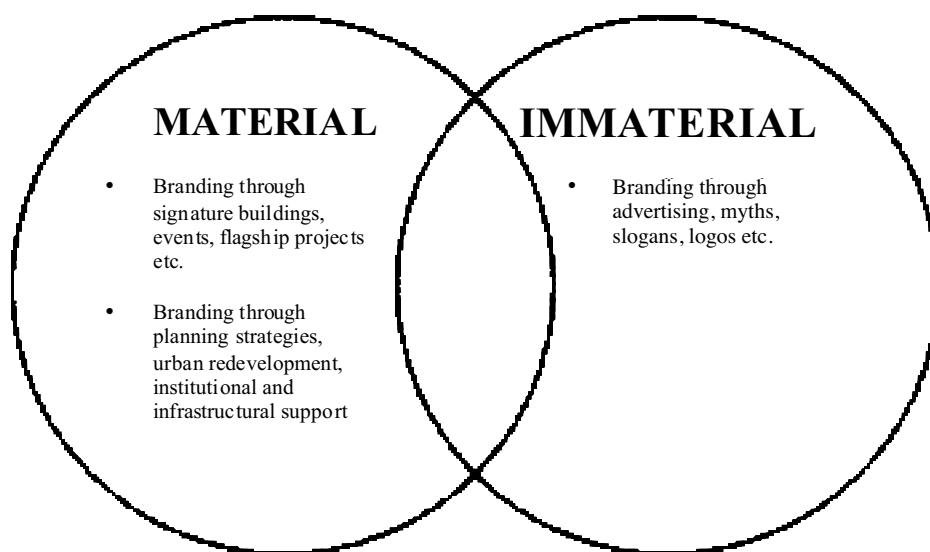


Figure 2: Urban branding strategies



from the case-studies is used in this report to illustrate different urban branding strategies. As many cities could be used to illustrate more than one strategy the case-studies in each chapter must be understood as examples of the categories in question.

In the following, the case-studies will function as a palette of examples on urban branding strategies. The case-studies are categorized along with the simple grid presented above where the strategies are used in order to create an easy way to understand the context of how to interpret the different urban branding strategies. The case-studies are describing different ways

of using urban branding strategies. They are discussing advantages and disadvantages with different strategies, but also positive and negative aspects from the lessons learned. The results of these discussions are summarized in a number of commandments. These commandments do not give any concrete advice of how cities should brand themselves at different levels. However, the report summarizes a number of insights related to branding that could be usefully taken into consideration by politicians, policy-makers, urban planners and other actors involved in urban branding processes.

## 4. The Grand Gesture: Branding through the built environment, events, flagship projects

Much of the work of planners and city authorities is concerned with improving the built and infrastructural environment of their areas. The built environment has in itself often functioned as the symbol or image that best promotes a city or a region. It is not surprising then that public initiatives to improve the image of different places have often involved the manipulation of the built environment to convey new images.

Building images in stone is not, however, just an example of institutional inertia and the material fixations of planning departments. It is an approach to marketing and advertising places that has a long and proven history. Buildings and built infrastructure have a power and tangible symbolic value. Throughout history monarchs, governments, churches, businesses and so on have attempted to use the symbolic power of buildings to suit their own purposes. By accident and by design various places have managed to create buildings that capture the imagination to such an extent they become the most powerful symbol of what the place stands for. Such buildings have managed not only to become icons but also act as magnets for investments, tourists and labour. Indeed it is often to the built environment we turn when we try to sum up or understand a place. Buildings such as the Eiffel Tower and the Great Pyramids are an inherent part of how we understand and think of their home countries/cities. Some buildings, like the Twin Towers, retain their symbolic meaning long after their destruction or disappearance.

Whilst places have long worked on creating pleasant and efficient built environments as a part of their development there is a very explicit focus emerging (or re-emerging) on the role of iconic or signature buildings. Many places have adopted a conscious strategy of using signature buildings and architecture to advertise and re-brand their cities. These buildings have different functions, but are usually within areas like culture and sports, and fairly often the building is praised for its architecture. Architecture plays an important role in urban regeneration projects and place marketing and in this sense architecture becomes a form of advertising. According to Crilley (1993), ar-

chitecture is an integral part of the incorporation of cultural investment and policy into urban growth strategies, as cities struggle to attract inward investment. Architecture, from new science parks to new opera houses, is thus mobilized to transmit a catchy image of urban vitality.

Recently, signature or iconic buildings have gained increasing popularity among policy-makers and urban developers. The basis for this development is to be found in a couple of very successful examples of signature buildings that have helped give new life to a city with an image problem. One such example is Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. The investments in the building of the Museum have generated huge success in changing the image of Bilbao from being a run down industrial city to an internationally recognized centre for culture and art. Whether Bilbao's increasing fortunes can be seen as a direct consequence of Guggenheim or not, the Bilbao experience has made many governments, municipalities and urban policy-makers seriously consider the idea of creating their own 'Bilbao-effect'.

However, the idea of the iconic or signature building have been questioned and criticized by several pundits. The main critique of their current popularity is aimed at the difficulty of creating a truly iconic or unique building in a world that is increasingly full of them. As architect and author Charles Jencks (2005) suggests:

The danger (...) is that the iconic buildings become one-liners. They destroy cities. They send each other up. In other words, if you have five iconic buildings in a row, they cancel each other out. They have all these problems. But my argument is that the iconic building is here to stay because of the decline of religion, the decline of the monument, the rise of global capitalism, the rise of consumer society and celebrity culture, the rise of corporations and mayors and people who ask for them. And also because the public likes iconic buildings when they are successfully other – that is, when they are successful creative experiments.

An alternative to iconic or signature buildings is a cultural or flagship project. These activities are often based on local heritage, historical or artistic re-

sources, but also assume the guise of energetic redevelopment programs. Examples of this phenomenon can be found in the promotion of tourism in a number of old British industrial cities (notably Liverpool and Manchester) on the basis of their roles as popular music centers. A striking example can also be found in the case of the Ruhr region where the repackaging of an old industrial landscape has helped to spark off major new cultural developments (Gnad, 2000). However, the iconic building and other flagship projects or major events tend to create a 'Disneyization' (Bryman 2004) of the urban landscape where every urban space contains more or less the same ingredients such as a the ubiquitous business and shopping districts and the bohemian or creative district in the form of a SOHO™ ; a 'theme park' for bohemians and culturally interested people.

Just as eye-catching buildings can be important communications devices for places so too can headline catching events. It is important to note then that the strategy to advertise and profile a city or a region by focusing on one or several high profile or signature things does not just relate to building unusual buildings: it also includes hosting high profile or important events and other flagship projects. Some annual or periodic events with altering hosts, like for example the World Cup or the Eurovision Song Contest, attract enormous attention, and to a certain degree economic turnovers, for the hosts. Permanent calendar fixtures can also be important features of a place's landscape and brand: for instance the Paris Fashion Week or the Davos World Economic Forum. Other interesting examples of short term happenings that have lasting image effects are music and cultural festivals, trade fairs and other exhibitions.

In the following section two issues are discussed in particular. The first topic deals with signature buildings and larger cultural or flagship projects in urban branding. The second relates to the use of events as branding strategies.

## Iconic or signature buildings as branding strategies

As mentioned above, iconic or signature buildings are often used as marketing tools to express and symbolise new urban images. This trend is beginning to take hold in Nordic cities or municipalities. Recent examples in the Nordic countries include the newly built Opera House in Copenhagen, the redevelopment of the Oslo harbour around a new opera house and the

'Turning Torso' in Malmö. These projects have attracted tremendous national and international media coverage during planning and construction phases. Such grand projects, by their nature, often attract as much negative as positive comment. This is especially true at local levels and during the planning and building phases. The 'Turning Torso', for example, attracted significant negative publicity in Sweden during its constructing: mainly due to its cost overruns. However, opposition has gradually changed towards a more positive attitude and today the high rise building is seen as a positive symbol for the regeneration of Malmö.

Despite notable exceptions there is a relative lack of new large-scale projects and new internationally recognized buildings in the Nordic countries. This is not to say that there is a lack of iconic buildings with important symbolic values but rather that Nordic cities have generally not been as aggressive in their use of grand projects and signature buildings as other European cities. This is, of course, not necessary a bad thing since as important as planning new projects is the maintenance and strengthening of the status and value of existing (often historical) buildings such as Nyhavn in Copenhagen or Gamla Stan in Stockholm.

