Chapter 9
Rethinking the Roles of Culture in Place Branding

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Abstract Within place branding, culture is assumed to create positive associations with the place and is, therefore, used extensively. However, we argue that the understanding of culture is inadequate and leads to disconnection between local culture and the place brand instead of synergy. A critical evaluation of the methods commonly used reveals that culture is misinterpreted and oversimplified. The article discusses significant tensions relating to the dominance of certain cultural elements and actors and the effects on identity. The relationship between place brands and culture is reconstructed through a re-appreciation of its complexity and reciprocity. Synergies are found in understanding culture as a process of meaning production and in clarifying the role of place brands (as cultural phenomena themselves) in culture.

Let's Get 'Cultured'

The July 2014 issue of the Lonely Planet Traveller magazine features a 'mini guide' on 'Culture in Crete' stating that as "the birthplace of Europe's first advanced society, the Minoans, this Greek island has ample ancient treasures to explore alongside unique customs and historic traditions". The guide goes on to highlight three museums (the Iraklio Archaeological Museum, the Nikos Kazantzakis Museum in Myrtia and the Lychnostatis Museum near Malia) and three archaeological sites (Knossos, Gortyna and Lato). Additionally, three arts festivals are suggested (music in Paleohora and Houdetsi and arts in Iraklio). The interpretation of culture in this guide to Crete then focuses—perhaps rightly so—on two elements,

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namely history and the arts. This is an interpretation common in development policies and tourism advertising but it is not the only possible interpretation. While the arts and local history are unquestionably parts of culture, are these the only or main expressions of culture? Or are they the ones that make places 'visitable' (Dicks 2010)? Why not other aspects of culture? The renowned Cretan Cuisine or the laid-back Cretan life style are not mentioned in this instance although they are arguably integral parts of 'culture in Crete'. Meanwhile, in Metro's 'Escape' column (Monday, 9/6/2014, p. 34) there is an article with the normative title 'Get cultured in Gdansk', Poland. The brief article starts with clarifying that Krakow is the cultural capital of the country but there "the museums are teeming come mid-summer", so we are advised instead to "go to the chilled-out Baltic seaport of Gdansk for [our] culture fix". Two museums in the city are then suggested as the places where we can get 'cultured', namely the Amber Museum and the National Maritime Museum. Here then culture is interpreted as exhibitions in museums. On the same page, there is another article titled 'Art attack in Seville, Spain', which starts stating that "Seville, with its galleries, gardens and churches, is a divine place to disappear for an arty summer break". This is rather unexpected as gardens and churches would easier be related to the wider term 'culture' rather than the more narrow term 'the arts'. It is two galleries that are then suggested (the Andalusian Centre of Contemporary Art and the Museo de Bellas Artes). Paradoxically, the article goes on to state that "[f]ood is an art form, too, in Seville" so we are advised of the best places to "feast on tapas". So the interpretation of 'the arts' here is actually much wider than the interpretation of 'culture'. This chapter starts with the position that understandings of culture in destination and place branding are limited and do not embrace the full complexity of culture. We question the extent to which culture-based branding tactics add to and re-create local culture. Furthermore, as Miles (2007, p. 1) also states, "different uses of such terms indicate different assumptions". We aim at exploring these assumptions and clarifying what they mean for place branding.

A New World of Culture

Throughout this book, like many others on the contemporary management of places around the world, there has been a persistent theme of how actors, whether governments, enterprises or individuals, could or should react to and use the changing contexts within which they operate. There are new objectives: what we expect places to do and to be, new means of communication that are shaping different relationships between individuals, as citizens and consumers, and the place-bound services and amenities they experience and use. There are new ideas of governance linking citizens and their governments, and, most evident in the field of marketing, new competitive arenas, both within a place and between places, on scales from the local to the global, within which a confusing mix of intensified competition and increasingly necessary cooperation between places alternate. Both the context,

whether the physical and spatial setting or the economic and social environment, and the processes of change are producing outcomes not anticipated, most notably in the changing cityscape and the wide range of urban experiences. Whether intentionally or not, several of the diverse processes set in motion under contemporary urban governance are underlined by an attempt to "re-image" the city thus linking to the domain of place branding. Several common threads are evident in place branding methods and have been examined in the literature, including the chapters in this book. Many of these common threads, none of which could be classified as trends with clearly understood trajectories leading to envisaged outcomes, are woven around culture in some form or another.

