Competition, Cooperation, Co-opetition. Widening the perspective on Place Branding

Thesis presented by:

Cecilia Pasquinelli

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Tutor: Prof. Nicola Bellini

Advisor: Prof. Andy Pike

*"One strikingly poetic Catalan phrase evokes the
drabness of Barcelona twenty-five years ago:
'color de gos com fuig', the color of a dog
running away - that is no color, indeteminancy,
mud, yet with something unquestionably there"*

ROBERT HUGHES, 1992

Acknowledgments

CONTENTS

Figures and Tables

Introduction

1. Place branding and place marketing: a discussion on local and regional development

The debate on place branding and place marketing often misses underlining its contribution to local and regional development. Some argue the need to frame place marketing within the wider debate on social capital (Trigilia 2000), thus proposing an internal perspective on it, i.e. the internal marketing. By actively involving insiders, internal marketing is interpreted as a tool to leverage on for the attraction of external targets. In a similar vein, Valdani and Ancarani (2000) sustained that branding strategies can trigger both an accumulation of social capital and the development of open territorial networks. On the other hand, it is worth noticing that the effectiveness of branding initiatives depends upon quantity and quality of the social capital that is available within the place (Bellini et al. 2010).

Some others argue that place marketing has to rely on internal and external networking which are intended as crucial mechanisms allowing territories to enter a global circuit of opportunities (Cozzi 2007). In addition, the 'territorial offer' is defined as a set of "territorial projects" (Bianchi 2000) building on and, at the same time, fostering relational resources which play a fundamental role for local economic development (Cantone et al. 2007). It seems that place branding and place marketing contribute to a determination of territorial organizing capacity, by relying on projects that are likely to produce a web of relationships among local actors.

Accordingly, the logic of networking is deployed to shape and interpret those actions that are aimed at marketing and branding places. The relational approach has been a point of reference for marketing geographies (Caroli 1999; Valdani and Ancarani 2000; Hankinson 2004; Cozzi 2007; Aiello and Donvito 2006, 2007). This research project contributes to the literature stream focusing on a relational interpretation of brands, thus conceiving brands and branding as integrated platforms for the management of network soft components. These are defined as those tangible and intangible elements, such as symbols, landmarks and narratives that, by composing a collective discourse on the place, do influence and shape the path of development. From a relational perspective, such collective discourse develops alongside the multiple interactions among local actors, and between local actors and their territory. By virtue of its relational nature, the brand is an active element of place marketing, since it participates in the success of the territorial network. This is the relation among brand, branding and marketing informing this research project within the broader field of local and regional development.

2. The Research Project

This research project investigates the cooperative approach to branding places, by proposing an additional reading of places and place brands from the relational viewpoint. The place is, in fact, understood as a bundle of internal relations, as well as a node of an open network linking the place to the outside world (i.e. the external relations). This interpretation of places is in line with the rationale of those development policies that, beside competition, take into account the opportunity to cooperate across administrative and/or political borders. By means of such collaborative efforts, economies of scale and/or economies of scope can be pursued, while policy learning processes can be sought.

The premise of this research is that, beside the market metaphor, the metaphor of the network can be included in the discussion, thus widening the perspective on place branding and marketing. Place branding and marketing are usually intended within a framework where competition is the main assumption at the basis of the debate on local and regional development. Such assumption refers to the 'market metaphor' which interprets on one side the place as the offer, i.e. the territorial offer, on the other side investors, tourists and residents as the actual or potential place 'consumers' composing the demand. The market metaphor seems to enable an application of business marketing and branding theories to the geographical context, even though an effort is needed to discuss the limitations of such an approach and to provide a meaningful adaptation. In line with this, a critical discussion of the collaborative rationale and, thus, of the network metaphor within the place brands and branding debate represents the original contribution of the present research.

This research project is articulated in four chapters which are focused on collaborative strategies of branding crossing administrative borders and, thus, involving multiple geographical entities. This means that this research will attempt to reach an understanding of the extent to which cross-border branding initiatives are a viable way to enhance reputation and competitiveness of the involved places. In other words, the discussion will deal with aspects related to the branding of relational spaces, that is spaces composed of multiple geographies participating in cooperative initiatives in an attempt to foster economic development.

This particular angle of observation is here named *"inter-territorial branding"* or *"network branding"*, in order to recall the two main elements of the discussion, that are:
- the *network*, this is the relational or collaborative space coinciding with the branded object. Though being part of the broader field of place branding, network brands and branding refer to an interactive space or a network of places whose historical, cultural, political and sometimes physical boundaries are crossed in order to pursue economic development. This contrasts with the notion of 'place' as usually intended in the place branding debate, which concerns delimited, self-contained and closed spatial units under the jurisdiction of an administrative and/or political authority (Anderson, 1996 cited in Pike et al. 2006:25);
- *branding*, this is intended as the process aimed at establishing a fair reputation and building a brand equity, which are both assumed to contribute to economic

development. The focus is on the mechanisms and processes of network brand emergence and evolution.

This research project aims at providing an exploratory insight into cross-border brands, thus contributing to filling the literature gap related to the collaborative rationale as an approach to branding places. Accordingly, particular attention is drawn to the process of emergence and evolution of inter-territorial brands, by emphasising main challenges, pitfalls and opportunities coming from collaborative branding strategies.

In an attempt to cast light on this unexplored research field, i.e. inter-territorial (or network) brands and branding, the Ph.D. project is structured as follows. *Chapter One* contains an introductory overview of place brands and branding, and critically reviews concepts and variables composing the theoretical backbone of this research. The aim of this chapter is, in fact, providing the reader with a conceptual point of reference, by presenting the notions on which the following chapters are built and, at the same time, by explaining the origin of the research question tackled in this project.

Chapter Two introduces the notion of network brands and branding, i.e. brands and branding crossing administrative borders. After a definition of the object under scrutiny, i.e. the inter-territorial brand, this chapter aims at unfolding the process of inter-territorial branding, by analysing both major phases and forces leading to the emergence of inter-territorial brands. While territorial competition is the main assumption of place management, this chapter argues this is not an exhaustive approach to understanding local development and, consequently, place branding. Within a frame of global competition, cities, regions and countries may undertake inter-territorial cooperation in order to enhance their competitiveness. In this regards, this chapter tackles an evident gap in place branding literature which overlooks inter-territorial collaborative strategies.

Chapter Three aims at further unfolding the process of collaborative branding strategies crossing administrative borders and, thus, at investigating the sequence of steps that head towards the emergence of a collective organization identity. In post-industrial economies there is the need to reflect on geographical settings that are capable to trace alternative tracks of local and regional development. In the literature on relational spatialities there is an evident gap concerning viable forms of organization to manage and deal with geographical networks and relational spaces. This chapter tackles this issue by assuming a branding perspective whose deep relation with planning for economic development is underlined.

Chapter Four aims at highlighting the extent to which a network of places can be shaped, conceived and perceived as a brand. In addition, the hypothesis of network brands and branding as viable tools to determine re-branding effects in declining areas will be discussed. Conventional variables of place branding, i.e. brand image, brand reality and brand identity, are re-interpreted in light of the relational paradigm and looked at through a relational lens of observation. The methodological novelty introduced for empirical investigation, i.e. the use of the social network analysis, is functional to an operationalization of the brand image, which is here intended as a bundle of parasocial relationships linking local communities to the brand.

Finally, the conclusive chapter retakes into account the contribution of Chapter Two and attempts to enrich the related explorative efforts, by building on the findings of Chapter Three and Four. The conclusion provides the reader with a further discussion of the significant elements characterising network brands and the branding process.

3. Summary of the research results

On the basis of both a theoretical and empirical engagement, this research project achieved an exploratory insight into network brands and branding, thus making a set of statements emerge. These should be taken into account as issues to build on for further research aiming at better framing cooperative branding rationales.

Firstly, network branding builds on a collaborative rationale according to which a range of strategies mixing diverse degrees of cooperation and competition among the involved geographies can be adopted, depending upon the complexity of branding aims and scope (see Chapter Two). That is, a regime of co-opetition (meaning collaborative strategies among geographies which do compete directly) is likely to be pursued to deliver less complex brands, e.g. destination brand, where aims are relatively clear and merely operative. Differently, cooperation with complementary partners - in relation to which the degree of competition is lower and perceived as almost inexistent, beyond the assumption of global competition -, rather than with direct competitors, is likely to be preferred in case of more complex brands, e.g. integrated brands. In fact, in these cases the aims tend to be strategic and thus more ambitious, yet fuzzier. Strategic and fuzzier aims, in fact, may imply a lack of capacity to control payoffs and results of collaboration, so that a cooperative regime characterised by a low degree of competition (real and/or perceived) is preferred, since it helps to avoid the risk of blending competition with cooperation (see Chapter Two).

The notion of co-opetition is worthy of attention. Co-opetition can be used to refer to a very broad set of strategies available to approach local and regional development. Such rich set of strategies consists in diverse combinations of cooperative and competitive attitudes adopted by geographies to enhance their competitiveness, where either cooperation or competition can prevail. As a matter of fact, cities, regions and countries, similarly to businesses, can benefit from consciously undertaking branding relations of cooperation and competition with other territories simultaneously. According to the results of a critical discussion on the collaborative branding rationale, which constitutes the overall aim of this research project, co-opetition should be taken into account as a valid alternative (or, rather, as a source of valid alternatives, in light of the many different strategies that can derive from the co-opetitive rationale) to frame development and development policies.

Secondly, concerning the process of emergence and evolution of inter-territorial brands, this research project concludes that:
(a) the inter-territorial branding process is characterised by the intertwining of both pragmatic and political forces which do shape the brand, so that both have to be considered as conditions for the emergence and evolution of inter-territorial brands. Although the network space is not a political arena - at least originally -, networks can

become the space where political vision and ambitions as well as political strategies are pursued;

(b) in a turbulent environment, as the contemporary one is since being characterised by uncertainty and increasing scarcity of resources, on one hand pragmatic motivations are likely to favour the emergence of network brands and branding, because of the need to determine economies of scale and scope in the pursuit of economic development, and because of an increasing awareness of the need for policy learning crossing closed administrative borders. On the other hand, the political dimension can challenge the ambitious and costly choice - in terms of time and control - of cross-border collaboration, thus decreasing the appeal of network branding strategies. This means that in a turbulent environment the emergence of network brands depends upon the achievement of a critical and hard balance between the pragmatic and political forces influencing the territorial capacity of networking;

(c) network brands and branding may experience an institutionalization process. This improves and strengthens the meaning of the brand until defining a proper legacy of meaning that turns an imagined space into a proper institution. When the process of institutionalization is undertaken, the network brand – since becoming an institution - tends to be self-reinforcing, thus lasting over time. This is positive for the creation of a brand reputation, usually requiring long-time frames. However, at the same time the institutionalized network brand can produce lock-in effects, by constraining the imagination of alternative spaces for development. This implies the risk of producing static networks due to a crystallization of the network boundaries.