## Use of design and architecture in Helsinki's branding

Helsinki, being the capital of Finland, has to negotiate between its role as the visiting card of Finland and building its own image as urban, tolerant and culturally thriving. This image stands in stark contrast to the sticky idea of Finland as 'Europe's last wilderness'. Modern design and architecture provide an important and mediating ground for this development. Modern architectural building constitute an important part of Finland's self understanding and image abroad, but can also be crucial in the branding of the city. Many of Helsinki's important buildings stand as isolated icons, the neoclassical cathedral by C.L. Engel, and the high-modern Finlandia Hall by Alvar Aalto being prominent examples. Architectural landmarks constitute an important part in any city's tourism routes. Signature architecture is not always the preserve of art galleries or opera houses. In Helsinki some of the most important signature buildings are commercial spaces: such as the Academic bookstore by Aalto; Stockmann department store by Sigurd Frosterus; and the main railway station by Eliel Saarinen. While Helsinki lacks contemporary signature buildings (Kiasma by Steven Holl being a partial

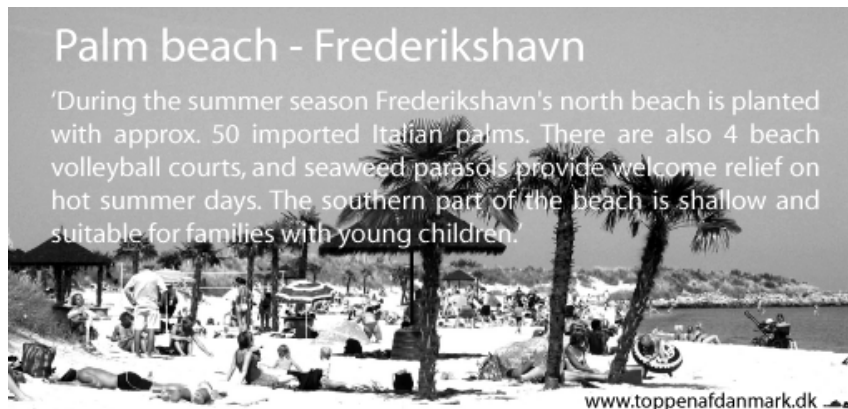


Figure 3: The palm beach in Frederikshavn.

exemption), much of its urban structure consists of modern architecture and interior design.

We should therefore try and broaden our understanding of signature and iconic buildings. First, we should not assume that they need to be entirely new and thus we should understand that promoting and protecting architectural and design heritage is extremely important to a city's brand (and indeed its self-image). Secondly, we should be aware of the importance and role of commercial spaces and buildings in setting a city's tone and image. Careful cooperation with commercial interests could be important if a city's architectural and design credentials are to emerge or be strengthened.

### The Shipyard City and the Palm Beach of Frederikshavn

Signature buildings and spaces do not necessarily need to be permanent or even particularly characteristic of local conditions. Recently some cities have begun to focus on 'experience' spaces of a more temporary or surprising nature to strengthen their brand or completely redirect it.

One such example is Frederikshavn in Denmark. In 1997, the closing down of two shipyards left 7000 local workers unemployed, adding yet another negative dimension to a public image already marked by (Swedish) tourists 'on the loose'. To change this negative trend new investments were made in, for example, the transformation of water front facilities to cater for more immaterial production: the informational technology industry. Moreover, and in accordance with the notion of the new experience economy, the city supported the 'Ocean Blue' project at the harbour.

The project resulted in a variety of seasonal interventions. Ski slopes in a Nordic context are perhaps not so surprising but the construction of a summer time palm beach in a Nordic city ranks as more unusual. However, even though the politicians felt that things were changing for the better, a survey still confirmed the negative image in the wider public. The city therefore hired the marketing company Gaardbo COMM whose main task was to start out "telling positive stories". In the advent of this strategy 1000 locals were named ambassadors of the city and were asked to spread the new gospel locally as well as nationally. The City Council chose a strategy of 'wild' and daring projects challenging the main stream perception of a medium sized municipal city in the periphery.

### Regeneration and city brands

In the same way as a building may represent a city or function as advertising or be a part of a conscious urban branding strategy, a block, a quarter or a larger project – flagship or culture project – can make up a vital part of an urban branding strategy. A common approach has been to use culture in the advertising of a city. Especially, culture has been used as a counter-image for de-industrialized cities in need of a new identity and image.

A sort of first-generation approach to the systematic deployment of cultural assets in the quest for local economic growth can be found in the aggressive place-marketing pursued by many municipal authorities since the early 1980s (Power and Scott 2004). This activity is often based on a local heritage of historical or artistic resources, but it also assumes the

guise of energetic redevelopment programs. Bilbao, Seville's Expo, Manchester, Dublin's Temple Bar and the Ruhr region are instances of the remaking and marketing of place through stressing culture and arts and are primarily focused on attracting tourists and inward investment. One of the dilemmas of this approach is the mismatch that sometimes occurs between the exigencies of the tourist trade and local cultural aspirations and attitudes. In short there is a danger that tourism and real estate development end up undermining the culture and arts industries these approaches supposedly build upon.

Of late years, an alternative (or, rather, a complementary) second generation of policy approaches has come increasingly under the scrutiny of local authorities. In this instance, the objective is less the construction or redevelopment of facilities that will entice visitors to flock into a given centre, as it is to stimulate the formation of localized complexes of cultural industries that will then export their outputs far and wide. This stress can be found in policy approaches that stress the importance to economic development of creative industries, cultural industries or experience industries. Such approaches are focused primarily on using policy to (re)build a network of creative/cultural/experience firms that are strongly anchored to the local area through tightly-knit firm-to-firm links and institutional infrastructures. Even more than in the case of place-marketing approaches, this alternative line of attack is critically dependent on a clear understanding of the logic and dynamics of the agglomeration processes that shape much of the geography of the modern cultural economy.

For any given agglomeration, the essential first task that policy-makers must face is to map out the collective order of the local economy along with the multiple sources of the increasing-returns effects that invariably emanate from its inner workings. This most commonly involves mapping exercises and research on industrial activities clustered in the area. This in itself is a difficult task due both to the problems of defining just where the cultural economy begins and ends, and to the intangible nature of many of the phenomena that lie at the core of localized competitive advantages. That said, it is this collective order more than anything else that presents possibilities for meaningful and effective policy intervention in any given agglomeration. Blunt top-down approaches focused on directive planning are unlikely in and of themselves to accomplish much at the local scale, except in special circumstances. In terms of costs and benefits and general workability, the most successful

types of policies are generally those that concentrate on the character of localized external economies of scale and scope as public or quasi-public goods. The point here is both to stimulate the formation of useful agglomeration effects that would otherwise be under-supplied or dissipated in the local economy, and to ensure that existing externalities are not subject to severe misallocation as a result of market failure. Finely tuned bottom-up measures are essential in situations like this.

Whether the goal is to use culture as a flag that attracts new residents and tourists or whether there is a concerted attempt to create cultural *industries* clusters it is important that such strategies are connected to, and embedded in, local structures and anchored to local actors. A common issue to all such local developments (whatever the scale) is the need to coordinate the various local actors and interests involved in intervening in an area or in using one area as symbolic of a wider city or region. This is something that is specifically dealt with later in the report.

### Helsinki: Arabianranta Art and Design City; Design Quarter

The Arabianranta art and design city in the Helsinki region is a collaboration between the University of Art and Design and the mixed-use development surrounding the Arabia shop and museum. Arabianranta is not a grand gesture as such but it is a clear example of a strong intervention in the built environment. It is equally an example of cooperation and planning policy. However, as an intervention it profiles and brands itself with very specific associations to culture and design.

The site for this project is situated in the huge Arabia porcelain factory. Around this nucleus, a new inner city suburb is under construction. The area is peppered with urban art and design-led environmental projects. A specific system directs 1–2 per cent of acquisition costs of both public and private projects to investments in art. Besides many art pieces, this has led to high quality architectural execution and art that is seamlessly integrated in new buildings. The project has involved local artists and architects as well as international stars, such as Robert Wilson, in large-scale projects in Arabianranta. The project can be considered as a best practice of both public-private cooperation, production of themed urban area and city branding.

Another example from Helsinki of a design and culture based intervention in the built environment



Figure 4: Lume Media Centre by Heikkinen-Komonen Architects in Arabianranta (photo Panu Lehtovuori).

that has had an impact on the evolving Helsinki region brand is the Design Quarter. At the initiative of the promotional organisation, Design Forum, parts of Punavuori are branded as a design-intensive quarter. The core consists of the Design Forum and the Design Museum, located near each other. In this first stage, the Design Quarter is a marketing arrangement, joining the two public institutions and a selection of design shops, cafes and restaurants. Ilpo Koskinen (Professor in industrial design at the University of Art and Design in Helsinki) has proposed the notion of “semiotic community” to describe this kind of place-based lifestyle option.