Of course, culture is a notoriously slippery word whose many definitions depend on who is defining it and for what purposes. Suffice it to note that culture is a 'shared system of meaning' (e.g. McEwan 2005) that enables us to make sense of the world and communicate that sense to others through a myriad of 'cultural' practices that are shaped by and simultaneously constantly shape culture. Thus it is a socially defined, and constantly redefined (e.g. Rodseth 1998), process rather than an outcome. It is not our intention to embark upon the near impossible task of considering all definitions of culture in cities and all their ramifications relevant to place marketing and place branding. For our limited purposes, "… rather than attempting to uncover its essence, we should rather focus on the ways and contexts in which it is used" (Meethan 2001, p. 115). Our intention is to focus upon the intersection of culture and place, namely the simpler task of how culture, in some of its manifestations is increasingly being used in the construction of place brands. The simple point here is that culture is necessarily strongly related to place-branding, specifically how a place sees itself and wishes to be seen by others. However, the simplicity of the relationship breaks down once the variety of objectives and outcomes and of techniques and processes is examined in detail.

Two different but related approaches encapsulated in the ideas of 'culture in cities' and 'cites of culture' are often conflated. There is a set of activities that most people and their governments recognise as being 'cultural', which have been produced and consumed in cities almost since cities began. However, previously culture, in this sense of artistic production was seen as a merit good, something to be indulged in from surplus production once more basic needs had been satisfied. Whereas culture in the contemporary city is being also treated as a resource, not least for economic development. In the city of culture, "economy and culture were once regarded as 'self' and 'other'; they are now seen to be linked, co-constitutive or seamlessly intertwined" (Castree 2004, p. 206).

Rethinking the Justifications and Rationale

There is nothing especially novel in focusing upon culture in place management, as either cause or result, input or output. Culture has two obvious characteristics that have always rendered it attractive to governments. First, as all peoples have always

needed to understand their worlds and communicate this understanding, the resource is both enduring in time and ubiquitous in space. Secondly it is pervasively accessible, frequently as a public good, in both an economic and social sense. It is a resource that is omnipresent and easily available and from the moment when people felt the need to impose government upon themselves, it has been automatically and inherently involved. Given these advantages, small wonder then that culture is used as an instrument in the fulfilment of many management objectives (Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2014). It is, therefore, not the fact that culture is used but how it is used that is worth studying and contains the novelty.

The traditional use of culture was the provision of consumable aesthetic experiences through artistic production and performance simply because people enjoy some pleasure or satisfaction from this. In this sense culture is 'the best that man can produce or feel' (Arnold 1869/1925) and is defined as having no use beyond itself as 'art for art's sake'. The idea can be extended from the individual to the place with culture in some form as public amenity enhancing the experience of the place and adding value to it as a location in which to live, work, recreate or visit. A quite different view is to treat culture as a resource rather than a consumable. As Kearns and Philo have noted (1993, p. 3),

> [c]entral to the activities subsumed under the heading of selling places is often a conscious and deliberate manipulation of culture in an effort to enhance the appeal and interest of places, especially to the relatively well-off and well-educated workforces of high-technology industry, but also to up-market tourists and to the organisers of conferences and other money-spinning exercises.

The creative industries take their place alongside or more often as a replacement to other productive industries (Kunzman 2004) producing marketable cultural products. The 'creative city' (Landry 2000), considered in more detail later, is not only consuming culture, it is self-consciously producing it. This is linked to but different from the link between culture and the idea of the 'creative class' (Florida 2002). Here the word 'creative' has shifted its meaning from the production of cultural products to inventive and enterprising individuals innovating new ideas in fields beyond the traditional artistic. The link is twofold: first, such people, regarded as exceptionally spatially mobile, are attracted to places containing the opportunities for cultural experience in the original sense and secondly by their very presence they create a market for such experiences thereby attracting other, often 'non-creative' activities. Additionally, culture is linked to the major economic and social activity of tourism both contributing directly as a resource in the creation of artistic experiences consumed by tourists—either as the prime reason for their visit or as ancillary divertissement during their visit as is generally understood by the term 'cultural tourism'—as well as contributing in a broader sense to the generalized place ambiance within which many place-products, whether 'cultural' in the first sense or not, are generated for tourist consumption. Finally and combining all of the above, culture both in the sense of artistic production and characteristic way of life becomes an expression of local identity, whether un-self-consciously

conferring the quality of uniqueness upon a place and its inhabitants or deliberately as a promoted attribute distinguishing this place from its competing neighbours.