Thirdly, this research findings suggest the opportunity to enhance the reputation of places by means of cross-border collaborative strategies. In fact, network branding strategies can foster re-branding effects throughout two distinct mechanisms. This is viable, firstly, by creating a reputation for the network space *per se*. Such reputation arises beside pre-existing individual images of the collaborating places, without diluting them. Secondly, the reputation earned by the inter-territorial brand can ends up fuelling and renewing the sets of images characterising the individual partners separately. That is, the inter-territorial branding may trigger an innovation process for the involved identities.

Moreover, a further reputational impact has to be mentioned, i.e. the recognition of a networking or collaborative capacity characterising the involved places. Hence, an enduring cross-border collaboration may result in an increase of reputation which is due to the partners' trustworthiness and reliability determined by a well-proved and visible – i.e. 'branded' - capacity to deliver projects and, generally, to deploy innovative development strategies. That is, according to this research results, inter-territorial branding seems to be capable of increasing the 'reputational capital' of the collaborating partners from two perspectives. On one hand, inter-territorial branding can change the image of the networking places, by modifying values and symbols composing places' imagery. On the other hand, from an institutional point of view, inter-territorial branding gives the chance to demonstrate a political and managerial capacity of the involved local actors. The reputation of 'good partner', in fact, improves the place identity and, especially, the so called behavioural identity of the place, since a branding strategy itself

may reveal salient identity aspects, such as the style of local governments' strategy-making, mirroring how things get done within a place (see Chapter One).

Concerning the wider contribution of this research project, we can state that the discussion on network branding widens the reach of the place branding debate. The case of network brands helps to identify the branding potential to produce institutions, i.e. brands, which, by entering the policy agenda, end up influencing the definition of local strategies for development. Consequently, beside the administrative and functional geographies, we should include the 'branded geographies' in a discussion on development. As argued, branded geographies coincide with those relational spaces that are capable of being protagonists in the "market of geographies". Also in this sense branding should be considered as crucial process to the path of local development. In fact, it is not only the way to communicate the selected routes of development, or a way to improve the reputation of places, but it is also a process of collective learning and collective creation of a discourse on development, highly influencing decision-making and consensus-building.

While place branding is usually conceived as aimed at capitalizing on the place identity inherited from history, this project argued that branding can contribute to the production of identities, that is ever changing identities that redefine the space of action constantly. This is due to the interactions among multiple communities that, in the case of network brands, establish relationships across the administrative or institutional borders of cities, regions and countries. Accordingly, identities are only partially created by the strategic design of brands. Rather, they are constructed mainly by the interactions of communities appropriating them. As a matter of fact, a distinction between the producers and consumers of place brands is not viable, just like in the case of corporate and product brands (see the issues related to brand co-creation in Chapter Four).

In this regards, it is worth stressing the importance of a relational interpretation of place brands. This project refers to the relational paradigm for the analysis of network brands, and there is room to sustain that this is a useful perspective within the wider domain of place branding. That is, analysts can reach significant insight into place brands if these are understood as bundles of relationships that are established by networking assets and resources, as well as by virtue of the set of perceptions building the so called parasocial brand relationships (see Chapter Four).

4. Reflections on the research project

This research project dealt with a theoretical problem which is at the core of the place branding debate, and which imposes reflection on the meaning of brands and branding carefully. Differently from the business context, concerning places we have to establish if we can speak of brands even in lack of place branding actions projecting images of the branded object towards target audiences. This project followed the stream of literature that uses the notions of brand and branding in this extensive way. The sense of place and the place images are defined as those elements allowing us to speak of brands, thus assuming that place brands do exist and are relevant for development even if they are not linked to, or somehow favoured by, designed brand strategies. In the same vein, this project refers to branding as the set of mechanisms and processes that either voluntarily

shaped by an intelligent organization, or spontaneously emerged in an uncontrolled and unmanaged way, do produce visible place brands endowed with positive or negative, strong or weak reputation.

The use of brand and branding terminology mainly depends upon the stream of literature within which place branding is grounded. The debate on place brands is fuelled by many different contributions coming from different fields of study, such as human geography, planning, architecture, sociology, marketing and psychology. Multidisciplinarity, which thus is intrinsic to the debate, enriches the analytical perspective on place brands and branding yet, at the same time, is provoking a lack of homogeneity in the place branding vocabulary. The result is that there are not agreed definitions even concerning basic concepts, such as brand and branding.

Currently, a wide academic community is working on place brands. We can separate two main groups: the business scholars in the field of marketing and branding, and the geographers mainly interested in urban planning and, generally, in economic development. Despite some exceptions, the former group is fairly reluctant to accept an unorthodox use of brand and branding terminology, thus limiting the observation and speculation to those cases in which proper branding actions were carried out. The latter exploits selected notions concerning brands and branding in an attempt to understand those mechanisms regarding place images and identities that can be relevant to local and regional development.

Even though rich in diversity and very active especially over the last decade, place branding scholarships have been fairly disappointing so far. On one hand, scholars are often not able to establish a constructive dialogue within the place branding community, because of an inability to edge the significant differences in the theories and languages used. On the other hand, place branding theory is fairly poor and fragmented due to a lack of integration across a variety of contributions in the field. There is still the need to find a shared theoretical background on which to build a theoretical discussion that can be understood by all members of the place branding community.

One may argue that the incompatibility of both languages and *grand* theories across disciplines will probably make the research efforts in place branding vanish eventually. When the 'fashion effect' concerning place branding will finish, who is going to undertake place branding research? Will they be marketing scholars, thus carrying the risk of focusing on a very niche field of research overlooked by marketing mainstreams, far from local and regional development problems, or, rather, geographers who, though being more open to hybridizations, tend to overlook branding research because feeling distant from marketing-like rationales?

There is an evident problem of identity (a funny paradox for the place brand research community!) which is unlikely to find a solution by remaining within a multidisciplinary approach to research. This is the ultimate statement resulting from this research project. Multidisciplinarity, characterising place branding research, is said to be a "juxtappostion of theoretical models belonging to different disciplines" offering complementary perspectives on a phenomenon (Ramadier 2004:433). This implies, however, that each discipline keeps working "in a self-contained manner" (Bruce et al. 2004:459), thus producing heavily fragmented outcomes.

Differently, an alternative approach such as the interdisciplinary or, even, transdisciplinary approach, might provide support for place branding to become a properly scientific research field. An interdisciplinary approach aims, in fact, at the construction of a common model overcoming the disciplinary fragmentation and, thus, reaching a synthesis, by means of a transfer of tools and models from one discipline to another (Ramadier 2004). That is, the interdisciplinary approach determines a "mixing of disciplines" (Lawrence et al. 2004) in tackling one problem, in an attempt to use a range of disciplinary perspectives to provide a systematic outcome (Bruce et al. 2004). However, one may argue that at this stage place branding literature has not become a proper discipline yet, so that interdisciplinarity may result in an untenable research approach.

Another research approach is transdisciplinarity, which might be a viable way to raise the place branding debate to the level of an organic and scientific discussion. Assuming the complexity of the research object, i.e. the notion of place brand, and the need to pursue innovative research strategies to reach an appropriate insight, transdisciplinarity can challenge current fragmentation by carrying out a "fusion of disciplines" (Lawrence et al. 2004:400). Transdisciplinarity, in fact, allows an interpretation of the observed phenomenon by assuming the perspective of the crossing space of multiple disciplines (Lawrence et al. 2004). In other words, transdisciplinarity defines an articulation of multiple readings of a complex reality, in order to produce an organic interpretative framework that goes beyond the single disciplines. Consequently, the created knowledge is different from the sum of its disciplinary components. Despite the many challenges in carrying out transdisciplinary research (see Futures, Special Issue, 2004), this might be a viable way to develop the realm of place branding speculation whose evident lack of theoretical development is the main barrier towards further improvements.

This was confirmed by this research project where the constraints of the multidisciplinary approach became evident in the theoretical development step. Beyond a rich empirical insight and the opportunity to describe and understand the dynamics of the analysed phenomenon, the theoretical contribution is weak since it is not conceived and produced within a robust set of place branding theories (which does not really exist). As a matter of fact, this project did not assume the interdisciplinary or the transdisciplinary approach, while multidisciplinarity was sought in line with the mainstream of place branding literature. The multidisciplinarity was guaranteed by the reference to different disciplinary domains - such as corporate branding, organization theory and, generally, economic geography - in order to reach an insight into diverse aspects of the investigated issue. The adopted theoretical framework provided an understanding of network brands and branding, but this is hardly defined as place branding theory because it keeps being an application of 'outside' theories to place brand and branding empirical problems.

As said, multidisciplinarity inspired this project, thus positioning it within the place branding mainstream. In terms of disciplines juxtaposition, business management and regional studies are main references for this project, in line with my background and research interests. Starting from a business management background, I have been developing my research in the field of regional economic development over the last five years. The attempt has been exploiting the knowledge I developed in both areas in order

to provide an original insight into regional development studies, by trying to work 'on the border'. I intend business management theories and methodologies as potentially functional to the research field I want to contribute to, i.e. local and regional development. However, it is not only a matter of exploitation of business concepts and models. Rather, my business studies background has structurally shaped my way to conceive local and regional development research. In fact, my focus is a 'strategy' perspective on local and regional development, whose presumption (and aim) is the possibility to manage (not just to analyse and understand) development processes within geographies.

5. Methodological approach

This project adopted the case study as research strategy in light of the need to consider a process, i.e. the inter-territorial branding process, that is characterised by "the complex cause-and-effect links within the context of a complex, social science situation" (Carson et al. 2001:35). In place brands and branding research, the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not evident (Yin 1994) so that the case study approach tends to be considered as the most appropriate research strategy (see Kavaratzis 2008). In place branding, case-based research is, in fact, often undertaken since the observed phenomena are not "easily observable outside the natural settings in which they occur" (Bonoma 1985:202).