### Husavik village

Not all attempts to use culture to boost an area’s image need to be based in large cities or focus on international style art, architecture and design. Indeed some of the more successful Nordic re-branding and redevelopment culture initiatives have happened in small and isolated places; and used art and design wholly unique to the area. The Ice Hotel in Jukkasjärvi in Northern Sweden is now a well known example of a focus on design and culture led redevelopment and branding. The most interesting aspect of the Jukkasjärvi story is the fact that they managed to turn their weakness, their long, cold and icy winters, into their strength and prime attraction factor. Another ex-

ample is that of the town of Husavik in northern Iceland. Husavik is a typical fishing village that used to run cooperative fish industry factories and agricultural services but suffered the closure of almost all its industry some years ago. The town has had to reinvent itself as a place celebrating local culture and history and nature. Small local entrepreneurs have worked hard to sustain small enterprises in tourism, basing almost all livelihoods on the six to eight summer weeks when foreign tourists visit the region. There are now two whale-watching companies established in the region and during the high season all accommodation is usually booked. In 1998, designers were brought in to look at the old harbour area to see how the seafront could be developed from an industrial environment into something more sympathetic to visitors. After research in various locations in Canada and Europe a proposal was made to redevelop the existing buildings to have capacity for retail and service areas, a museum focusing on Viking sailing techniques, and service locations for nature excursion companies. The designers presented images from tourist locations abroad, showing details of street furniture, restaurants, and banking services to stimulate ideas for the local public. A dynamic master plan was made for the town. The plan was based around the concept of intimacy with the locality, the use of traditional materials and methods with the aim being that no one would realize that a designer has taken part in

the development. This work introduced an approach to the community that has realized the importance of involving a designer in the very early entrepreneurial stages of possible projects. In this case, the innovative use of a designer as a facilitator for community involvement in a redevelopment and branding plan proved important. However, it shows that the use, and accentuation, of local and authentic images and culture can be an important starting point for the development of new types of industry: in this case tourism.

## Branding through grand projects and events

Whilst the use of signature buildings is a common method now used to put cities on the map, the use of large scale events coupled with building projects is also a strategy adopted by cities to strengthen their brands. There is a long history of special events, trade fairs and exhibitions throughout the world and many of these events have also involved signature buildings and significant building and redevelopment programmes. Examples include: the 1851 Great Exhibition in London which involved the building of the Crystal Palace; hosting the Olympic Games and the upgrading of city infrastructure and the building of Olympic villages and arenas (Barcelona's hosting of the Olympics is often cited as the classic example of this); or World Fairs and Expos. Cities also regularly compete to attract more regular events such as high-profile trade fairs that can enhance their reputation as meeting places and centres of innovation and excellence. In the rest of this section we describe two such examples: the Millennium celebrations and Dome in London; and the Milan Furniture Trade Fair.

### London – the millennium Dome

The Millennium Dome project in London is one of the best-known projects using architecture to celebrate an event in the history of a city and a nation. In this respect the project has very much to do both with iconic buildings and events as branding strategies. The Millennium Dome project had several functions. First, the building housed an exhibition that should demonstrate technical and cultural achievements. Second, the building was an anchor around which to new enterprises and development could be attracted to the locality of Greenwich (the site of the Dome). Since the site was environmentally damaged the Dome project was also seen as instrumental in repair-

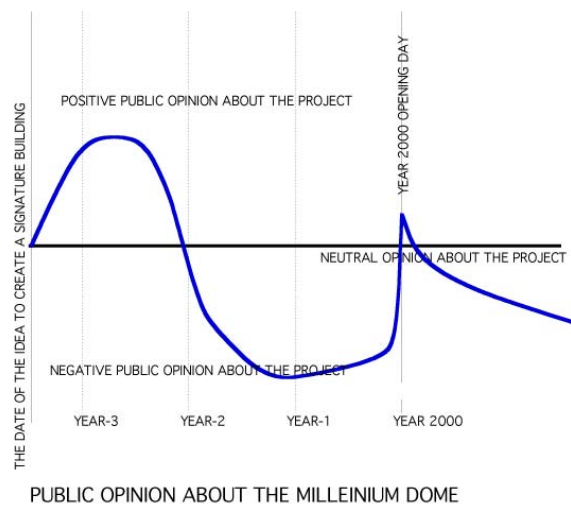


Figure 5: Popularity curve for the Millennium Dome (Drawn at a seminar in London in 2006 in which leading members of the Dome team and various critics assessed the project).

ing the area with ecological and sustainability issues. The Millennium Dome project really increased the pace of which the Greenwich area was developed. If the Dome had not been built, probably nothing would have happened on the site for a long time since no development firm was willing to touch it.

In 1994, the British government established The Millennium Commission which set up a competition for projects or events that would celebrate the new Millennium. An ambitious plan was launched with an enormous budget (especially for a one year event) of £758 million. The event and building was to symbolise a dynamic and modern Britain and put London firmly at the centre of the global frenzy surrounding the millennium.

The financial situation of the Millennium Dome involved a range of different and sometimes innovative sources. In particular the Dome project got most of its funding from the new national lottery meaning that no tax payer's money was used for the construction of the Millennium Dome. Despite such innovative financial arrangements the project is perhaps most memorable and remarkable, at least in the UK, for the level of negative media attention it drew to the politicians, Government departments and local authorities involved. Initially the idea drew positive attention from the press who saw it as the type of bold plan that underpinned historic successes such as the Festival of Britain in 1951 (which led to Europe's largest arts and culture complex: the South Bank



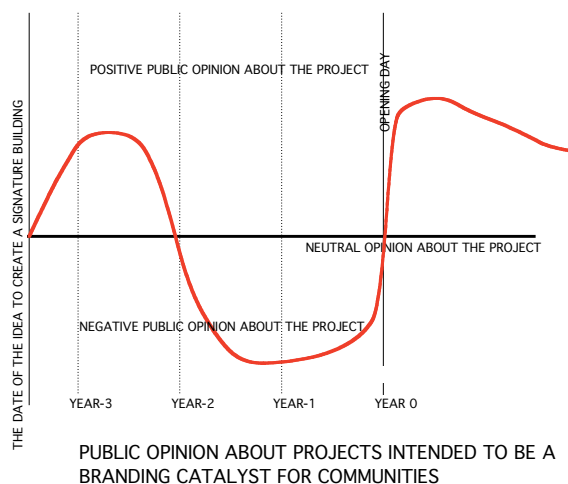


Figure 6: Popularity curve for public iconic buildings.

Centre) and earlier world fairs. However, the situation had changed by the start of construction. In the end, the British press spent several years during the construction phase and the entire year in which the Dome actually accepted visitors systematically ridiculing the project and those involved.

The Dome project soon created a series of regional rifts since it quickly became a symbol of centralized government favouring spending in the capital and trying to hide this favouritism under a cloud of 'spin'. The nation did not like the London power to squander money that could be spent locally. A long series of design faults, construction problems and cost overruns (all of which the government attempted to 'spin') reinforced the negative images the project generated. The Dome became a symbol of how to get things wrong and a symbol for top-down planning that was out of touch with reality and the wants and needs of the British public.

The project thus demonstrates that the enthusiasm that policymakers have for iconic buildings and grand (but often powerfully defined) cultural interventions can just as easily lead to negative brands as they can to positive brands. A key question, however, is the longevity of these negative brands. Without defending the Dome in any way, it is interesting to note how many iconic and signature buildings are built and initiated under a storm of public and media protest. Indeed the architect of the Dome project, Richard Rogers, had a similar experience from the building of the Pompidou Centre in Paris. Initially the Pompidou and the surrounding redevelopment was widely criticised and abused during its inception and construction.

Even the Eiffel Tower had the same problem with negative attitudes from the public. These projects are now, of course, quite popular with both tourists and locals.

It seems that for many large scale projects public popularity grows with time; though this is dependent upon the project being of high quality. This indicates that whilst policy must be sensitive to how media and public images are handled under the construction and planning phases the results for the place's image and brand may take a long time to fully emerge. Policy should be aware that, especially in the case of signature buildings and grand projects, results will not be apparent immediately and that long term commitment is needed if the investment is to bear fruit.