In summary, culture provides consumable often marketable aesthetic experiences, it functions as a resource for economic activity, both directly by attracting cultural tourists and indirectly by attracting activities often with little direct culture content, it attracts a so-called 'creative class' as environmental amenity and finally culture expresses the identity of a locality to itself and the world. Even such a brief and incomplete summary of the roles of culture in places reveals not only multiplicity but difference. There is often an unexpressed assumption that the simultaneous use of culture in different ways for different purposes will be somehow mutually supportive of each other whereas in reality there are as likely to be incompatibilities and even contradictions. Even when all may be contributing to evolving place brands, it may not necessarily be the same brand.

The Instruments

It can be asserted with some confidence that we now know how culture can be used in the branding and re-branding of places. In the course of the last 20 years or more, place management authorities have developed, originally through risk taking and experiment, and subsequently through best practice exchange, a tool-box of instruments that are widely familiar. Indeed it is this very familiarity that has encouraged an almost automatic, unthinking application of such instruments, regardless of the specific contexts and local objectives, as a deceptively easy route to success. There are three techniques that are used invariably, namely signature structures, event hallmarking and personality association.

Signature or Flagship Structures

The idea of governments using buildings to express their existence and their ideologies and policies to themselves, their citizens, the rest of the world and posterity is so irresistible as to be commonplace in most historical epochs. The adjective 'signature' suggests an expression of unique individuality so that the architecture by its distinctiveness and even notoriety rather than its aesthetic quality, announces the existence of a unique place. The adjective 'flagship' conveys the purpose of such structures as more than accommodating various functions but through their very notable and memorable existence to make clear statements about the character and policies of the authorities that erected them. As Dicks (2003, p. 1) describes, "[t]hrough heavy investment in architecture, art, design, exhibition space, landscaping and various kinds of redevelopment towns, cities and countryside proclaim their possession of various cultural values". In practice such structures may be historical or contemporary, even futuristic, in design. All are intended to be noticed but the

content of the message is different. Historicism states that the place is enduring and traditional while futurism states that it is daringly *avant-garde*. Among the first cities to erect a major public building to house cultural objects, using an arresting original design by a 'star architect' (Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano), was the Paris 'Centre Pompidou' art gallery on the Beaubourg in 1977. Other cities noticed the instant publicity, and its messages of commitment to culture and to experimental originality, rapidly followed until the erection of such a new museum or gallery in some eye-catching style had become something of a cliché, with 'Beaubourging' becoming an obvious and universally applicable strategy thus failing in its primary objective of notability.

Because it is unlikely that the complex character and multiple aspirations of a city can be expressed in a single building whatever its striking physical and aesthetic qualities, signature building has often been extended into the shaping of entire districts. The signature of the city is conveyed through the ensemble of related buildings, spaces and streetscape elements, including signage, paving, street furniture and not least the labelling of the district. The objective is not just a coherent unity in design but the expression of statements about the place as a whole to insiders and outsiders. The two most usual assertions are, 'we are old/historic', or 'we are cultural' depending on whether the district is based upon the preservation and re-creation of historic forms, as in the now classic 'heritage conservation area' or upon the presentation and consumption of cultural experiences through theatre or museum districts. Such signature cultural districts (see Evans in this volume for a detailed analysis) are intended to reflect upon the city as a whole beyond the immediate neighbourhood, even in, or perhaps especially in, cities whose main activities and image have little to do with culture (an obvious case being the *Museumufe*r in Frankfurt am Main where the city is declaring that it is more than just a centre for financial services).