This research strategy was adopted on the basis of a match between the investigated research theme and the reasons for choosing the case study stated by Stokes and Perry (2007):
- "an investigation of a contemporary, dynamic phenomenon and its emerging body of knowledge" (Stokes and Perry 2007:138);
- the need to analyse a real-life context where the elements of the phenomenon cannot be constrained within given variables, or too many variables would be necessary for considering all the possible relevant aspects (Yin, 1981 cited in Stokes and Perry 2007);
- an explanation of causal links is too complex and single clear outcomes are not likely;
- the need to use multiple sources of data to reach an insight into the phenomenon.

In line with recent developments in case study research this project adopted a mix of induction and deduction, in order to fulfil its objectives (see Conclusion chapter). The usual distinction concerning case-based research rationale is between theory-building and theory-testing. The theory-building is an inductive process (see Eisenhardt 1989), while the theory-testing is fairly deductive (see Yin 1993, 1994). Their main difference consists in the relation with theory at the beginning and at the end of the research process. While a purely inductive process starts with no theory and no hypothesis (it is "impossible [though] to achieve this ideal of a clean theoretical slate", Eisenhardt 1989:536), the deductive approach roots into a theory which can be confirmed or disconfirmed by means of an hypothesis testing. According to Perry (1998) the difference between the two approaches is the reference to different scientific paradigms, that is on one hand the deductive approach refers to the positivist paradigm, on the other hand the inductive approach refers to the phenomenological one.

However, some argue that in case-based research a middle road involving both inductive and deductive stages can be useful (Carson et al. 2001), since pure induction prevents the researcher from benefiting of existing theory, while pure deduction might prevent the development of new theory. Accordingly, it is said that a first stage can be exploratory by providing a preliminary model inductively, while a second stage delivers confirmation or disconfirmation of the emerged model deductively (Carson et al. 2001). Even Eisenhardt (1989), who sustained a theory-building grounded on case studies, argued an *a priori* specification of constructs as a preliminary step in the research design, thus considering the identification of theoretical constructs as valuable for guiding the research. Put simply, the process of theory advancements does need an ongoing interplay between the two approaches.

For this research project such 'middle road' was chosen, thus including both inductive and deductive stages of research. Further methodological elements are presented in the Conclusion chapter.

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Chapter One
Place Branding.
A Literature Review

1. The origins of place branding: a historical perspective

Place branding is not new idea and, actually, its origins are traced in the past. As Kavaratzis and Ashworth argued, "the conscious attempt of governments to shape a specifically designed place identity and promote it to identified markets, whether external or internal, is almost as old as government itself" (2010:1). Some identify the birth of place branding with colonialism, as being an attempt to attract settlers to the New World, while in modern days the origins of place branding are traced in the US during the 19th century (Hankinson 2010; Govers and Go 2009). However, the practice of promoting a geographic area to visitors, residents and investors has been developing over the last two decades rapidly, along with a fast and progressive sophistication of techniques and purposes.

While in the 1980s the approach consisted mainly in "selling the place" to selected targets, currently the strategic content of branding initiatives tends to be higher and deeply intertwined with economic development policies. As Anholt suggested (2010a), following the development of product marketing, which derives from the consumption boom after the II World War, city boosterism became a professional practice, so that evolutions in place marketing went in parallel with the evolutions in product and service promotion. However, the concept of strategic place marketing was conceptualized by Kotler et al. for the first time in 1993, while the notion of brand took a long time before being part of both the academic discussion and practice (Anholt 2010a).

From a historical point of view, place branding is interpreted in light of globalization which has pushed public authorities towards the adoption of an entrepreneurial attitude to local and regional development. According to Kirby and Kent (2010), place marketing derives from the concept of "entrepreneurial city" which is based on the notion of entrepreneurial governance introducing the notions of sense of management, risk-propensity, promotion and profit motivation. There is much agreement on the "neo-liberal shift" in public management (Harvey 1989). Coalitions are sought among public and private actors, while the old style of policy-making is abandoned in order to maximize efficiency. In this frame, place branding is to be considered as "a marketing-led strategy of economic development" (Greenberg 2008) that translates business techniques and concepts into tools for public management. Strategic place marketing is,

thus, deemed necessary to face threats – or to exploit opportunities – posed by global competition.

According to some, place marketing and place branding have been key tools for neo-liberal elites to lead a transformation of localities from industrial to post-industrial economies. Eisenschitz (2010) argued that place marketing has been developing in parallel with the economy abandoning the industrial age dominated by working class communities. Along with deindustrialization, the working class has been weakening, while the middle-class has been imposing its own vision for development, thus shifting the focus on services and, generally, on a de-materialized knowledge-based economy. That is, the emergence of place marketing and branding is highly related to a historic path that has affirmed "the politics of the post-industrial city" (Eisenschitz 2010).

Arguably, place branding takes shape in parallel with a growing emphasis on the 'de-materialized' knowledge economy. Particularly, the claim of a creative class (Florida 2002) driving economies and their growth, impressed the ultimate push to place branding on the basis of a twofold assumption. On one hand, human resources are increasingly mobile (Kotler 2004) and are deemed the spatial drivers of investment capitals. On the other hand, people are said to be influenced by not only tangible but also intangible factors. Accordingly, place identity and culture do work as 'magnets' for attraction, thus influencing individuals' relocation decisions. For example, in order to allure and retain best talents, investors tend to choose appealing geographies for doing business. This is core assumption for understanding the overwhelming and rapid diffusion of place branding around the world.

In 2005 in an editorial of *Place branding and Public diplomacy* journal Anholt claimed that the time for place branding had come. That is, "big changes in the social and political fabric of modern society make the more 'public-oriented' approach of place branding a necessity in the 21st century" (Anholt 2005a: 116). The key factors leading the development of place branding as an approach to place management were said to be five, i.e. the spread of democratic-type of governance, the increased transparency of open relationships, the growing power of international media, the decreasing costs of travelling, the pool of international investors becoming scarce and, finally, a tougher global competition for talents.

The two assumptions above, i.e. the neo-liberal transformation and the knowledge economy, are complemented by a third one, i.e. the territorial competition. As said, globally cities, regions and nations compete in order to attract and retain human resources and capital investments. Competition is explained according to a definition of the marketplace: "a globalised world is a marketplace where country has to compete with country – and region with region, city with city – for its share of attention, of reputation, of spend, of goodwill, of trust. That places should look to the disciplines of the marketplace for inspiration about how to prosper in this world is entirely logical" (Anholt 2005a:119). Globalization and the disappearance of frontiers for investments and credit have made countries, cities, regions and their capacity of attraction increasingly crucial to economic development (Lebendenko 2004) so that, as some scholars stated, place branding is now inevitable for those geographies that do not want to be left behind (Gertner and Kotler 2004).

These three assumptions provide a viable explanation of a transition from the place marketing frame to a renewed one where place branding does dominate the debate. Place branding is the most recent approach to marketing regions and it consists in a further sophistication of the way to conceive how to market geographies. According to Gertner, the "turning point in the field's evolution" (2011:91) is represented by Anholt's article that in 1998 stressed the shift from place marketing to place branding. Since then place marketing seems not to be an "appealing expression or topic" any longer (Gertner 2011:98). Place marketing was mainly focused on positioning, targeting and defining the optimum place marketing mix (Kotler et al., 1999 cited in Kavaratzis 2005). From a geographical perspective, in 1990 Ashworth and Voogd (see Kavaratzis 2005) proposed the geographical marketing mix, thus referring to promotional, spatial-functional, organisational and financial measures. Then, in the 2000s the expression 'place branding' almost replaced the one of 'place marketing' in the literature and, accordingly, "there [has been] an apparent shift towards branding, which has been recognised widely in the literature and is evident in the practice of place marketing" (Kavaratzis 2005:332).

Place brands and branding put in place an additional set of tools that allow places to capitalize on their immaterial resources, such as symbols, values and identities, in order to vehicle messages concerning a 'development proposition', to be intended as the direction (politically) selected for fostering economic development. We can intend the development proposition as a value proposition related to place brands, which is supposed to work as that deliverable promise inspiring internal and external actors' behaviours. This sophistication of the tools used for supporting development was required by the strengthening of competition, as well as by the neo-liberal transformation in public management favouring managerial approaches to development policies. Arguably, the paradigm of the knowledge economy and the rising leadership of prominent stakeholders characterising it, such as educated middle-classes, talents and the so called creative class, have induced to emphasise place brands, which belong to an intangible dimension of meanings highly valued by contemporary 'relevant' stakeholders. As a matter of fact, this is the same mechanism enhancing the role of product and corporate brands in contemporary society.

Certainly appealing to symbols and values is not enough and the need to "do and label" is usually suggested, so that branding means on one hand improving reality (e.g. services and infrastructures), on the other hand making the unique advantage of investing and living in a region visible, perceived and credible. All geographies are called to construct their competitive advantage, thus positioning themselves in a 'geographical market', an open space of competition where even backward regions can play and exploit opportunities. There are many experiences of economically marginal and geographically peripheral places that are 'packing' their competitive advantage, in order to emancipate from their historical backwardness (see Pasquinelli and Teras 2011). Pant (2005) made the example of regions building their brands on the "quality of contest", a sort of environmental quality which can help to improve the reputation of those places that have been traditionally linked to the ideas of remoteness and marginality. That is, in the construction of a competitive advantage there is the need to reflect on viable ways to enter the short-list of those geographical areas that are considered by businesses and talents as potential spots for localization.

In fact, place branding has been a growing practice all over the world and the vocabulary of branding is used in all continents. Not only rising attention to branding has been paid

in practice, but also an exponential growth in the number of academic articles from 1988 on demonstrates scholars' rising interest in this field (Lucarelli and Berg 2011). In US many brands encompass metropolitan areas like, for example, Dallas/Forth Worth reaching significant cooperation across a range of cities in order to attract visitors and investors; and Chicago (see Moilanen and Rainisto 2009) where World Business Chicago, a public-private economic development corporation, is in charge of making the city the best global hub to live in and work ("Chicago. A Magnet for world-class talent", Moilanen and Rainisto 2009). Another example is the State of Kentucky ("Kentucky. Unbridled Spirit") which draws attention for the pervasiveness of the brand strategy incorporating the brand "in everything the State creates"[1], such as licence plates, web sites and brochures, in order to make the country image consistent and widely known.