### Building for temporary signatures: trade fairs and regular events

Whilst some events are one-off there is now an awareness of the role of short lived but regular events in marketing a city and region. An exceptional example of this is the importance of business of trade fairs, exhibitions and other temporary events as key indicators of a city's dynamism and business climate. In addition, such events can bring cities significant revenue in the form of business visitors and tourists. However, attracting and hosting such events is far from cost free and even short lived events such as trade fairs involve significant investment in infrastructure and capacity (in terms of fair grounds, accommodation, etc.). The effectiveness of trade fairs as a marketing and symbolic tool combined with the revenue they can bring in has meant that there is intense international competition for events and that many cities are now investing large sums in both attracting trade fairs and festivals and in building the facilities these events need.

Trade fairs, etc. also have a vital role in economic development in that they support firm level competitiveness and competence. For firms, trade fairs and industry events are often the most direct and important route to new markets and distribution channels. Trade fairs have a general importance for the interchange of information and meeting industry participants as well as their export-promotion function. Larger international trade fairs also attract significant media attention that can be invaluable to firms trying to establish themselves in new markets.

An interesting example in this development is Milan in northern Italy. The large global design, fashion and furniture trade fairs and exhibitions the city hosts





Figure 7: Entrance to the new Fiera Milano.

work as powerful advertising for the city, but also as a way of strengthening Milan's position as a global centre for fashion and design. Participating and visiting these trade fairs and exhibitions are producers, buyers, customers, retailers, distributors and tourists that together have the power and possibility to spread the idea of Milan as a centre for design and fashion. More than anything there are two events in Milan that have come to symbolise the city and its (post)industrial economic base: the Milan Furniture Fair and the Milan Fashion Weeks.

Milano Furniture Fair or the Salone Internazionale del Mobile (and the Milan International Design Week that runs parallel to it) is the largest furniture fair in the world and over one week attracts more than 120 000 visitors and over 1200 exhibitors. It is the most important trade fair for furniture, lighting and interior design. The Milan Furniture Fair has a great impact on trends, networks and contacts in the furniture industry world wide. To the city the trade fair has since its beginning been central in creating the image of Milan as a world leading hub for the furniture and design industry.

The ability to successfully host such large scale temporary activities, like the furniture fair, is also

making a permanent physical impact on the built environment in Milan. Up till the year of 2004, the area of the trade fair (Fiera Milano) was located near the city centre. To maintain and further strengthen the position of Milan as a centre for design, large investments have been made into a totally new exhibition area. This new exhibition site is custom made to fit sizeable international trade fairs. The old exhibition complex in the city centre will be redeveloped and renamed the City Complex. Parts of it will remain host for shows and conferences in the city and the rest of the old exhibition complex will be transformed into a new district with towers and buildings designed by international renowned architects like Arata Isozaki, Daniel Liebeskind, Zaha Hadid and Pier Paolo Maggiora (no doubt with many signature buildings involved).

The new exhibition area is located just outside Milan on a site previously used by an oil refinery. It is the largest development project in Italy and also the most expensive; and largest self-financed investment with approximately 1750 million going into the project. The new exhibition site occupies about 2 million square metres with a gross floor space of approximately 530 000 square metres. The whole exhibition

site is more like a new town involving several blocks dedicated to trade fairs and exhibitions. It has a police station, airline check-in, chapel and a mosque. It is also the site for three new hotels and a subway line that links directly with central Milan.

In a similar way as the Milan furniture fair, the fashion weeks are an integral part of the international fashion circuit. The fashion weeks function as temporary events or nodes where the industry get together to share information, see new fashion collections, trends, etc. and to exchange goods. These events are not just sales points but are also meeting points and network building events. The fashion weeks in Milan, just like the furniture fair, give the opportunity to manage some of your business acquaintances (customers, producers, suppliers etc.) at one place at the same time. For domestic and local firms such events mean that they can reach a wide variety of customers and markets in one place in a short period.

The fashion events also leave their mark on the year round environment. In the case of Milan there has been significant urban redevelopment initiatives undertaken by private actors with the aim of creating the right sort of flexible and symbolic spaces for temporary events and for incoming visitors: e.g. Dolce & Gabbana recent rebuilding of a former cinema as a 1000 person show venue.

Fashion industry actors, such as Giorgio Armani etc., seem to understand that the surrounding environment reflects greatly on the perception of the products and brands they sell. Consequently they have been active in investing in urban infrastructure that supports the sort of image they want for Milan: for instance by investing in large arts and cultural complexes and by marketing the city's name by themselves. Indeed for city's interested in promotion it should be understood that business has the capacity

to spend substantial amounts of money on advertising the city that reflects the image they want to have associated with their products. The implication of this is that policymakers could be advised to cooperate closely with and encourage private firms to use their city as a backdrop to advertising campaigns. Sometimes indirect marketing of a city – such as its role as a backdrop for a successful product or a film – can be much more effective than direct advertising conducted by the city authorities.

The implications of what has been said about temporary events – and particularly trade fair events – for Nordic cities and regions is that such events can be important components of a successful brand strategy: especially one aimed at the business sector. However, whilst cities should help develop their own events co-operation on a Nordic level can be of a wider regional importance and help add to all Nordic brands.

Thus Nordic and national trade fairs should be supported in efforts they make to internationalize: internationally recognised trade fairs greatly enhance both city and larger regional brands and help firms to access wider markets. Private actors that run trade fair events have already started using the Nordic brand themselves. For instance, the advertising campaign for Stockholm Furniture Fair 2006 went under the slogan: “Världens största mässas för nordisk design” (The world's largest trade fair for Nordic design). Copenhagen International Furniture Fair 2006 advertised under the slogan: “Your access to Scandinavian furniture and design”. Whilst the emergence of one local trade fair as ‘the’ Nordic event may take business away from other competing Nordic events it can be considered that a few strong global brands are better for the regional image and for companies than a fragmented set of weaker brands.

## 5. Branding through planning, urban redevelopment, and administering long term change

In contrast to more short term focuses on creating a splash that many branding exercises involve, a range of Nordic and European cities have concentrated on developing long term holistic approaches to urban branding. These approaches most often involve urban strategic and operative planning bodies that aim at the promotion and development of their respective urban regions through long term networking, branding, competence building and industrial support. These types of approaches attempt to link many areas of urban, economic, social and infrastructural development in order to create an integrated platform within which the city or region gets remade and re-imagined.

Of course, cities and regions have for many years adopted long term and integrated approaches to their development. What is often quite new about more recent variants of this is the stress these initiatives now place on the 'soft-side' of development: the development of image, brand and reputation.

The integration of a focus on the 'soft-side' into development plans can be particularly challenging for city and regional actors as it involves them not only in the sort of conflicts hard-side development (such as infrastructure upgrading) involve but also in highly emotive issues around identity and inclusion. This leaves the public sector with a challenge to adopt strategies of marketing and promotion from the private sector without losing public support and anchoring. Such strategies require knowledge on how to organize both physical and image renewal, and the ability to coordinate a wide range of interests becomes crucial for the competitiveness of the respective urban region.

Internationally and in the Nordic countries two main planning tendencies have become central to such integrated branding approaches.

Firstly, there has been a tendency within city and planning authorities (as well as private developers) to become highly selective: to highlight and support the regeneration of certain areas of their cities or certain 'clusters'. Typically this has involved either: a focus on high-technology industries and the building (and branding) of science parks and technopoles; or a fo-

cus on regenerating problem ridden urban and declining areas (most often dockland areas or quarters populated by 'creative' people) and to use these redeveloped areas as symbolic of how the city as a whole is changing. Regeneration thus becomes both about changing the social and economic structure of specific areas and about creating a built expression of the entire city's new direction and regeneration.

Secondly, there has been the growth of a new regionalism in planning and policy circles. This has meant that central government as well as city and local authorities have started to pursue cooperation within wider regional settings as a key policy goal. Greater regional cooperation is seen as essential if smaller administrative units and local actors can gain the economies of scale and scope they need in order to make a mark in a seemingly ever more globalized world. In such initiatives local identities and images get recast (or pushed to the side) in the service of creating a larger regional identity and development plan.

Urban branding and development processes involve a range of various political interests, different governmental bodies at various levels, and private sector interests such as landowners, building companies, business communities, inhabitants and interest groups. This characteristic makes it crucial for urban governmental actors to possess viable tools and organizational models for handling such a complex set of often competing interests. The rest of this section deals with some Nordic branding cases that involved first and foremost the necessity to coordinate different actors and interest groups. A particular issue here is how such processes can work successfully when both public and private actors take part; and how different actors can learn from and adapt to each other.