Event Hallmarking

Cultural events have been hosted in and by cities for almost as long as there have been cities. The relevance to place branding lies in the addition of the adjective 'hallmark', that is qualities involved in the staging of the event contribute to the place brand of the city as a whole. Such a contribution may be no more than demonstrating to citizens and to the wider world that the place has the technical organisational skills and political commitment to successfully stage such events. Secondly, as well as asserting its existence and competence, the place acquires importance depending of course on the importance of the event staged. Only thirdly does the place benefit from association with the content of the event. Events could be political, sporting or commercial as often as cultural in which cases the content has little to offer to the place brand but with a cultural content there are a number of potentially beneficial associations. These could be the longevity and continuity of cultural production, the contemporary cultural creativity of inhabitants or the

appreciation, consumption and patronage of the arts. In short, we have a long history of cultural production, we are culturally creative and we are a cultured people. It is doubtful if all three can be claimed simultaneously and often a choice has to be made between using such events as an effective stimulus for encouraging a local cultural creativity or showcasing the place as a patron of global cultural production to the world. The extent of the availability of such potential benefits depends on scale and continuity ranging from small one-off cultural events for local consumption to regular mega events for global markets in places branded as festival cities (Edinburgh, Salzburg, Stratford, Bayreuth etc.) whose brand and much of whose local economy, depends upon their staging of regular festival events for export rather than for locals.

Although almost all places stage cultural events, with various justifications, and a few places have been remarkably successful in benefiting, in the ways suggested above, from such events. In reality it should be remembered that most cities, stage cultural events as a civic service for the satisfaction of citizens' leisure-time alongside libraries, parks and swimming baths with little concern for the potential contributions of the event to the place brand. The evidence of the impact of major events on the local cultural scene is scarce and contradictory. Quinn (2006) concluded from a number of Irish cases that festivals may increase tourism, generate some local revenues and even contribute to place recognition. However, 'city authorities tend to disregard the social value of festivals and to construe them simply as vehicles of economic generation' (Quinn 2005, p. 927). Van Aalst and van Melik (2011) however concluded that the evidence of a link between festivals and the host city are at best weak, confined to a limited part of the population and often effectively non-existent. Even if there is an interaction between a global event and local culture, Boland's (2010) concern is that the former will overwhelm and change the latter into a globally more comprehensible and acceptable pastiche.

Personality Association

As individuals are unique a place in search of uniqueness has only to associate itself with a named individual to acquire this characteristic. Furthermore the various associative attributes can be transferred from the nominated individual to enhance the place in some way. It is in this sought for transference of associations from person to place, that the branding lies. As all places have a history and can thus lay claim upon some person, whether historical or mythological, this ubiquitous and free resource seems to offer an easy, universally available and well-trodden route to successful branding and there are numerous well documented cases (Ashworth 2010; Giovanardi 2011; Scaramanga 2012). However, there is a check list of attributes leading to success or at least avoiding failure. First, the personality selected should be widely known or at least capable of being popularly promoted in the targeted markets and the link between person and place should be feasible and credible. Secondly, the association should be sustainable over time. Celebrity status

is necessarily transient and celebrity endorsement has a short lived impact. Cultural fashions change and the popular appreciation of artists, styles or periods waxes and wanes and history is constantly reinterpreting the reputations of its personalities. A link once seen as effective and beneficial may become less effective, less relevant and less beneficial as fashions change. Thirdly, and although obvious, an often overlooked condition is that the personal attributes transferred to the place should enhance or reinforce the desired brand. It should convey associations that have a contemporary value to the brand being created. Notoriety is not enough. Nottingham may have won the contest of the popular imagination to claim Robin Hood but apart from recognition it is not clear what attributes of the myth (defiance of authority, redistribution of wealth, theft?) are being transferred.