In Europe, there are many cases of branding initiatives aimed at improving the profile of post-industrial cities and city-regions. Manchester, Bilbao and Glasgow are only few examples demonstrating the strong link that policy-makers draw between branding and urban regeneration, as well as the reliance on culture and local heritage to re-launch the attractiveness of European regions. Proving the relevance of place branding in contemporary European debate on development, forty cities under the guidance of Lyon City Council (France) have been collaborating for a project focused on brand management and city attractiveness. In 2005 the Eurocities Questionnaire showed that the average annual expenditure on place branding in Europe was £ 400.000 per city with total amounts spanning from £ 130,000 to £ 10 million per year (Seisdedos, 2006 cited in Lucarelli and Berg 2011): these differences in terms of branding investments report about the many different ways to conceive place branding in Europe. The Eurocities project aims at providing good practices of place branding and lists a series of lessons for "successful place branding" in Europe (Eurocities 2010). However, while suggesting potential elements of successful recipes, the Eurocities project has not helped to clearly define place branding success, which is a salient aspect still unexplored in literature.

Australia pioneered country branding by designing a campaign that contributed to the creation of a national image[2] which was lacking, while New Zealand has earned positive reputation as destination by means of the "100% Pure New Zealand" campaign (Morgan et al. 2002). An interesting Australian example is, then, Pilbara region which shows the difficulties of a transformative re-branding approach in a region where diverse communities with very different cultural backgrounds have different, even conflicting, expectations from their place (Singleton and McKenzie 2008).

In the Asian continent, South Korea has recently launched a country brand strategy in order to make national assets visible to the world. Then, China tried to exploit Beijing 2008 Olympic Games to show its capacity of economic leadership to international audiences, while Chinese cities and provinces are increasingly sensitive to branding[3]. Particularly, Berkovitz et al. (2007) explained how China made an attempt to build a positive image by using Olympics as a tool to communicate that, on one hand, China is rich in history and culture, and that, on the other hand, by means of the "high-tech

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[1] See http://kentucky.gov/pages/unbridledspirit.aspx. Accessed: January 2010.

[2] See http://www.buildingbrandaustralia.com.au/. Accessed: January 2010.

[3] Chengdu and the Chengdu High Tech Industrial Investment Zone are an example. The website targeting UK for FDIs attraction in the high tech industry strongly refers to the "authentic Chengdu" for promoting the city as global innovative hub, see http://www.chenguhitech.co.uk/ChengDu_City.asp. Accessed: January 2010.

Olympics", China is no longer only "the factory of the world", yet a country that is ready to upgrade its position in the global value chain.

In the African continent, South Africa founded the International Marketing Council in 2000[4], working on the creation of a consistent umbrella brand for the country. This brand is in charge of signalling and giving evidence of the big socio-political changes going on (Dooley and Bowie 2005), and it is said to have contributed to the successful bid for the South Africa 2010 FIFA World Cup. This sport event drew the attention of many other African countries[5] to branding, which now is considered as an opportunity to reach visibility and to counterbalance negative images associated to the macro-region. Recently, the Brand Africa Forum 2010 was arranged, thus fuelling the debate on the Brand Africa and the African country brands.

However, after a fast and global spread place branding has been significantly criticized for turning geographies in "forests of logos, slogans and messages" (Power and Hauge 2008). Newspapers often proclaim that "public and private money is being thrown at the idea of place branding" (Harwood 2005). As a consequence of an overemphasis on place branding, some also argued it is just a convenient escape from substantial political projects (Olins 1999), hiding ineffective initiatives under brilliant logos. In fact, cities and regions often proclaim branding initiatives while engaging in a single part of the whole branding process, that is the launch of catching slogans and logos (Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2009).

Place branding is not only criticised as practice but also as a field of scholarship. The critical issues are three. Firstly, the theoretical knowledge in the field is still weak and a "robust theory is not under construction", despite an abundance of articles and books (Gertner 2011:101). This is partly due to the mulitidisciplinary nature of place branding in light of the reluctance of the academic community to accept a discipline as a scientific field of research when deriving from the adoption of paradigms from other disciplines (Gertner 2011). On the other side, the lack of theoretical propositions is a fact and it is due to the evident prevalence of a fairly descriptive approach often limiting empirical research to self-contained case studies (see Gertner 2011).

There is a third issue to be considered, i.e. the vocabulary of place branding. This issue is likely to have contributed to a slow progress in the field. The debate is fuelled by contributions from different fields of research such as business studies, human geography, architecture, sociology, communication studies and psychology. Such multidisciplinarity has enriched the language of place branding as well as the analytical perspectives but, at the same time, this has provoked a lack of homogeneity in the use of terminology and a serious fragmentation of the research field. That is, while this can be a source of richness for the debate, it seems to result in a serious lack of consistent and robust vocabulary undermining theory production. As a matter of fact, it is hard to find commonly agreed definitions of brands, branding and the related concepts. For example, brand and image are almost "similar or interchangeable concepts" and there is a variety of topics, issues, concepts imprecisely classified under the brand and branding umbrella name (Gertner 2011:97).

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[4] See http://www.brandsouthafrica.com/. Accessed: January 2010.
[5] For example, Ghana and Kenya recently undertook branding initiatives (see http://nation-branding.info/2010/09/18/brand-africa/. Accessed: January 2010).

1.1. Future trends in the place brand and branding debate

Current facts impose us to rethink of branding in a more focused and effective way. The global crisis and, consequently, public budget cuts along with the credit crunch impacting on private sectors, urge cities and regions to retake into consideration their policies and actions carefully. As a matter of fact, "maintaining or increasing the level of place branding is not politically easy in a recession" (Burghard 2009). Also, it is argued that under current conditions place branding has no longer a mission, so far having been developing in parallel with a property boom fuelled by credit availability, which reshaped the urban profiles of many cities and determined improvements of regional infrastructures (Eisenschitz 2010). Over the last decade public investments provided regions with assets and 'novelties' to be promoted and branded. In a scarcity of investment capacity to enhance the regional tangible advantage (i.e. "doing"), any 'labelling' can result as simply pointless and lack legitimacy.

On the other hand, global economy is experiencing a shortage of private capital investment projects, while talents seem to be even more crucial for the economy to recover than before. That is, territorial competition is further strengthening. Accordingly, since competition is one of the main assumptions in the field, there is room to argue that place branding is likely to be even more needed than before. A long-term perspective compels a reflection on the opportunity to work in the direction of fostering a regional positive image that may pay off in the future, since providing the regions with an advantage that will make a difference as long as the global economy will recover.

However, the need for change is widely sustained. In global competition place branding may be ascribed two aims, i.e. reaching place visibility and raising distinctiveness. As Hospers (2004) stated, spatial cognition studies demonstrated that the extent to which a region is known positively influences the place image, simply because of the human attitude of not trusting and not liking the unknown. In addition, place branding is in charge of communicating place distinctiveness and delivering a unique and unreplicable advantage (Turok 2009). Paradoxically, in the effort of 'packaging' distinctiveness, cities often end up promoting same features and delivering same brand messages. Turok (2009) argued that sameness tends to emerge, due to a serious lack of imagination and risk aversion that make brands similar and, thus, ineffective. Similarly, Eisenshitz (2010) stated that a serious limitation comes from the generation of "clone towns", with a consequent saturation of same brands making places all looking the same, with their mix of conference centres, high streets, malls, retails, museums, etc. Colomb and Kalandides reported on this by saying that place branding is producing a series of "urban products" (2010:176) whose homogeneity and high replicability seem to be the most frequent result. There is, in fact, a mimetic process going on, which is undertaken by cities in response to global competition and which, on the other hand, is accelerating globalization (Czarniawska 2002).

If, on one hand, the strengthening of global competition suggests that place branding is going to keep in regional and local authorities' policy agendas, on the other hand the dramatic decrease in public and private resources highlights the need for more effective and innovative brand strategies, meaning aiming at more distinctive and visible brands. At the same time, there is an increasing awareness of the need to assess and evaluate branding actions and their effectiveness, in order to justify branding investments.

Accordingly, within the academic community such awareness is rooting in light of a lack of evidence-based evaluation of place branding impacts.

Efforts are needed to analyse brand effectiveness (McCann 2009). This is an issue increasingly considered as one of the main weaknesses in this field. Scholars focused on the likely negative impact of those branding initiatives that end up provoking negative reactions among local communities. In fact, there may be local actors feeling excluded by the content of the brand narrative and, consequently, willing to counterbalance and neutralize the brand message (Greenberg 2008). Concerning branding impacts a stream of literature, inspired by psychological studies in corporate and product branding, has been 'measuring' the image and the change in perceptions. Many techniques have been deployed especially in the field of destination branding, which is naturally closer to product brands and branding. That is, the effects of campaigns 'selling' a destination can be isolated and somehow measured on the basis of a well-defined target, i.e. visitors. In terms of image measurement, many consultancies have been delivering their city and country brand indexes, such as Future Brand Country Brand Index[6], Saffron European City Brand Barometer[7] and Anholt-GfK Roper City[8] and Nation Brand Index[9]. Recently, the Economic Reputation Index was delivered in an attempt to carry out a monetary valuation of brands, thus providing a method for measuring the economic value of places and their assets, e.g. monuments and events (Mattioni 2011).

However, while being a robust base for screening the place image in order to design a brand strategy, the analysis of perceptions is not a definitive way to assess branding impacts. A change in place image is a long-term process, not likely to provide any evidence of branding effectiveness in the short term. Moreover, a shift in image can be caused by many factors that are not necessarily connected to branding or, in other words, the impacts of branding are not easily isolated from the impacts of other facts occurring

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[6] Country Brand Index (CBI) by FutureBrand - released yearly, the Index is utilised to rank 102 countries across 29 image attributes which include cultural elements e.g. authenticity and history, facilities e.g. Resort & Lodging Options and Ease of travel, business factors e.g. Ideal for business, Easiest to do business, New country for business and Advanced Technologies.

[7] *Saffron European City Brand Barometer by Saffron Brand Consultants* – the Barometer measures how successfully 72 European cities with populations of 450,000 or more, plus Manchester, Bristol, Cardiff, Leeds and Newcastle, project their assets for their future success. It consists in balancing City Asset Strength and City Brand Strength. Brand Utilisation reveals how well the cities are living up to their brand potential (by calculating brand strength as a percentage of asset strength for each city). *Saffron City Brand Criteria*: Pride and personality of people, Distinctive sense of the place, Ambition/Vision and Business climate, Recognition, Worth going to see, Ease, access and comfort, Conventional value, Locational context and value, Attractions and anomalies.

[8] Anholt-GfK Roper City Brands Index (CBI) – this assesses the strengths and weaknesses of 50 cities around the world, based on interviews with 20,000 citizens and consumers each year. It measures perceptions by relying on six dimensions: Presence (city's international status and standing and the global familiarity/knowledge of the city), Place (perceptions about the physical aspect), Pre-requisites (basic qualities of the city e.g. amenities, affordability…), People (openness and attitude of local inhabitants), Pulse (how exciting the city is perceived to be), Potential (perception of economic and educational opportunities).