### Coordinating local actors

As part of the research this report is based upon, a study of the Norwegian town of Drammen was conducted. The case study demonstrates that sorting out a well functioning forum for the coordination of local

interests and actors is a vital basis for any urban branding exercise (no matter what form the branding takes). In addition, the case study brings up the question of the relation between the built environment and constructed images. To create an effective re-imagining of a city – a total image change – it is, in many cases, important that this campaign is supported by a material infrastructure and built environment that is coherent with the images produced.

## Drammen

Drammen is a relatively small town of 60 000 residents located 40 km outside Oslo. In recent years the town has worked hard to change its image in order to attract and retain residents. Studies show that Drammen has a migration problem, where a considerable percentage of the population moves in or out of the city (Vestby 2005). Like many other cities at the beginning of the 21st century Drammen has undergone a restructuring of its business life, with service and knowledge replacing the traditional industrial production, and faces tough challenges related to attracting new businesses, new knowledge institutions and last but not least, new inhabitants. In addition to these changes Drammen has for many years been known as Norway's largest intersection – one of the ugliest places in Norway – characterized by heavy pollution and traffic noise.

This situation launched some major changes. In 2003, the leader of the city's planning council explicitly defined them as part of a branding process (Wøhni 2003). These projects have been part of a long-term process (lasting almost twenty years) of changing the 'face' of the city in order to tell a different story about Drammen. The actual initiative for the branding project came from a committee consisting of members from the municipality administration and the heads of the local business chambers. The project working group was comprised of members from both the public and the private sector: civic servants from the development and planning part of the administration, heads of the business chambers and a representative from the regional newspaper, and an informal project advisory group consisting of politicians and other prominent persons.

Three important city development projects were prioritized: the cleaning of the river; the renewal of the road system liberating the town centre of traffic; and the upgrading of the central town axis. But recent comment has also highlighted the long-term public/private partnership that has "anchored the various

projects outside the town hall in a long term strategy" (Haslum 2005). A central theme in Drammen has been the relationship between urban branding processes and the transformation of the city's physical environment. In November 2005 the group presented its results and launched "Elvebyen" – "The riverside city" as a motto for the future storytelling for Drammen.

In Drammen, the branding process so far has been broadly anchored, with participants from a regional level, the local business community and both the political and administrative level of the municipality. Although the different actors have different motivations for participating and committing to the process, the impression is that they have formed a strong public/private alliance in working with the branding policy, and also for all the participants the interviews show that there clearly is a lot of patriotism and love for the city involved as well. It has also been a deliberate strategy not to involve the political level in the day-to-day work and actual outcome of the branding project. The reason has to do with the long-term perspective of a branding strategy exceeding the political governing periods of four years. The inhabitants (together with the media) are being put forward as the main 'brand ambassadors', the project has not had an explicit strategy for involving the public during this first phase. Instead there has, as mentioned above, been a focus on involving strategic partners also in reviewing the work of this first phase. There is a potential risk that the project therefore does not receive as much support and attention in the population as it needs.

Urban branding at its most effective seems to involve an overall strategy for developing and sustaining all aspects of the community: including the physical environment, civic authorities, culture, education and lobbying for state funding and national institutions.

Today in Drammen there is a feeling that, the combination of physical reconstruction combined with such things as improvement of the local museum and the theatre, has profoundly changed the city. It seems to be a common feeling locally that Drammen now had reached a level where it had definitive urban qualities to offer: it had become a good "product" to sell. There has also been a general change in the attitude towards the city among the local population, and, perhaps most importantly, the regional newspaper has changed their editorial policy and decided to become an active partner in the community building process.

Branding a city is a slow process where you have to be able to build long-term credibility whilst understanding that you cannot necessarily command an organization to 'fall in behind you'. Drammen's answer to this challenge has been to build strategic alliances with major public and private actors and stakeholders. All the participants have also financially contributed to this joint venture. At the same time as the communication part of the strategy needs to be focused and coordinated for it to be efficient and have the desired effect, the study has also shown that branding with the purpose of attracting new inhabitants really affects all aspects of the development of a city as part of a product 'development' or 'maintenance' strategy. This means that it has to be treated as a broad issue involving a large spectrum of stakeholders, but also that the timing of the branding strategy has to be carefully considered. In Drammen they waited until the 'product' in terms of the physical environment was satisfactory.

In the last few years investments in the physical environments have been paying off. In 2003 Drammen won a national city-environment prize; in 2004 a national award for the design of the road system; and in 2005 a national design award for the town's central square. In planning journals and 'specialist press', Drammen has been presented as an example to be learnt from.

This case suggests, to us, that if one is interested in branding directed towards attracting new migrants/residents it is important to involve a range of both public and private strategic community actors in the planning and implementing of the branding strategy to ensure ownership and momentum. It is also necessary to focus on means directed at turning the inhabitants into 'brand ambassadors' to reach a broad audience and give the brand plausibility. Whatever urban branding strategy used there is a need to be aware that reaching the goal is a long term process that will require financial resources and long term commitment from all parties, and to carry out regular and systematic follow-up of campaigns.

## Balancing competing regional agendas

In general, urban branding and development processes involve a range of various political interests, different governmental bodies at various levels, and private sector interests such as landowners, building companies, business communities, inhabitants and

interest groups. In particular there has been a growth of a new regionalism in planning and policy circles. This has meant that central government as well as city and local authorities have started to pursue cooperation within wider regional settings as a key policy goal. Greater regional cooperation is seen as essential if smaller administrative units and local actors can gain the economies of scale and scope they need in order to make a mark in a seemingly ever more globalized world. This characteristic makes it crucial for urban governmental actors to possess viable tools and organizational models for handling such a complex set of often competing interests.

In order for small or medium-sized places or regions to be competitive and attract visitors, residents and, especially 'faceless' foreign capital and investments, they need to reach the level of a sufficient critical mass. Therefore, the development of strategic alliances with other regions or locations has increased with the aim of creating a win-win-situation for all parties involved. Usually the largest and most well known city of the region acts as an 'umbrella brand'. Below is an interesting example from the Helsinki region where the main city Helsinki is working as an 'umbrella brand' for the larger region. Other interesting Nordic examples of this kind are the Copenhagen-Øresund region and the Stockholm-Mälardalen region.

### Helsinki Metropolitan Area

The example of Helsinki region's image creation attempts in recent years is helpful in illustrating the difficulties involved in creating a single regional brand. We have already, in this report, seen that various local initiatives and regeneration projects are underway. However, on a wider level there has been a lack of coherent planning of the image creation.

The core of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area consists of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen, with a combined population of 980 000 (2004). These four cities have common public transport and share other services. From a branding point of view it is one functional city currently developing into a multi-level network of specialized centres and districts. In its "Territorial Review of Helsinki" (2002), the OECD uses a wider definition, including towns and rural areas with significant commuting and cultural links to the core. In this definition the Helsinki region is counted as 1.8 million inhabitants. However, this definition is too wide for most concrete municipal cooperation and development projects.

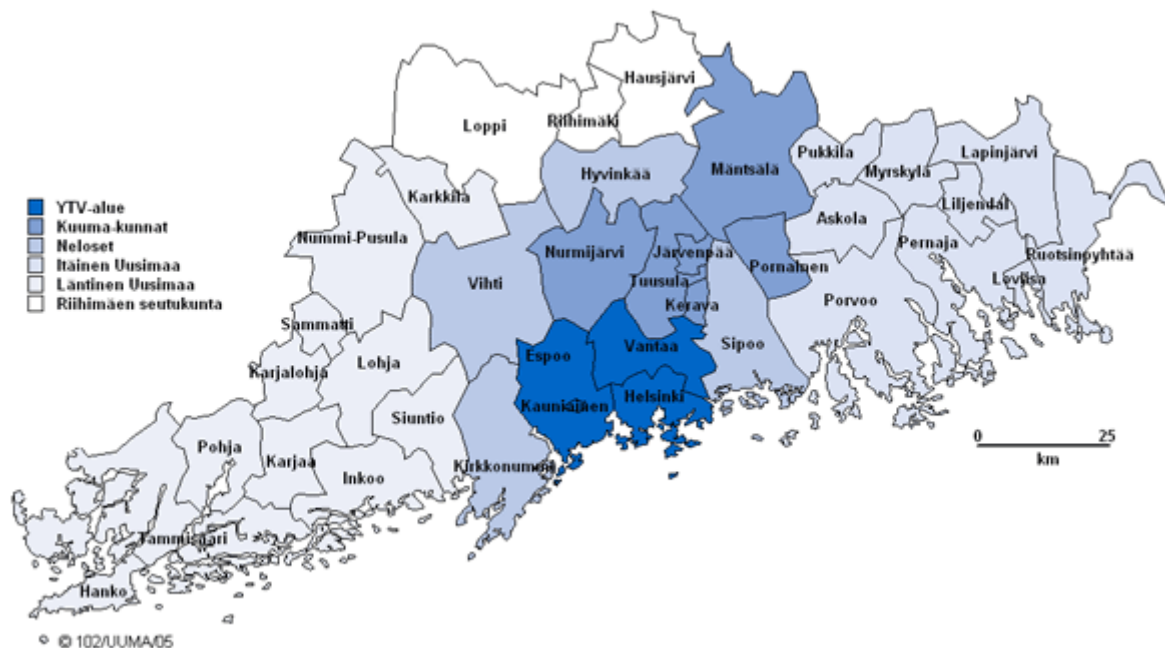


Figure 8: Map showing the four core cities and different groupings of surrounding municipalities (source YTV).