The Example of Salford

An example that seems to match all of the conditions above would be the post-industrial town of Salford. Here economic collapse, physical dereliction and resultant deep seated negative place image, among outsiders but also residents, were countered by a regeneration strategy in which culture, expressed through both past artistic production and contemporary architecture and design, together with the heritage associations of the quite recent industrial past and above all locality were the central components of the Salford Quays development. This redeveloped the former now defunct Salford Docks (the change of name from 'docks' to 'quays' is itself part of the rebranding) begun in the 1990s. Its centrepiece was the *Lowry Centre*, (opened in 2000) named from and displaying the works of the local painter of industrial Salford, but housed in a striking contemporary building and including a mix of cultural and entertainment facilities, including a theatre and restaurant. The traditional cultural theme was continued in the *Imperial War Museum North,* designed by celebrity architect Libeskind (opened 2002) but the wider links with creativity, entertainment and speciality retailing were introduced into the functional mix through *Media City UK* (housing the BBC), the *Lowry Outlet Shopping Mall* and cinema, Sports Centre and new office and residential properties. The design is self-consciously contemporary but the nomenclature (*Grain Wharf, Merchants' Quay, Labrador Quay*) echoes the industrial past. Clearly this case uses art, both historic and *avant-garde*, a heritagised industrial past serving contemporary purposes and acting as a backdrop to contemporary shopping, entertainment, and sporting activities together with and eclectic mix of strong local association with globally recognised cultural players. It also needs stressing that the rebranding is only an element, albeit a central one, in the development strategy which depends heavily upon investment in infrastructure (especially the *Metrolink* tram) and both public and private real estate. Although all the components of the successful use of culture within a rebranding exercise seem to ensure an automatic success in place rebranding, it must be remembered that the success stories are heavily outweighed

by the failures and replication elsewhere, without the particular time and place conditions of Salford, does not promise the same results. This leads us to consider the pitfalls of culture-based city rebranding.

Rethinking the Instruments

All the practices described above, attempt in one way or another to display the particular city's cultural offering in an alluring and, to a large extent, glamorous manner, an effort linked to significant potential gains but not free from dangers. A formal designation involving several of the techniques reviewed above that illustrates the potential and pitfalls of using culture to achieve branding objectives is the 'European City (after 1999 'Capital') of Culture' title of the European Union. This epithet bestowed now (2014) on 50 cities, seems to offer national and international recognition of cultural excellence both past and present, expressed in increased tourism visitation, stimulation of local cultural consumption and networks of production, all for the little cost of recognition and exploitation of what already exists. Each element of the triad, local culture, local self-image and the local economy seem all to be almost effortless winners. This in itself explains the often fierce competition among cities for the award and the accompanying high local expectations it evokes (Hakala and Lemmetyinen 2013). Indeed an evaluation of the impacts bestowed on recipients over the years can identify cities for which their year of cultural fame seems to have been a defining moment in their wider development and marks their entrée into the elite group of world cultural capitals. Although any such evaluation has a large subjective element there is a consensus among commentators that Glasgow (1990), Dublin (1991), Cork (2005) and Essen (2010) fall into a category of clear winner. However even more numerous are major cities whose national and international position was never in doubt (e.g. Athens 1985, Paris 1989, Copenhagen 1996, Krakow 2000) and the accolade contributed next to no additional benefit. Finally, there are cities for whom the award was based not upon recognition of what already existed but upon an optimistic hope that the designation would stimulate its own justification in new cultural activity. In many instances (e.g. Antwerp 1993, Thessaloniki 1997, Reykjavik 2000, Sibiu 2007, Pécs 2010, Maribor 2012) it did not and the expectations of the city managers, citizens, visitors and the observing world were not fulfilled, leading at best to no change and at worst to frustration and disappointment. It should be remembered that the stimulation of culture is not the goal, nor is it often especially important for increased cultural consumption in such cities. The goal is to stimulate wider urban development, principally through its value in shaping and propagating an improved place-brand both outside the city and even more important as a self-branding exercise aimed at creating a new local self-perception and élan. This will only work when the brand can deliver on its promise and the city actually deserves wider recognition as a result of changes that have already occurred.

More generally, culture-based place branding might turn into a gamble if its pitfalls are not considered. Practical experience from place after place that has attempted it, allows a careful consideration of the significant risks involved. We discuss these risks below in two overlapping strands.