[9] *Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index* – released yearly, it covers 50 countries and measures the power and quality of each country's 'brand image' by combining six dimensions: Exports (image of products and services from each country), Governance (public opinion regarding the level of national government competency and fairness), Culture and Heritage (global perceptions of each nation's heritage and appreciation for its contemporary culture), People (population's reputation for competence, education, openness and friendliness), Tourism (interest in visiting a country), Investment and Immigration (power to attract people to live, work or study).

at global, nation and regional level. This is a matter of causality which cannot be easily solved when dealing with such an intangible dimension. In addition, these approaches to evaluation are not exhaustive since they do not inform on the ultimate effect of place branding on local or regional economic development.

To conclude, future research in place branding is in charge of focusing on two main issues, i.e. branding strategies for delivering distinctive brands, and the evaluation of branding impacts and effectiveness. This research project is in charge of contributing to the former issue by proposing an exploration of cooperative strategies for branding networks of places, as further explained in the following chapters. From the impacts assessment side, this research assumes that branding initiatives contribute to strengthening cross-border cooperation, by supporting a relational spatiality which is chosen as the space for triggering economic development.

2. Place branding: looking for a definition

This section deals with the notion of place branding in an attempt to provide an overview of the related definitions. Showing a review of place branding definitions, Table 1.1. highlights a lack of agreement on the meaning of place branding. This is also sustained by Anholt (2005a) who affirms a confusion not only about what branding is, but also about its objectives. Particularly, Table 1.1. groups definitions into three categories, i.e. *purpose-based* (the definition states the aims of branding), *operative* (the definition states what place branding consists in), n*egative* (the definition says what place branding is not).

Table 1.1. Place branding definitions

Definition of Place Branding	*Author*	*Definition Typology*
An attempt to manage "the reputation assets" of the place such that reputation results in a "fair, balanced and useful reflection of its real assets, competencies, offering", thus avoiding biased cliché determined by history or ignorance.	Anholt 2005a	Purpose-based
It is "a sort of self-defence against tendency in the marketplace to vulgarise, trivialise and summarise in ways which are often unfair" (p.224)	Anholt 2005b	Purpose-based
It is not giving a name or a symbol to a place (places already have names and symbols), but it is about doing something to enhance the brand image of the place, that is a way to make places famous	Anholt 2010a	Negative/Purpose-based
Place brand management is better than place branding. Brand management is a primary responsibility of local, regional and national authorities	Anholt 2007, 2010b	Operative
The practice of applying brand strategy and other marketing techniques and disciplines to the economic, political and cultural development of cities, regions and countries	Journal of Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, http://www.palgrave-journals.com/ pb cited in Ashworth and	Operative

	Kavaratzis 2009	
It consists in the identification of brand strategies i.e. the fully architecture brand, the propositional brand, the naked brand	Eurocieties 2010	Operative
An attempt to provide relevant meaning and experience to people across multiple societies	Van Gelder 2002	Purpose-based
It is a special case of branding that may differ from other areas of application (e.g. products and corporations), requiring additional theoretical development	Pryor and Grossbart 2007	Negative
It refers to the strategic image management, which is an ongoing process of researching the place image, segmenting and targeting specific audiences, positioning to support the desired image, communicating the attractions to the target groups	Gertner and Kotler 2004	Operative
It is the re-imaging of the national identity	Hall 2002	Operative
It plays the function of empowering low-profile, non-destinations to tap into broader market segments beyond the traditional tourist trade (non-destinations are places that are not high profile cities)	Mohan 2009	Purpose-based
An attempt to transfer selected meanings (assumed to add value to the place) to the operational environment of place management.	Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2010	Operative
It refers to building brand equity in relation to national, regional and/or local identity: brand equity is built through brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality	Govers and Go 2009	Purpose-based
It is a meeting point of several different disciplines like politics, business, cultural studies, information and communication technologies	Lebendenko 2004	Operative

Source: author's elaboration

None of these definitions provide an exhaustive explanation of place branding, since they do not stress the multiple aspects of interest. For example, many scholars are interested in how to brand a place, others in why policy-makers should undertake such initiatives. One possible way to state a more comprehensive definition consists in building on the diverse statements resulting from precedent research in this field. The following paragraph attempts to summarize a selection of place branding definitions, showed in the above table, into a single statement in order to offer a more exhaustive definition. That is:

Place branding is a process
- *aimed at establishing a fair reputation and building brand equity for place management*
- *based on the definition of strategies and techniques that deal with place image and identity*
- *based on strategies and techniques that, though mainly coming from corporate and product branding, require additional theoretical development in light of other disciplines, such as politics, cultural studies, sociology, information and communication technologies, etc.*

If conceived as part of place management, the connection of place branding with development policies is intrinsic. Place branding is said to be highly strategic activity deeply embedded in local and regional policies (Clifton 2004; O'Donovan in Kotler 2004) since, as most literature suggests, the former is not simply about the delivery of consistent communication, yet it is a process with a strategic content that is crucial to the deployment of socio-economic development actions. Place branding is, in fact, intended as the management of those soft components (i.e. images, values and identities) that make a difference in the territorial network management, by fostering mechanisms of

collective learning and exchange among local and regional actors, thus orienting development.

There is a variety of place branding typologies. Accordingly, a geographical branding matrix is designed in order to provide a general framework in which practice and research can be positioned (Figure 1.1.). Each item of the matrix in Figure 1.1. represents a distinct perspective on branding. On the horizontal axis there is the scale of branding, i.e. national, regional and local, while on the vertical axis place branding is defined on the basis of the function carried out by branding efforts.

Scale / Function	National	Regional	Local
Destination Branding			
Place of Origin (export)			
FDI promotion			
Culture & Entertainment Branding			
Integrated Place Branding			

Figure 1.1. Geographical Branding Matrix
Source: author's elaboration

From a scale viewpoint, Caldwell and Freire (2004) made a distinction between country and region brands since, in contrast with the regional scale, the country brand scale has got peculiarities, such as an independent political agenda, an economy which is internationally visible, and a wide echo in international media. That is, the variables that are relevant for branding either countries or regions are necessarily different.

Arguably, across local, regional and national scales, the degree of complexity in framing brands according to geographical identity elements increases, because of the need to find a compromise with diverse stakeholders and interest groups. All of these, in fact, tend to represent themselves according to a specific set of values and symbols that shape their own identities. While countries are usually characterised by richness in symbols and icons accumulated over decades or century of common history, regions might lack of unquestionable identity elements, whose identification is highly challenging because of the need to drive a multifaceted collectivity to select elements of a shared identity. This can make identities felt as artificial. For example, a collective identity does not exist in many administrative regions that are bound within borders imposed by bureaucracy, rather than being the outcome of a collective identity processing. An example is Emilia-Romagna (Italy), a region resulting from the juxtaposition of two strong and distinct regional identities, i.e. Emilia and Romagna. The lack of an identity within the administrative regional borders is still evident and well mirrored by the logo of the

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regional government, which lack of any symbols or reference to a shared regional imagery (Figure 2.1.).
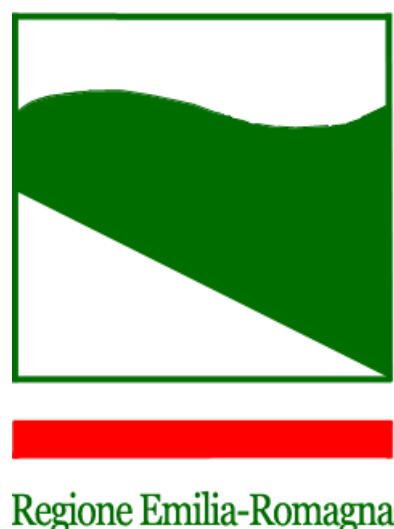
Figure 2.1. Regione Emilia-Romagna: the logo
Source: http://www.regione.emilia-romagna.it/

The need to reflect on the scale for branding was confirmed and emphasised by Gertner (2011), who recently reported on the weaknesses of place marketing and branding research. One of the main limitations is said to be the application of 'place branding' umbrella concept to a broad set of geographic entities, spanning from the street or neighbourhood to a nation. This is an invitation to better focus on the geographical scale in order to understand the extent to which brand and branding concepts can be adopted and how. In the same vein, Hanna and Rowley stressed limitations of the "place-branding vocabulary" (2008:62) where the word 'place' seems to prevail as the result of a weak geographical statement of the investigated issue.

From a functional viewpoint, we have to consider that place brand targets are multiple, such as residents, investors, tourists, students and workers. Place branding for investments attraction is supposed to allure outsiders, i.e. investors, but also to establish a dialogue with local investors in order to retain them. As Burghard stated concerning the Ohio brand (CEO at Ohio Business Development Coalition), branding plays a critical role in economic development because "companies look for any reason possible to eliminate locations and often rely on perceptions to determine if a state is kept in the final consideration set. A strong Ohio brand helps us minimize misperceptions about our state as a location to build a business, and ensures Ohio is on the limited list to receive a request for a proposal" (2009:50). The branding function of fostering exports is fairly related to the management of the place of origin effect, e.g. the "Made in" brand, according to which both public authorities and companies may take an advantage from collaboration, thus enhancing brand's market power. Differently, destination branding relates to the promotion of tourism industries: this seems to be the most developed and integrated field of research within the geo-branding field.

Despite the different functional domains of these branding typologies, considering these fields of activity as separate and closed boxes is a mistake. Accordingly, some argue the need to develop a more comprehensive branding function, i.e. the integrated place branding (Kavaratzis 2005; Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2009; Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2010). This implies a holistic reading of the place and an understanding of the place brand as an umbrella under which multiple aspects of development are pursued (Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2010).

Beyond a distinction among the items of the matrix in Figure 1.1., there is a common aspect characterising all of them. That is, the branded object consists in one closed place. This is here to be intended as referring to "the delimited, bordered spatial units under the jurisdiction of an administrative and/or political authority" (Anderson, 1996 cited in Pike et al. 2006:35). In contrast, this research project will introduce a further column to the matrix in Figure 1.1. (see Figure 1.2, Chapter Two), thus arguing the existence of another viable stream of branding research, i.e. the inter-territorial branding. This typology of branding refers to those areas that, not coinciding with self-contained or bounded administrative units, are branded as networking or collaborative spaces.