The presumption was that although there is officially a shared branding strategy for the three cities in the Helsinki Region, it is not appropriated well. On the contrary, the cities seem rather to compete with each other.

When analysing the promotion material (handouts, internet websites with image banks and video clips) used for international marketing it seems like the cities have a hard time collaborating under the common brand “Helsinki Region – Europe’s Magnetic North”. Instead the cities outside Helsinki seem to rely on different topics and strategies. The city of Espoo is using its own slogan “Espoo – the City for Creativity and Expertise”, in this emphasizing the importance of the Otaniemi high-tech area, where the University of Technology and the Nokia’s headquarters are both located. Vantaa (“The Good Life City”) on the other hand relies on the Helsinki –Vantaa airport and has developed the concept of ‘Aviapolis’. Helsinki doesn’t have a specific slogan; relying perhaps instead on its position as the capital of Finland and the only real urban area in the region.

The marketing material that was analyzed focused on the role of nature, good everyday life and advanced high tech. Themes of urban culture, architecture and modern design, winter and multiculturalism are absent or less visible. Also interesting was that although many of the citizens in the region live in

suburbs like Espoo and Vantaa, the suburbs and suburban ways of life are completely missing from the promotion material.

The traditional, iconic images of Finland and Finns are strongly present in the material analysed. The Finnish nation state was very much constructed under the influence of German romanticism and Herderian concepts of people, nature and history are still emphasized even when presenting modern Finland. In this national imagery, the Finns are silent and unsociable people from the deep woods with a strong relation to nature:

“Finnish culture does have a few special features. Foremost among these is the sauna, to which hosts happily conduct their guests. Second, the conversational culture may at first confuse the guest. Finns often listen more than they speak. They may also leave long pauses in the conversation; these do not hold any negative meaning“(<http://www.hel2.fi/eca/>).

In summary it seems that it is Finland rather than the Helsinki region that is being branded. The branding strategy seems to be careful, modest, defensive, based mostly on a blend of tradition (nature, national mythology) with welfare state values (‘good everyday life’) and a step towards creativity (high-tech).

The Helsinki region is another example of a functioning and well connected economic region that for

many purposes – attracting visitors and investment – shares more or less the same space and identity. However, a lack of regional coordination means that instead of a variety of images and stories are produced that are often at odds with each other. This case dem-

onstrates the problems associated with developing strong collective brands for functionally integrated regions that are divided into a large number of smaller administrative areas.

## 6. Branding through advertising

All the branding exercises and approaches we studied used advertising and direct marketing of various sorts. This type of work is completely immaterial in its output and is often the most difficult part of a branding strategy to get right. Public sector actors are often not as experienced as private sector ones when it comes to buying and using marketing and advertising services. In addition, reaching an ever more media and advert saturated public is increasingly difficult (even for the most media-experienced and well-financed firms). Presenting the right image in the right way through the right channels is a major challenge for urban branding initiatives.

Particularly confusing and challenging for many can be the sheer variety of different media and channels branding can be communicated through. A preliminary list of the most commonly used methods is as follows:

- Advertising in the press
- Adverts through industry and business press and contact points
- Brochures and audio-visual materials
- Exhibitions
- Homecoming days
- Letters to potential in-migrants
- Radio and television adverts
- Road side adverts and displays
- Websites

The most commonly used method is the combination of a slogan and logo. This is often considered an essential starting point for any urban branding campaign. A series of examples and experiences have shown this is to be a cost effective and important marketing tool. However, it is also a difficult tool to use: a poorly chosen slogan or logo can haunt a city for many years.

The classic example of a successful slogan and logo is the 'I Love NY' campaign produced for New York State and City authorities.

In 1977 the State of New York decided to combat increasingly negative images surrounding the city and state. By the 1970s New York had become associated with crime and inner city deprivation for many

outsiders and the strength of these images was perceived to be negatively affecting investment and, particularly, tourism. The State authorities consulted and employed the advertising agency Wells, Rich and Greene and the graphic artist Milton Glaser. The logo and slogan were so successful that they are still used today and are recognised as one of the most successful city brands ever created; it has appeared on not just city materials but also on everything from T-shirts to postcards, and has been adapted and manipulated in a multitude of different ways and contexts. In rare cases such as the 'I Love NY' campaign the brand can not only advertise the city but also develop an iconic status of its own and a financial value. Recently the Mayor of New York Michael Bloomberg has stated his intention to license the logo itself on a range of merchandise. These recent moves to regain control over the brand come as part of a renewed effort on the part of the Bloomberg administration to aggressively market New York as a destination for corporations, events and tourists. In the 2003 State of the City Address, Bloomberg said that:

"New York is in a fierce, worldwide competition; our strategy must be to hone our competitive advantages. We must offer the best product — and sell it, forcefully... we'll market our advantages aggressively and globally. We'll find the money to advertise our strengths-and tell people around the world, NYC is the place to be. Right now!"

The message from such examples and from the literature on image communications and branding is that the most important part of any strategy is developing a coherent and convincing 'story'. For both large and small cities finding a story or even a set of stories, which is attractive to both your target market and to



Figure 9: The official logo of New York City.



the public and city that it reflects can be problematic. A clear lesson from experiences around the world is that there is no easy answer to identifying the story that will work best. However, evidence from Danish case studies conducted for this project suggests that when branding the immaterial aspects of a city four stages and areas are common to Danish branding initiatives:

### **1. Identify the story (with a plot) for the territory**

Branding practices are about ‘selective story telling’: most often the telling of a ‘positive story’. However, in urban branding it is important that such stories have a direct relationship to the reality on the ground and consequently such stories are more successful when they are shared by local stakeholders.

### **2. Use (in a managed way) professional brand-builders**

Most urban branding exercises choose to use professional marketing/branding bureaus for the job of constructing a branding strategy. Choosing the right bureau and using their services in the right way is one of the most difficult parts of the branding process for public actors and agencies.

### **3. Develop an ‘image strategy’**

Common to the cases is an understanding of the importance of an image strategy. An image strategy consists of an image analysis/survey, a new logo, a graphic design manual, and an implementation strategy for feeding the new image to local stakeholders, business communities, municipal officers, and citizens. The image strategy covers policies for communication and media usage as well as a more or less institutionalised feed-back input on its efficiency.

### **4. Using the brand in different ways and different forms**

The aim of the vast majority of Danish initiatives was to have as many agents as possible using the logos and slogans. As a result a large amount of merchandise is produced in all cases (from flags, t-shirts and ties to pencils, stickers and DVDs). Media and internet exposure is also common to all cases. However, there is very little consciousness often of how the particular communication channel/medium can negatively affect the brand and little appreciation that over-exposure or exposure to the wrong groups can damage brands.

The rest of this chapter will focus on three further case studies conducted by the project team. The first

focused on two branding initiatives in Stockholm and problematizes how branding processes may vary according to their local anchoring. The second is on Hjørring in Denmark, and shows how an advertising campaign, following a large scale urban development project, is used in branding and re-branding the city image. The third focused on the re-imagining of Randers in Denmark and on how the local population contested and criticized the new brand.

## **Stockholm – two approaches to local anchoring of the branding process**

The first case is that of Stockholm and focuses upon two different approaches to local anchoring of the branding process. Also, this case deals with the fact that in many places more than one branding strategy might be running at the same time. Each of these strategies is likely to have separate stories, image strategies and institutional anchoring and ownership: meaning that conflicting images and affects are likely. Although, the bigger the city, the more stories should be able to fit the image of the city. Global centres, like the above mentioned New York City, are intertwined with different stories – from business to leisure.