The Risk of Planned Success

The dangers now becoming evident, stem largely not from the chance that the rebranding will fail but that it will be successful. If, for instance, the place is successfully associated with a historical personality, the resulting anxiety is that the diversity and depth of local cultures is lost: Salzburg becomes monopolistically synonymous with Mozart, Liverpool with the Beatles and Nottingham with Robin Hood. Thus places may become imprisoned in single episodes of their long history and particular expressions of their diverse local culture at the expense of all the rest. The stronger and simpler the brand association the more likely it is to be successful but also the harder it will be to change in response to changing fashions. There may be more to Pamplona than 'bull running', more to Volgograd (Stalingrad) than a battle and more to Memphis than Elvis Presley but attempts to change or even diversify such strong brands would be difficult, if not impossible. Attaining notability or even notoriety in this way appears easy and if it is easy then everywhere, with the necessary financial resources, can do it, then everywhere may try, which contradicts the original intention of creating distinctiveness. Imitation, or as place managers are more likely to put it, importing best practice from elsewhere, reduces the impact as a pioneering originality becomes a well-trodden path. This is most evident in the competition to erect the world's tallest, most unusually shaped or curiously located building. Each new structure will sustain its impact for only a few years before being surpassed by another. The durability of the signature effect of an Eifel Tower or a Sydney Opera House is the rare exception rather than the universal rule. The dangers of what could be called 'Guggenheiming' are beginning to be appreciated (using the exemplar of the 1997, Frank Gehry designed well-known Guggenheim museum in Bilbao (see Gomez and Gonzalez 2001; Evans this volume). The strategic objective was to aid the economic regeneration and image transformation of the economically weak and decayed industrial city of Bilbao by means of first making a clear statement to both its citizens and the world that the city existed and is to be noticed and secondly that it is committed to 'culture' as support for that existence and reward for that notice. The results is that the originally stated strategic objective has not, or at least not yet as the time elapsed allows, been achieved with an economic revitalization of the city and realignment of its identity (Evans 2006) nor has it stimulated much local cultural creativity (Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2014) beyond that directly linked to the museum and in its immediate vicinity (Evans, this volume). Tactically it has been successful in generating a flow of short stay tourists, specifically to the museum. However as a rebranding exercise it has been almost immediately successful, to the extent that

mention of the town now immediately evokes the museum. 'The key point is that the model is believed to be effective and thus acts as a talisman supporting the self-esteem of residents and a place image attractive to exogenous investment' (Ashworth and Graham 2012, p. 587). Unsurprisingly therefore it has thus been continuously emulated elsewhere (see the many cases described by Evans in this volume). Success in achieving the strategic objectives depends largely upon the existence of actual or potential local synergies in the economy or culture of the city enabling it to profit from such a development. The irony is that such success is most likely in cities already possessing such synergies and thus in least need of a new, direction changing impulse.

The Risk of Unplanned Fragmentation

With all these instruments, the overall danger is treating them in isolation from each other and from other measures. For instance, in organizing events and festivals, ranging from Mega-events such as the Olympic Games to small local festivals, local authorities find a seemingly effective way to reinforce and project a cultural image of their place. We would argue, however, that, like any strategy put in the service of branding the place, such activities need to be guided by clear strategic directions (Kavaratzis 2011) and their effects need to be considered not only in economic terms (Garcia 2005). What is often encountered in practice is the attempt to organize a multitude of different events in the place choosing from an infinite list of choices: smaller festivals along with larger festivals; one off events along with series of regularly organized events; events covering all art forms; events based on the place's cultural past along with others that focus on progressive artistic production; events focusing on 'high culture' such as opera or classical music along with festivals of popular culture to name a few. The critical question that has been raised is whether this type of 'all events go' strategy is effective in creating or reinforcing a cultural place brand (Kavaratzis 2011). A further question relates to the purpose of these events. Are they used as a means of promoting local cultural development in order to work towards the future of the place's culture, as a means of establishing local cultural features in order to preserve and strengthen a cultural past of the place or as a means of attracting external audiences in order to foster tourism development? Can a single event or the array of staged events work towards achieving all these goals?

In general, it is unlikely that any application of a single technique will be effective. Such activities need clear strategic direction (Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2014) and are not 'quick fix' solutions to entrenched long term problems. They work effectively in combination with each other and with other policy measures as part of a long term strategic effort. The success stories related here and in the literature are often misleading through the very evident nature of the success, encouraging simplistic assessments and over optimistic imitations. Barcelona did not change overnight from a hardworking harbour and textile manufacturing town

to a vibrant city of culture as a result of the discovery and promotion of Gaudi alone. Neither did what Gibson and Stevenson (2007) named the 'Glasgow model' turn a depressed industrial city into a city of culture through its fortuitous designation as European City of Culture in 1990 (Richards and Wilson 2004; Quinn 2005, 2006). In all such cases change both functionally and in image was already in progress for many years and the intervention whether in design, association or event, worked as a catalytic culmination of much that had already occurred and as a trigger for much that occurred afterwards. It was not the change in brand, dramatic as it was, that reversed the fortunes of the place as much as the changes in the place that powered the changing brand. It confirmed and popularised an already evident if unpublicised success.