2.1. Places in Time: Re-branding

Some scholars argue that one of the main differences between place branding and corporate branding is that in the former case the process has to deal with an "old product" with no room for *ab initio* activities (Hankinson 2007). For this reason, according to some it would be more accurate to speak of place re-branding. Anholt (2010a) argued that it is not a matter of proper branding since in the case of geographies there usually is no naming and construction of symbols which, in fact, usually derive from history.

That is, branding is in charge of changing the way in which messages about places are interpreted by the audiences (Anholt 2005a). This implies a change of "pre-existing background reputation" by conditioning place perceptions (Anholt 2005a). For this reason branding cannot be about mere communication since this may reshape the sent messages but it is not sufficient to reshape the context according to which these messages are received and interpreted. For example, the city of Amsterdam underwent re-branding actions in order to overcome problems related to its image of 'sex and drugs' tourism destination (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2006). In 2004 the campaign "IAmsterdam" was launched, but a delay in the definition of city policies for improving the 'place-product', downsized the re-branding effects (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2006; Kavaratzis 2008). In contrast, in Belfast re-branding aimed at changing the perception of a city recording thirty years of social conflicts: as a result, re-branding was said to have contributed to aligning the city image to the fast changing local reality (Northover 2010).

Bennett and Savani (2003) argued that most British cities have tried to reinvent or reposition themselves by using marketing techniques. These authors stated a set of motivations for place re-branding initiatives. Re-branding can not only revive obsolete place images in order to make cities appealing to new and wider target audiences, but also may communicate change and innovation undertaken by the regional economy, especially to insiders. Furthermore, re-branding may foster a dissociation of the locality from its past failure, such as political, economic or social failures. Such dissociation was

pursued by the city of Glasgow in the late 1980s when a public-private partnership made significant re-branding efforts (Hankinson 2010). Another example is Liverpool whose re-branding process contributed to make the city the winning candidate of the 2008 European Capital of Culture award (Hankinson 2010).

However, there are serious problems alongside the re-branding process, which are related to the "complex potential conflict between continuity and change" (Govers and Go 2009: 3). By analysing nine district units (neighbourhoods) in British, Danish and American cities, Bennett and Savani (2003) suggested that outsiders' attraction is likely to be an effect of re-branding occurring at the expense of locals who tend not to fit with the branded change. That is, the approach to re-branding may end up being top-down and heavily elitist such that the selected images tend to be not suitable for large part of local stakeholders.

In many cases re-branding implies a correction of negative images, which have to be counterbalanced in light of a reality change. Gertner and Kotler (2004) suggested three methods for turning negative perceptions into positive ones. Firstly, ignoring until denying the negative issues is proposed as a viable strategy. Secondly, turning negative elements into positive ones is said to be possible by means of repositioning and reframing. Gertner and Kotler (2004) analysed the case of Clute, Texas, where an extraordinary presence of mosquitos was turned into an event, i.e. the Mosquito Festival, deemed successful because of the huge amount of incoming visitors. Thirdly, fostering a new positive attitude towards the place can be an option, by building a "valid, believable, simple, appealing and distinctive" brand (Kotler et al. 1993:149).

In all cases, positive visual evidence of change has to be provided. This was sustained by Trueman et al. (2004; 2007a) as a result of their analysis of the Bradford case, which showed the relevance of the built environment and its role in embedding the perception of the occurring change in residents' minds, thus providing the community with a sense of confidence and trust in casting off the past of decline and misfortune.

Singleton and McKenzie (2008) considered the transformative challenges of re-branding as core to a discussion on place branding. They argued that the sustainable development agenda, according to which competitive identities reside in local natural and human capital, drives re-branding to mirror one of three main imperatives, constituting the overarching rationale of branding and contributing to an homogenization of brands all over the globe. The first imperative relates to the priority of an elimination of disparity which gives citizens a positive sense of place and sense of community. The second imperative focuses on the international consciousness of risks related to health and environment - the environmental brands -, while the third is about the "risk-aware society" concerning international community conflicts, such as the religious ones. These imperatives are in line with the understanding of re-branding as suggested by one of the main consultants in the field, Simon Anholt, who proposed the selection of universal issues in which the place can excel at and raise its own distinctiveness for re-branding (2010b). Accordingly, the reference to 'imperatives' is instrumental to an effective diffusion of re-branding messages across a wide international audience.

To conclude, it is worth stressing that the re-branding perspective is of particular interest for this research project, which is aimed at exploring inter-territorial branding. Gertner and Kotler stated that, differently from countries and cities, "emerging regions

and regional aggregations formed on the basis of cross-border relationships" are "good candidates for change" (2004: 56) along with a re-branding process that may even include the opportunity to name the branded area. That is, it is worth understanding the extent to which inter-territorial branding offers the chance of radical re-branding as a consequence of the constitution of an alternative identity, i.e. the network identity, instead of individual place identities (meaning the identities related to self-contained areas closed within administrative and/or political borders). This means reaching an understanding of the modalities according to which inter-territorial branding can determine re-branding effects, by building on a lack of legacy and identity from the past characterising the collaborative space.

3. Branding geographies and corporate branding: translation, application or adoption?

A huge part of place branding scholars focuses on the relevance of corporate branding, intended as a set of concepts that can be used for place brand management (Kavaratzis 2005; Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2009; Hankinson 2007, 2010; Trueman et al. 2004, 2007; Rainisto 2003; Moilanen and Rainisto 2009). As stated by Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2009), there is a wide agreement on the impossibility to think of places like products, while Hankinson (2010) suggested two main reasons for considering corporate branding as crucial to the development of place branding theory. These reasons are the presence of multiple stakeholders and the need to provide support for a variety of business activities. In addition, Therkelsen and Halkier (2008) argued that both place branding and corporate branding have a multidisciplinary nature, deal with numerous stakeholders, face a social responsibility and need to take into account multiple identities.

Furthermore, it is said that "place branding differs significantly from conventional products and product branding" because of the place identity (Therkelsen and Halkier 2008:161). In contrast to this argument, which is almost taken for granted in the place branding debate, it is worth stressing the strong identity, even personality (Aaker 1997), of those products that agglomerate a brand community or tribe (Cova and Pace 2006), until becoming a 'source of inspiration' for the community members. For example, product brands like IPhone and, before it, IPod[10], certainly have an identity and, arguably, a very sophisticated and multifaceted one.

In branding literature the main differences between product and corporate brands are stated by those scholars supporting corporate branding stream of research as a distinct one (see Balmer 2003). One of the main reasons for such assertion is the strategic content of corporate brands. That is, while product brand management is usually assigned to middle marketing managers (Balmer 2001), corporate brand management is generally considered as extremely strategic issue so that it is carried out by the CEOs (see de Chernatony 2001). This is due to the fact that brand management is to be tightly

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[10] In this regards, it would be worth undertaking a comparative analysis between the strength of the Apple (corporate) brand identity and the strength of individual product brands i.e. IPod, IPhone, IPad, and following their evolution from a historical perspective.

linked to overall strategic plans of business development (Margulies 1977, Leitch and Richardson 2003, Balmer 2001).

This project is aligned to the research stream assuming the need for a parallel between corporate brand and place brand (Anholt 2002; Kavaratzis 2010). Such parallel is endorsed according to two issues mainly. Firstly, the assumption of a highly strategic content of branding activities, which is a prerequisite for place brands to play a role within the development policies framework. Secondly, the 'multiplicity' aspect characterising corporate brands that, similarly to places, have to engage in a relationship-building with multiple actors. Accordingly, it is a matter of borrowing concepts, strategies and interpretative frameworks from corporate branding, in order to fuel the debate on socio-economic development of cities and regions (Bellini 2005; see Pryor and Grossbart 2007).

Nevertheless, the intrinsic differences between places and corporations cannot be overlooked. As sustained by Kavaratzis, there are similarities between corporate brands and place brands but "it is not clear in what ways places could be thought of as corporations" (2010:37). Hankinson (2010) suggested that five requirements for an effective corporate branding can be worthy of consideration in regards to place brands:
- a brand supportive culture;
- the definition of a clear vision for the organization (it is, thus, emphasised the strategic content of branding), whose vision, corporate culture and brand image have to be aligned;
- the delivery of the brand promise[11];
- the need to deal with a wide range of external stakeholders;
- the building of a brand appeal by means of the definition of a brand identity that is meaningful to multiple stakeholders.

The rationale is that, although places are not businesses, there are business strategies and practices that can inspire place branding. That is, the parallel with businesses based on the market metaphor can be used to find solutions to place management issues (Kavaratzis 2010). Mainly, the process undertaken by place branding scholars is a critical adaptation of assertions coming from corporate branding, on the basis of which further theoretical development is needed (Pryor and Grossbart 2007). The process consists in selecting, empirically testing and, when possible, translating corporate branding issues, rather than a straightforward adoption of corporate brands and branding theory.

Anholt (2005a) drew attention to an application of the "advanced branding" to places, while the animosity against place branding is interpreted as mainly due to a confusion about what branding really is. Although according to some the aversion against place branding is due to "snobbery by intellectuals" or ignorance about how a company really works and the related complexity (Olins 2002:243), negative reactions seem to derive

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[11] Corporate branding deals with the generation and management of corporate brands which are "the sum of the corporation's marketing efforts to present a controlled representation of the corporation's value system" (Motion et al. 2003:1086). Corporate brand is also defined as an "informal contract" or "covenant" (Balmer and Greyser 2002) with all stakeholders, providing a sort of guarantee and creating awareness and recognition (He and Balmer 2006). That is, corporate brand consists in the value proposition (Aeker 2004) which offers an opportunity to create relationships between the organization and its stakeholders. (Motion et al. 2003). The clearer the value proposition, the stronger and more distinctive the brand (Aeker 2004).

from an understanding of place brand management as application of "popular" or "simple branding" (a semantic reason, as sustained by Olins in 2002). "Popular branding" is a set of techniques aimed at selling the place in a professional way, while "simple branding" is the construction of a visual identity through slogans and logos. According to Anholt (2005a), we can apply corporate branding to place management domain when the former is intended as a process taking care not only of the construction of a visual identity, but also of the strategy-making, consumers' and stakeholders' motivations and behaviours, the internal and external communication, the ethics and purpose of the organization. That is, the brand has to be conceived as a "central organising function of the company" (Anholt 2005a:118) constituting a platform which helps employers, employees and ideally all stakeholders to share beliefs and values and to adopt consistent behaviours.