Amongst many branding processes ongoing in Stockholm two urban prominent brands have been developing at roughly the same period. These operate at various urban geographical and political levels. The first of these is an attempt to create a new image and brand for the entire city. This involves branding Stockholm as the ‘Capital of Scandinavia’. Parallel to this official public/city authority branding process is a local district-level process which involves local entrepreneurs building a brand around a shopping and entertainment area in a rapidly gentrifying area of the southern inner city: SoFo (South of Folkungagatan at Södermalm).

Both brands have generated considerable attention both nationally and internationally. The organisation of the two branding processes clearly shows how urban branding may take different forms.

### *Stockholm – ‘the Capital of Scandinavia’*

In 2005 Stockholm city authorities launched an attempt to re-brand the city as ‘the Capital of Scandinavia’. The overall objective for the branding exercise is to help attract businesses and investment as well as new citizens and tourists. The city needed a unifying brand that could replace the diverging brands and names that had co-existed for a long time, such as

'Beauty on Water', 'The Biotech Capital' or 'The Venice of the North'. Of these former brands 'Beauty on Water' was the strongest, but as this was only directed towards the tourist market, it was thought important to develop a new brand that covered business, inhabitants, investments and tourists.

The new brand aggressively tries to build on the geographical centrality of the city in the Nordic and Baltic region and its place as a powerful business and cultural centre in the region. The brand builds on a set of observations about the city's central role in the region: it is the largest tourist destination in the region; it is an important centre for regional financial services and financial markets; it is home to many large domestic firms; it hosts many global firms' regional headquarters; it is a world class centre and market for the arts and culture; and hosts globally important events such as the Nobel prize ceremonies. Despite all these strengths claiming that it is the 'capital' of Scandinavia is quite bold. The expressed aim of this ambitious title is that it is also an attempt to challenge Swedish modesty and forcing the inhabitants of Stockholm to take a bolder and prouder attitude toward their own city.

Just as in other places the development of the brand itself was outsourced to a private firm. The branding of Stockholm was in 2003 contracted out to Stockholm-based Dowell // Stubbs branding agency by the managing director Jörgen Kleist of Stockholm Business Region. The fact that this company primarily consists of foreign born employees and owners was said to help ensure an objective 'external eye' on the city. The firm was given the brief to develop a clear, usable and distinct message which was easy to remember and that reflected Stockholm's position in Europe. In collaboration with selected local stakeholders the agency collected a range of Stockholm's characteristics, and grouped under the headings of 'centrality', 'business' and 'culture'. When the brand was fully developed, the employer Stockholm Business Region wanted a coherent argument for and story behind the new Stockholm brand. This led to 'the brand book', which summarizes all the reasons for branding the city as the Capital of Scandinavia.

Whilst the brand was developed by a private firm its implementation is not. The implementation of the brand is managed by a team at Stockholm Business Region. A central part of the implementation activity is to make remaining local stakeholders use the new Stockholm brand in their marketing efforts. Stockholm Business Region has restructured its webpage, established a Public Relations position and uses a

wide range of printed materials in the implementation of the brand. Autumn 2006 Stockholm Business Region is planning to measure the penetration of the brand in the local business milieu.

The effectiveness of the brand is, at this stage, hard to estimate. Though it has gained widespread attention in Stockholm it has perhaps not raised such positive feelings in other Nordic countries. Indeed one can imagine that for the authorities of, for instance, Copenhagen it is not so 'Wonderful' to have a close neighbour symbolically downgrade them to the status of a regional satellite. Despite such possible objections, the use in the brand of the idea of being part of a wider Scandinavian region and identity is, however, interesting. It is recognized that for many outsiders the Nordic countries share much the same space, characteristics and market. Using broad Nordic or regional brands can be a way for individual cities to help put themselves on the map.

#### *SoFo*

Parallel to attempts to develop a citywide identity more local processes of definition and identity creation are often ongoing. SoFo (South of Folkungagatan) is a district within a district (Södermalm) of Stockholm. The area has, in recent years, undergone rapid gentrification and is now increasingly populated with trendy cafés, bars and small fashion and design shops.

The name for the area is far from the result of an organic process. The brand SoFo was invented in 1998 by three friends (Henrik Borggren, Fredrik Glejsner and Per Holm) who were involved in helping friends renovate cafés and the like in the area. They felt a need to name the area where they were hanging out, and inspired by SoHo in New York they invented the idea of SoFo.

The idea behind the slogan was to re-brand the previously working class quarter as a 'hip', gentrified and vibrant urban area. The strategy taken to deploy the brand constituted very much of 'word of mouth' channelled through friends and colleagues. The trio printed a number of t-shirts and stickers that were distributed to acquaintances that were running cafés, shops, galleries and studios in the area. In this sense the implementation process made the local ambassadors 'live the brand'. After a while people got curious about the meaning of 'SoFo', and the word of mouth started to spread. As such the SoFo brand was established with scarce resources and is very much a result of social and network processes. After a couple of years the term SoFo had triggered such curiosity and

attention that it has slipped into common usage in the area and beyond. Indeed by 2004 the word had even worked its way back to its New York origins:

“To the uninitiated, Sweden is to style as Germany is to humor. But as anyone with finely tuned radar will tell you, the land that gave us Roxette and Lars Nilsson is now on the international fashion map. Stockholm, the Swedish capital, even has a thriving new shopping district, which is named, much to the embarrassment of the locals, SoFo, as in "South of Folkungagatan." Located in the formerly working-class district of Södermalm, SoFo serves up a smorgasbord of indie fashion stores selling everything from ascetic avant-garde to hard-edged streetwear” (Extract from article on SoFo in *The New York Times*, August 29, 2004).

Although the initiators did not have any intentions in making money on the brand they did patent the name. This was, they say, in order to prevent other and larger commercial actors from profiting from it. In line with this the brand policy does not allow anyone to use the name for commercial purposes. As such the originators of the brand initially had an idealistic approach to the brand, and this policy has probably given the brand a certain aura of cultural credibility.

The development of the brand is now largely taken care of by local shop owners and the like. Local shop owners have, for instance, established a network to advertise the area and conducted joint lobbying to get the area upgraded. The developing local business community has taken effective control of the brand and their involvement and control has been vital for its success and credibility. However, it must be noted that whilst the trio of inventors are no longer involved in the day-to-day running of the brand they still own the copyright to the brand. Whilst this seems not to be a problem at present, one can imagine that legal ownership by private individuals of an urban area's identity and principal marketing point could create significant difficult problems for the local community that grows around it.

The two branding stories from Stockholm illustrate how urban branding processes may function at various levels and in quite distinct ways. Although the two cases are not comparable as such, they were both developed in roughly the same period, they are both drawing upon cultural vibrancy as one of the main attraction factors, and they have both received considerable attention locally, nationally and internationally. However, the differences between the two branding processes seem to be larger than the similarities. The most surprising proof of this is the fact that the manager of the branding agency in charge of the

Stockholm brand had not even heard of the SoFo brand when asked after having created the Stockholm brand Capital of Scandinavia. Nor had the inventor of the SoFo brand heard of the Capital of Scandinavia brand. This illustrates how these constitute two different brands that co-exist in separate worlds without any direct connections or linkages.

No branding process can ever manage to incorporate all possible actors, and there will always be a wide range of reactions, opinions and discrepancies about a wide-reaching urban brand like the Capital of Scandinavia brand. It is also too early and not the intention of the present study to evaluate the branding process of Stockholm as such. The Capital of Scandinavia brand appears to be a top-down process where the development of the brand platform seems to have been reserved a small number of selected private stakeholders. This seems to have led to an efficient process in developing the brand, but may similarly represent larger difficulties in recruiting local ambassadors for the brand. The SoFo case represents more of a bottom-up approach to branding at a local scale that grew into a neighbourhood identity building process. The bottom-up characteristic also refers to the grass-root nature of the marketing of the brand, involving shop-owners and artists without any financial or political power. However, highly local brands run the risk of only representing certain slices of a city's life and their lack of inclusiveness is a challenge for the marketing of larger regions as a whole.

The lessons learned from this case study may be summarized as follows:

- The organisation of urban branding initiatives may take various shapes regarding the degree to which the organisation of the process is top-down or bottom-up directed.
- The organisation of the branding process and coordination of stakeholders is likely to be reflected in the local anchoring of the brand. A broad anchoring implies many local ambassadors that will contribute to coordinate and effective marketing efforts.
- There is a trade-off between efficiency and coordination in developing a brand and the local anchoring of the brand and the branding process. A rapid development process may thus cause a long implementation period.
- A successful brand eventually needs to be able to live on by itself independent of the efforts of particular persons.

- Branding is a long-term process, but it doesn't necessarily have to be expensive.
- It is inevitable that, especially in larger urban areas, many brands directed by different interest groups will arise. Such diversity may strengthen a place's identity and status. However, branding initiatives should be aware of competing or alternative stories and try to work with them.