Rethinking Culture, Branding and Creativity

The essential contradiction stemming from much of the discussion above is that a place is both an entity whose meaning is interminably being renegotiated through its culture in response to social and political change, within and beyond it, but also is a commodified and marketable product. These continuous, common processes result in two quite different coexisting outcomes. On the one hand the search for the distinctive whether for external competitive advantage or internal citizen identification would seem to stress a unique individuality, while on the other hand the similarity of the forces, reactions and objectives would seem to tend towards the homogeneous and generic. The resulting contradictions are not resolved in a self-conscious, agreed consensual compromise but result in the tangle of inconsistencies and paradoxes that typify the reality of most places. Inevitably places developing a brand that in the first instance distinguishes them from their neighbours and competitors, will seize upon the cultural and historical characteristics of the locality, searching through the personalities, events, customs, myths and relict structures of the past and present for the distinctive. Local cultural expression, whether as art or way of life, is thus both a favoured instrument and an objective. This use of locality on an extra-local scale has led to the envisaging of the existence of a dichotomy of local/global, assumed to be exclusive categories of people with necessarily opposing interests, who each lay exclusive claim to the same culture. The accusation of appropriation is based on the assumption that a local culture already in existence for local purposes is 'hijacked' (Kavaratzis and Ashworth forthcoming) by global interests for their own purposes to the detriment or exclusion of those who originally produced it. This accusation of misuse is based upon four charges relating to how that culture is used.

The first charge against the use of culture in place branding is that such use views culture as an existing entity to be quarried for immediate consumption "as artefact rather than as process' (Rantisi and Leslie 2006, p. 374) operating over the longer term. Secondly, it fails to understand, or to have any interest in understanding, how cultural artefacts, events and practices acquire their meaning.

Du Gay et al. (1997) argue that there is a 'circuit of culture' with five facets, whose interaction is essential to the understanding of its meaning, namely, how is culture represented, how does it relate to social identities, how is it produced, how is it consumed and how is its use regulated. Place branding considers only one part of this circuit, namely representation. Thirdly, the production of marketable cultural products is undertaken by what Evans (2001) called a 'cultural production chain', whose phases include inspiration, production, circulation, delivery and reception. Each of these phases requires different and distinctive infrastructure, skills, technology, transport, which results not least in favoured locational spatial patterns. Branding, however, is interested only in the result, not the long chain that produced it. Fourthly, the mechanistic view of culture as a place bound resource that can be manufactured and managed on demand, usually though an application of the techniques mentioned earlier, takes the view "of culture as a detectable and distinctive variable" (Brewis and Jack 2011, p. 234) rather than an organic, collective, dynamic and on-going processes (Brewis and Jack 2011). Branding views culture as a place asset: something the place *has* rather than something the place *is* (see Ortner 1973; Smircich 1983). The consequence of such thinking is that if the place *has* little (or inappropriate) culture then more (or more appropriate) culture can be manufactured.

At the core of much local misgiving and distrust, which may be expressed in indifference, resentment or resistance, to the imposed brand is encapsulated in posing the simple question 'whose culture is it?' The question itself is loaded with assumptions about culture, its nature and the ownership claims made upon it. A brand communication favours the spectacular and the immediate to capture attention and then simplicity and brevity to convey the message. It is therefore easily accused of a selectivity that reduces a complex multifaceted local culture to a unifaceted, clichéd, blandness. Diversity is reduced to uniformity, depth to superficiality and authenticity to speciousness. The constraints imposed by the necessity to communicate are magnified by the need to communicate with quite different markets while using the same message. Seizing the attention and transferring some instantly understood meaning simultaneously to potential investors, entrepreneurs, tourists or residents requires reducing the content to its simplest in which all complexities or distractions of meaning have been filtered out, leaving a residue, which may be no more meaningful than 'I amsterdam'. 'BeBerlin' or 'totally London'. We also need to be aware that culture is very commonly oversimplified in place branding. What often happens is that the place's culture is instrumentalised for the purposes of branding the place through, for instance, festivals that are a single-faceted simplification of the variety that culture always includes. This is not only ineffective place branding but also a mistreatment of a very sensitive notion. Furthermore, it actually destroys the raw material that it attempts to work with.