The construction of a visual identity is, thus, to be intended as deeply intertwined with the strategic dimension of brands. A visual identity embodies a rhetoric spilling out from the pursued strategy, in an attempt to persuade the relevant targets about its salient elements. The rhetoric is not conceived as a distortion, rather it is conceived as "part of everyday discourse, [...] a language of images and symbols expressed in both lexical and graphic forms" to convince and involve an audience (Gold and Gold 1994:77). Despite an evident evolution in approaches to communicating and delivering such rhetoric, this is not something new. Rather, the power of rhetoric for persuasive purposes was clear in the past, as demonstrated by an extensive and conscious use of coat of arms, flags, public symbols such as, for example, commemorations and monuments, all constituting the visual identity. That is, from this perspective place branding can be deemed 'old wine in a new bottle', since the use of symbols and images to exploit the power of rhetoric has always been practiced, while the deployment of marketing and branding tools and concepts represents the 'new' way to entangle a development strategy in a rhetoric and, thus, in a visual identity.

In history the use of rhetoric by means of symbols and images had highly ambitious objectives. One example, which is particularly relevant in regards to the overall aim of this research project, is represented by the effort to construct national identities, by convincing diverse communities (that is, diverse identities) to participate in a unification project. There are examples of nations built on the basis of the rhetoric of the birth of a country by 'becoming one'. This is the case of the US flag whose design refers to the fifty states constituting the United States of America, while the thirteen stripes represent the colonies that, rising against the British monarchy, were the first states composing the Union. During the 19th century the flag became a strong symbol of American nationalism against secession during the Civil War. If the US flag acquired its rhetorical power during this time, in the 18th century the formation of the United States federal government created the need to consolidate the idea of unity. *E Pluribus Unum*, i.e. "one out of all things", was the motto introduced on the seal of the United States and, in order to make it pervasive and circulate across the whole population, it was introduced on American coins and spread as public symbol. Another example is the Union Jack, the flag of the United Kingdom. Its components, in fact, represent the union of England (the red cross), Scotland (the white diagonal) and Northern Ireland (the red diagonal). It is worth noticing not only the power of the Union Jack as symbol over a history of colonial empire and internal conflicts, but also the strong rhetoric regarding the three components separately, from both a political and institutional perspective.

3.1. Umbrella brand: an example of translation of corporate branding theory into place branding issue

This section is in charge of demonstrating the processing of corporate brand ideas for a translation into the field of place branding. Within the corporate branding research field, He and Balmer clearly stated that "corporate brands are applicable not only to corporations and subsidiaries, but to other organizations and entities, including countries, cities and regions" (2006:244). In the same vein, Balmer and Greyser (2002) argued that many of the corporate branding principles can be used for cities, regions, supranational bodies as well as for not-for-profit organizations, universities and churches. It seems that there is a double effort to build bridges between places and organizations, thus further legitimating place brand management as part of the branding discipline.

The mechanisms of translation will be presented by explaining the adaptation of a central concept, i.e. the umbrella brand. This induced scholars to think of corporate branding as a valid reference point on the basis of the multiplicity of stakeholders, purposes and expectations that one single corporation has to satisfy, as said above. Hankinson (2010) stated that, due to the highly demanding and fragmented environment where corporations have to play, corporate brands started being interpreted as umbrellas under which a range of different products have to be promoted. Assuming the co-existence of multiple interest groups living, working, visiting a place, all bearing different complex expectations from it, the notion of umbrella brand was endorsed by place brand scholars.

The umbrella brand is defined as a place brand spanning several functional contexts, thus favouring economies of scale since resources are focused on the determination of a consistent place brand (Therkelsen and Halkier 2008). Concerning geographies, there is a clear need for political efforts of mediation, in order to reduce potential conflicts among the diverse stakeholders and harmonize innovative and traditional assets under an umbrella identity (Bellini et al. 2010).

Iversen and Hem (2008) claimed that umbrella brands provide additional brand equity to local partners, by pursuing a risk reduction when introducing new functions under the umbrella, and by improving local partners' reputation. This represents an efficient use of resources for the identification and differentiation of geographies and their internal actors. Iversen and Hem (2008) also explained how umbrella brands have to be designed. Firstly, the selection of brand elements has to result in a consistent mix of values; secondly, a strategic positioning can be reached by capturing "the essence of the place and the spirit of its people" (Iversen and Hem 2008: 611) which, however, is not an easy task.

Place branding scholars have identified problems characterising umbrella brand strategies. Despite the compromising approach, high heterogeneity can persist, thus producing a 'non-brand'. The brand can result as too bland since, in order not to create conflicts and negative reactions among those who may feel excluded by the brand, the umbrella ends up being conceived as a common lower denominator, thus not alluring anyone's attention. In contrast, the umbrella brand may be too skewed because of a focus on certain activities while omitting others (Therkelsen and Halkier 2004). This is the

result of the very different assumptions that stakeholders have in mind in regards to their territory in terms of space, time and agency (Therkelsen and Halkier 2004). In fact, each stakeholder identifies the space of action according to mental social maps which are made of a hierarchy of social relationships where specific roles are ascribed to actors (agency mapping) and a clear causal relation and direction of change are assumed (historical mapping).

Place umbrella brands imply the need to re-read corporate branding concepts within the frame of the politics of place branding, as place brands derive from inter-organizational negotiations and consensus-building process involving three types of stakeholders, i.e. public authorities, businesses and citizens (Kotler et al. 1999 cited in Therkelsen and Halkier 2004). According to Ooi (2004), promoting, maintaining and enacting the brand imply "politicking", that is negotiating the process throughout the mobilization of support, cooperation and the creation of a unique and appealing story about the place, by building on and, at the same time, leading to interactions among stakeholders.

Scholars have analysed potential and pitfalls characterising the umbrella brand. Along with a critical development of the notion of umbrella brand, other concepts from corporate branding have been put under scrutiny. Recently, Jansson and Power (2010) argued the positive co-existence of many place myths out of umbrella brand schemes. They made the example of Milan which can be simultaneously a football city, a fashion city and a finance centre. The competing place myths will be negotiated across multiple processes where the relevant actors make an attempt to affirm their own interests.

This is related to the co-existence of multiple identities. In this regards there is an opportunity to pair the notion of umbrella brand with the one of brand architecture. Borrowed from corporate branding, the brand architecture concerns the articulation of multiple brands developed vertically, i.e. at different geographical scales, and horizontally, i.e. inside a specific level across different territorial functions. As Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2009) suggested, corporate branding theory refers to the brand architecture in order to stress the intertwining of the corporate brand with the multiple product or service brands.

The brand architecture consists in a branding strategy according to which product brands can be positioned under the corporate umbrella or, rather, be managed separately. Ashworth and Kavartazis (2009) deemed the brand architecture useful to include the issue of place-scale into the debate, thus considering country, region and city brands as part of a complex architecture. Moreover, Trueman et al. (2007) suggested the notion of multiplicity and the need to deal with sub-brands in relation to local neighbourhoods willing to affirm their own visions for regeneration. These scholars proposed to think of a "portfolio of neighbourhood sub-brands" in order to increase and mobilize social capital locally in favour of change, thus avoiding an exclusion of part of local community.

Dooley and Bowie (2005) considered the brand architecture as a means to link and create synergies across individual sub-brands and, thus, across the multiple territorial functions, such as tourism, export and FDIs attraction. Accordingly, they presented the concept of Place Brand Portfolio which is the collection of all the brands related to a given place. Four are the strategies that are borrowed from corporate branding, i.e. the house of brands (each brand has a distinct role), the endorsed brands (each brand has its

identity but there is an evident affiliation to the umbrella brand in order for the former to receive credibility and reputation from the latter), the sub-brands (each brand has its own visual identity keeping a connection with the umbrella in order to produce synergies) and the branded house (the sub-brands are not relevant individually since they merge into a single umbrella brand).

For example, the Spanish country brand (i.e. España) is the outcome of the "house of brands" strategy. Working as a master brand, it is actually independent from both regional sub-brands (e.g. Euskadi and Catalunya) and provincial sub-brands (e.g. Costa Brava, see Dooley and Bowie 2005:405). Differently, an example of "branded house" strategy is the New Zealand brand where the country brand symbols are used to define the sub-brand identities, thus carrying the risk of the master brand's dilution, as well as the risk of negative events impacting and spreading across all the brands, i.e. master brand and sub-brands.

While the umbrella brand and the brand architecture entered the place branding literature, there is the need to work more on the relations across a 'triad' of concepts, i.e. umbrella brand-brand architecture-multiple identities. There is the need to deal strategically with multiple identities in an attempt to deal with overlapping brands telling different stories on a single place.

3.2. Places like corporations or corporations like places?

So far we have argued that corporate branding theory is a useful source of inspiration for the place branding debate. However, there is room to argue a potential mutual exchange of perspectives and practices, according to which place branding can support corporate branding developments. According to Olins (1999), corporate branding should learn lessons concerning methods of political mediation and multiple communities' motivation from place brand management. Such lessons would derive from the intrinsically political nature of the place branding process (Bellini 2004, Bellini et al. 2010). For example, in the field of green marketing, consumers' communities 'vote' in favour of eco-friendly brands, while they have the capacity to mobilize against those brands considered as disrespectful towards the environment. That is, around both product and corporate brands, a network of interests, ideological and political attitudes seems to thicken. In light of this there is room for corporate brand managers to learn from place brands and branding experiences.

A lack of control on brands and brand values, which is inherent to place brands (Jevons et al., 2005), is increasingly of interest for corporations that, along with the spreading use of the web and social media, have much weaker control on their brands. Corporate and product brands' complexity arises, in fact, on the basis of the interactions established within internet communities, interactions that add new meanings and values to the brand. This is also a matter of ownership. It seems that brands start belonging to brand communities, thus determining a fuzzy and blurred ownership similarly to the case of places, rather than being in the hands of the companies investing on them. That is, as for places, the brand follows uncontrolled tracks of evolution (Jevons et al. 2005), and rely on the key role of stakeholders who have to be motivated, persuaded and inspired (Olins 2002). In this regards, Christopher et al. (2002), within the research field of relationship

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marketing, argued that corporate culture is fed by human resources' values and beliefs, just like the culture of a nation is fed by its citizens.

These statements suggest reflecting on the extent to which not only corporate branding perspectives offer a valuable analytical starting point for place branding, but also place brands and branding may offer stimuli to furthering the corporate branding debate. In other words, in both fields researchers have the opportunity to consider the relations between corporate brands and place brands in an attempt to trigger synergies along the research process.