Figure 10: The Hjørring logotype

## Hjørring

Hjørring is a small city of 30 000 inhabitants located in Denmark and is a historical regional administrative, cultural and commercial centre. This image, however, did not satisfy everyone and was perceived by many to be outdated. The advent of a motorway connection to the wider European motorway network in 2002 was seen locally as an opportunity to re-imagine the city and its wider hinterlands. In 2001, a local marketing company was hired to brand the whole municipality and not just the city. Against a background of population decrease the town council wished to re-articulate their image in strong and visual terms.

The logo of the branding campaign contains innovative graphics signifying the motorway gateway and network. Large quantities of car streamer logos were distributed for rapid brand exposure, creating a high but short-lived awareness of the brand. The brand values were articulated against a situation of less distinct physical urban attributes and at the end of the day tending towards more generic phraseology.

## Randers – Re-imagining the City of Violence

Randers in Denmark has struggled with its image as an abandoned, dusty, industrial city out of sync with an increasingly service based Danish economy. The city has been labelled by the media and others as the 'city of violence'. In 2003 the new elected lord mayor decided to change this image.

A deliberate choice on the part of city officials in Randers was to use an external, non-local marketing bureau. The argument was that only by looking at the city through 'strangers' eyes' could an image strategy successfully negotiate the dangers of inward-looking and restricted notions of place that often develop over a city's history. The branding strategy in Randers was not just directed towards changing the city's image but also involved a complete architectural surgery of the downtown area.

The official branding campaign of Randers had two central dimensions: first an inward directed element aimed at encouraging citizens' self-esteem; second, the development of a brand that would act as a coordinating influence on a series of massive developments and investments in the city centre. In line with these aims a positive new story was decided upon and an image strategy was developed which resulted in a very comprehensive communications package involving logos, fairytales, design manuals, new letter heads, and other merchandise and marketing materials.

What is most interesting about the Randers case is perhaps not the organization and efficiency of the city-led branding campaign but the fact that the stories and images they chose for Randers became widely contested and criticized by many of the city's inhabitants. Against the background of the city's new official logos and images an alternative and very ironic and critical set of images and even logos were developed by local people and groups.

The new official city logo latter was in the shape of a capital R that contained a number of symbols of the city's history and identity: such as salmon from the Randers fjord. In reaction to the new branding campaign an alternative version of the official logo emerged. This alternative version mirrors the official one but replaces the officially sanctioned set of symbols with a set of salmon bones, a junkie's needle, beer bottles, motorbikes and stinking dog dirt. According to the local newspaper the anti-branding logo is meant as a protest against what is perceived as a socially exclusive branding process that paints a picture that cannot be recognized by the protesting citizens.

What the Randers case clearly demonstrates is the likelihood that branding processes will be contested and that a significant no-logo movement is ready to take on meta-brands in innovative ways. Most clearly this case demonstrates the need for new stories and images to be rooted in a reality that those affected by the brand can agree with. Extensive coordination and



## Randers a taste for life

Figure 11: The Randers logotype.

cooperation with local groups and interests is thus crucial if one is to avoid the sort of spoiling techniques deployed by local activities in Randers. However, it must be noted that the fact that Randers has a citizenry that is so actively engaged in the city's identity that they are willing to develop and publicise alternative visions is far from necessarily a bad thing. It demonstrates a high level of local engagement and creativity and an awareness and concern for how the



Figure 12: Alternative version of the Randers logotype.

area is processed and packaged: such diversity, creativity and engagement can be powerful forces for change and innovation.

## 7. Different strokes for different folks

It is a hard task to write a conclusion to a report on such a broad topic as why we should brand cities and how this may best proceed. As we have shown in the report such exercises can have many different aims, take many forms and be directed at many different publics. The problem with branding cities is that they are very diverse products that can be difficult to fit neatly into a marketing campaign. Even if one can fit a city into one or a number of campaigns, running such campaigns can be difficult to manage and sustain. Added to this is the fact that the ‘product’ itself can react negatively to the wrong sort of marketing or branding. We feel strongly that it is clear that for diverse ‘products’ such as cities diverse strategies are needed and that there is no one solution and no model of best practice to copy.

### The 10 ‘commandments’

However, even if we think that cities and regions need to find their own paths and solutions there is much to be learnt from the experiences of other places. Through our work during this project we found that certain points emerged as important. These points have been summarized into 10 commandments:

#### 1. There is no recipe for success

- There are various urban branding strategies and the choice of strategy needs to be adapted to local characteristics and assets.
- It is not clear whether one should aim for one meta-brand or for a portfolio of many brands with separate target audiences. However, there is a need for targeted marketing in both cases.

#### 2. Urban branding is just a little part of community building

- The brand needs to reflect and involve local assets and people.

#### 3. Don’t just tell it, show it

- Physical changes are often as important as mental images in showing that a city really is changing.

- Branding is often most powerful when it is linked into and coordinated with physical transformation processes and urban (re)development initiatives (e.g. Drammen, Barcelona, Glasgow, Bilbao).
- The link between physical urban transformation and branding/the brand needs to reflect local assets and characteristics.

#### 4. Uniqueness and innovation is key

- Branding is ultimately about differentiating yourself from others therefore there it is important to be special and avoid copying what everyone else seems to be doing.
- A first step towards this is to identify local strengths and characteristics.
- It is important to be flexible in your thinking and understand that even local weaknesses can be turned into strengths (for instance, lack of light in the winter can be special to some people!).
- It is also important not to be blind to what others see and be ready to accept that outsiders’ perceptions and needs might be very different to your own. It can be useful to see the city through the ‘eyes of the stranger’: e.g. by employing a non-local marketing bureau or by conducting visitor surveys.
- Both the brand itself and the method of communication can take many different forms: e.g. events, award ceremonies, conferences, supporting film industry, fashion locations, delegations, trade fairs, television, press, literature, signature buildings, and local ambassadors.

#### 5. Branding is a long-term process

- Avoid quick fixes; there is a need for long-term commitment.
- Branding can seldom be done without money
  - Facilitate a continuous flow of economic support and institutional anchoring (e.g. branding secretariat).
- Regular evaluation based on a clear set of success criteria is important.

- Brands develop slowly and the path is seldom smooth so be ready for set-backs and be ready to be involved in crisis management.

#### **6. Top-down / Bottom-up branding strategies**

- There is a need to be aware that the branding process may vary along a top-down versus bottom-up axis.
- There may be a danger in fully outsourcing full control over a branding process to private agents; there may be advantages in local (public) governance and participation in the process.
- The more top-down a branding process the more difficult it tends to be to involve the local population.
- Small scale actions and hard to pin down feelings like civic pride are of great value. Thus it can be important to have the local population as brand ambassadors.
- Cities that use the same (top-down) branding agency may get 'mass produced' brands.

#### **7. Well functioning organisational capacity and flexibility is important**

- There is a need to define local needs and characteristics.
- There is a need to define competitors/the competition and possible collaborators.
- It is important that there is an organisational map – to avoid duplication or conflicts – and that participants know where they stand and what their responsibilities are.
- It is helpful to have a clear aim, focus, strategy and good internal/external communication flows.

- Subcontractors, such marketing and branding firms, sometimes have expertise the public sector does not have but it is important they are given a very clear brief.

#### **8. It is not necessarily true that you are in competition with everyone else**

- Cooperation and co-branding can in many instances be more helpful in attracting the sort of attention and friends you are aiming at.

#### **9. Brands work at many different spatial and temporal levels**

- There is a need to think wider than the municipality (coordination) (ex. Øresund, Paris-London, Barcelona-Euro-region). Cities need to find their position within the Regional/National/Global. Different cities (size, power etc) should address different target groups.
- Some cities/regions could gain from seasonal branding and awareness that different strategies for different seasons might be needed.
- Different actors could sit down with their calendars and plan the entire year, would need better intra-urban coordination.

#### **10. The role of key persons**

- Dynamic and charismatic branding advocates and individual driving forces should not be underestimated. Often dedicated individuals and civic entrepreneurs are important driving forces behind (or against) particular urban branding or (re)development processes. Identifying, including and supporting these individuals is important.

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Nordic Innovation Centre

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The Nordic Innovation Centre initiates and finances activities that enhance innovation collaboration and develop and maintain a smoothly functioning market in the Nordic region.

The Centre works primarily with small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) in the Nordic countries. Other important partners are those most closely involved with innovation and market surveillance, such as industrial organisations and interest groups, research institutions and public authorities.

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