Finally, as culture-led regeneration remains a popular strategy and the notion of creativity is strongly linked to place re-branding, it is worth re-stating that a major part of the problem is the fact that culture is treated as if separate from the conditions of its production (Miles 2007). Similarly, creativity seems to be treated as a symbol that floats above the city rather than being a constitutive element of social

life within it. If creativity is "a way of getting rid of rigid preconceptions and of opening ourselves to complex phenomena which cannot always be dealt with in a strict logical manner" (Landry and Bianchini 1995, p. 10) then the 'creative city' is a city capable of redefining itself beyond a simple re-labelling as creative. This is perhaps what is missing from current practice and exchange of best practices leading to what Miles (2007) describes as models of cultural renewal being sold through cultural industries consultancy regardless of localised conditions. As Ind and Todd (2011, p. 48) note,

> in the wake of the ideas proposed by Richard Florida (2002), the idea of creativity has been conflated with a specific creative class. As a consequence, cities have jumped on the bandwagon that has encouraged managers to think in similar ways as to how they can position their brands by encouraging or managing creativity. Yet creativity does not need to be the property of a creative class nor used in an instrumental way to move a place up a league table of desirability.

The same authors continue to asses that the role of place brand managers becomes not to manage creativity itself but to manage *for* creativity. This demands innovation and creativity in the culture of planning and place branding as strategies for urban change. Healy's (2004) distinction between three meanings of creativity is helpful here. First, creativity is linked to innovation and the search for the 'new', placing value on the "capacity to draw in new ideas from outside and link them to the specifics of local situations" (Healy 2004, p. 89). Secondly, creativity addresses the dimensions of urban dynamics emphasising the importance of the creative endeavour as enriching human existence, going beyond material benefits and profit and demanding a "very different appreciation on the party of funders, building regulators, land use planners and impact assessors" (Healy 2004, p. 90). Thirdly, creativity can be seen as a process of creating a new product, whether a "new urban locale, a new market niche, a new governance practice" (Healy 2004, p. 90). The important suggestion of Healy (2004) is that creativity suggests a new governance mode; one that goes beyond definitions of what a city should be like and encourages innovation and an "evaluation culture which focuses on learning new approaches and new practices" (Healy 2004, p. 90).

Concluding Remarks

We have undertaken above a summary examination of the uses of culture within place branding and have attempted to raise significant warnings. The question, 'can culture be harnessed in the service of place-branding?' is passé because the literature is now full of cases answering with a confident and self-evident affirmative and because place managers now accept that this path to assured success is easy, obvious. The rethinking is necessitated not by the subsequent question of 'how should it be done?' as by 'what are the wider consequences of doing it?'

The only lesson of global experience is that there is no universally applicable model, no set of reliable and predictable instruments and no certain successful outcome.

Elsewhere, we have suggested that the brand should be used as resource for people to construct their culture (Kavaratzis and Ashworth forthcoming). The implication for place branding is that this changes the role of the place brand manager. Traditionally, the task is to define the city's culture, attempt to persuade that this definition is the correct, authentic or most expedient one and provide its 'content' in order to make it a legitimate branding statement. Perhaps it is better to think of the task as highlighting the many facets of a city's culture and facilitating their interaction through a multitude of channels. Kornberger (2014) uses the (conveniently art-related) metaphor of the brand manager as a gallery curator who does not produce content but makes editorial decisions on themes, inspirations and quality. "Similarly, the brand manager's role would not be to produce content but to put the means to tell their own stories in the hands of the consumers" (Kornberger 2014, p. 189). In this sense then, the rethinking of the roles of culture in place branding undertaken here leads us to usefully rethink our place brand management culture.

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