4. Variables of place branding: Image and Identity

This section presents the main variables used for place brands and branding research, i.e. image and identity. In response to the difficulties in defining the place brand, this research project will refer to the definitions of image and identity, considering them as vital brand components. Thus, after providing a definition of place branding (see above), the research project deals with the place brand, by defining its main components.

4.1. The Image

In place branding, the image is usually used as synonymous of reputation (Anholt 2002, 2007, 2010a; Iversen and Hem 2008; Hospers 2004, 2006; Hankinson 2007; Trueman et al. 2007a; Reynolds 1965 cited in Govers and Go 2009 – these are only few examples of authors using reputation as substitute for image), in contrast with corporate branding literature making a distinction between image and reputation. The main characteristics of corporate reputation are the historical roots (Fombrun and van Riel 1997), its base made of actions and behaviours, its tendency to stability (Balmer and Greyser 2003). Being of interest of both internal and external stakeholders, reputation is said to be a "quasi-control mechanism" since it provides standards guiding stakeholders' behaviours (Balmer and Geyser 2003:178). Differently, corporate image, which was originally at the core of corporate brand scholarships back in the 1950s-1970s, is conceived as "the net result of the interactions of all experiences, impressions, beliefs, feelings and knowledge that people have about a company" (Bernstein, 1984 cited in Balmer 1998:967). The multiplicity of audiences implies a multiplicity of images in relation to one corporation: the corporation is interpreted in diverse ways not only according to the many stakeholder groups, but also according to the diverse associations in the minds of individuals within the audiences (Jevons 2005; Kotler and Keller 2007). In this regards, Abratt (1989) referred to the emergence of a "mosaic of attitudes" towards the company (Gray 1986 cited in Abratt 1989:68). Despite the evident difficulty to define the corporate image which tends to overlap with other notions (see Balmer 1998 and Abratt 1989), Balmer (2001) helped to clarify the concepts of image and reputation. While corporate reputation can be defined as "the enduring perception held of an organization by an individual, group or network" (Balmer 2001:257), corporate image concerns "the immediate mental perception of the organization held by an individual, group or

network" (Balmer 2001:257). The main difference seems to be the 'enduring' element characterising reputation, i.e. time.

As said, this sharp distinction has not been adopted yet by place branding scholars. In place branding, the image is said to consist in "the perception of the brand that exists in the mind of the consumers or audiences" (Anholt 2007:5). That is, "brands are made in the mind" (Greenberg 2008:33), being a "perceptual entity" (Hankinson 2004) composed of objects, symbols, values and other non-tangible phenomena which determine how a certain audience understands and refers to the brand. According to Anholt (2010b), the image is a measure of audiences' ignorance which, however, does not prevent them from forming an opinion about the place. The opinion emerging from place perceptions can be positive or negative. Generally, as scholars demonstrated, the less a place is known, the worse its image (Hospers 2004). According to Vanolo, external perceptions are usually vague and abstract, while they tend to be negative in case of "unexplored or unfamiliar places" (2008:371). For this reason place branding is also said to be in charge of making places famous (Anholt 2010a).

Destination branding has provided place branding scholars with advanced research tools in the field of image formation analysis. The "perceptual perspective of branding" has dominated tourism marketing literature (Hankinson 2010:20) and, in fact, much attention has been drawn to the mechanisms of image formation. For example, even in lack of direct place experience, potential visitors seem to be able to develop perceptions of a destination since before the visit. Accordingly, this is a realm of research aimed at understanding how the perceptions, influencing the decision to visit or not to visit a place, are developed. Accordingly, destination branding is reaching an insight into the image formation and the relationship between images and behaviours (Baloglu and McCleary 1999).

The image is deemed a crucial variable since it is said to impact on the path of place development. Therkelsen and Halkier (2008) classified place images into three main categories, i.e. exotic, friendly and hostile. Regions with friendly images imply that audiences think of them "like home but better" in terms of services and facilities. While this is a very suitable image for attracting investors, "exotic" images are suitable for alluring tourists who tend to pursue a 'different' experience. Finally, a "hostile" region is likely to face barriers in attracting any kinds of target. That is, the image contributes to positioning the place in people's mental maps, thus impacting on behaviours and, generally, on the establishment of relationships with the place.

Even though branding initiatives attempt to improve the place profile, there is no guarantee of any impact on the path of development. Only "when an image has been consolidated, it is likely to be self-fulfilling" (Bellini 2004:6) and self-reinforcing because actors tend to behave in response to their expectations and evaluation of the place. Expectations and evaluations are shaped by perceptions, but the consolidation of images is an unpredictable and long-term process.

Two are the types of images we need to consider, i.e. the external image and the internal image. While a huge part of literature focuses on external images, rising attention has been drawn to the internal ones. This is referred to local communities and their perceptions of the place of which they have first-hand experience. While the external image tends to be built on a lack of experience and ignorance about the place, internal

images tend to rely on accumulated knowledge. This does not necessarily means that local actors have a complete or detailed knowledge of what is occurring on site since, even though daily experiencing the place, they can have an outdated or partial perception of their own place.

The internal image is also called "brand purpose" (Anholt 2007), which relates to "the spirit or the state of will" of insiders. In this regards, internal place branding suggests that insiders may achieve a common perspective and purpose for the place, simply by living the brand. By borrowing the service marketing rationale, Anholt (2002) underlined the relevance of citizens that, as company's employees, play a vital role in brand achievements, by showing team spirit, local pride and sense of purpose.

4.2. Place identity and brand identity

The notion of identity is central to the place branding debate, but a distinction is to be made between place identity and brand identity which are often confused in literature. On one hand the place identity or, according to some the sense of place (Kalandides 2011), results from a cultural, historical, economic and political path of development that turns a space into a place. On the other hand, the brand identity implies a branding strategy which consists in entangling the place within its positive or, even better, unique characteristics in order to improve the place reputation. That is, the brand identity is usually defined as the mix of tangible and intangible attributes representing the way in which brand managers want the place to be perceived (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005). The brand identity is said to be the "blueprint for developing and communicating the place brand" so that all stakeholders should participate in its collective determination (Hankinson 2004:115). This is at the core of the main critique moved by human geographers and sociologists, sustaining that place branding is leading to a 'commodification' of places.

The distinction between place identity and brand identity is relevant for two reasons. Firstly, the existence of a place identity allows us to treat places like brands even in lack of proper branding strategy and brand identity. In fact, the place identity is integral to places and their path of development. Secondly, in light of empirical analysis, there is much evidence sustaining that a huge part of failures concerning branding initiatives is mainly due to a poor design of the brand identity which results as too distant from the whole of values composing the place identity. This is the consequence of a selective process (and the politics of branding) underlying any branding initiatives (Ooi 2004; Bellini 2005; Bellini et al. 2010; Jensen 2005, 2007; Hospers 2006). These often end up creating conflicts among place stakeholders who may protest against those place branding campaigns that, as said, are perceived as excluding part of local community (Philo and Kearns 1993; Ward 2000; Therkelsen and Halkier 2004; Greenberg 2008).

Hence, the brand identity can be intended as a sub-set of values belonging to the place identity. Nevertheless, there might be a chance that from a temporal perspective the former even replaces the latter. Anholt (2007) argued that a sort of cultural democracy is likely to make the hegemonic place narrative prevail, thus provoking a cultural impoverishment over time. The risk, in fact, is that the selection of the elements composing the brand identity drives local communities to either forget or hide cultural

values. As a consequence, a set of cultural values may end up disappearing from local heritage.

Although significant problems emerge in regards to the definition of the brand identity and to the relation between the place identity and the brand identity, a strategic design of the latter may encourage a path of innovation, by inspiring change internally and by making this visible externally. In this sense, place branding goes in parallel with a virtuous regional learning triggering development.

It is said that the place brand is "the set of central, enduring and distinctive characteristics that actors ascribe to a place" (Pryor and Grossbart 2007:297). At the same time, it is worth noticing that, since being "socially and culturally embedded" (Pryor and Grossbart 2007:299), brands are co-created by social actors. This implies that the place identity can change as long as the social and cultural context changes, according to a social construction of identities (Jessop et al. 2008). That is, "regional identities cannot be seen as obvious, objective, natural qualities, but are viewed as socially constructed. Thus, identities are constructed by people and changes on views and goals make identities constantly subject to change. Consequently, regional identities are dynamic" (Simon et al. 2010: 415).

Simon et al. (2010) claimed that identities may change because of changing conditions. Such change may refer to the emergence of a new balance of power among local actors, the arrive of new actors in the region and the embedding process of new functions[12]. According to Aitken and Campelo, the brand, which is here intended as brand identity, is a "semiotic engine" (Heilbrunn, 2006 cited in Aitken and Campelo 2009:2) that, by comprising meanings, symbols and values, influences the construction of identities. In fact, according to co-creation mechanisms, the brand activates an "expanded multilogue" (Berthon et al., 2007 cited in Aitklen and Campelo 2009:2) with diverse stakeholders.

Lee et al. argued the deep connection between place identity and social relationships mobilizing social capital (2005). The "membership of network is negotiated and communities are built" by means of stakeholders' collective learning which derives from dialogue, coalition and conflict (Lee et al. 2005:217). This means that, behind a brand, there are dynamics of membership that are potentially capable of building communities through a collective dialogue, exchange and, in some cases, even conflict.

Trueman and Cornelius emphasized tensions among public and private actors fighting on what the city "has to symbolize and should be symbolized by" because of the "multiple layers of place identity" (2006:4). Govers and Go (2009) underlined that place identity is constructed through political processes, especially at local level, echoing local power struggles. There is also some arguing that the determination of collective brands can be

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[12] It is worth linking this to corporate branding theory. Stuart suggested that the best time for the rise of a new corporate identity of an existing organization is the phase she named "identity crisis", that is when the internal and external equilibrium of the organization collapses and a new strong "sense of mission, a new ideological beginning and a reassertion of the fundamental values and history of the organization" can occur (1999:122). The evolving nature of corporate identity is confirmed by Olins (2003) who argued the need for a new identity in case of serious discontinuities like a change in management or expansion plans heading the organization towards new directions. Balmer (2008) affirmed that particular attention is drawn to identity in case of organization or environment change, in case of market deregulation or in case of a need for change due to a misperception of corporation.

hardly solved with a collective selection of brand values, since even the most sophisticated mix of symbols cannot represent the complexity of identities (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005). Moreover, many stakeholders not only participate in conveying their "interpretation of the essence of the place", but also want to make it sure that their interpretation will be at the core of the designed brand identity in order to draw benefits (Therkelsen et al. 2010).

From an institutionalist perspective, branding strategies and consequently brand identities tend to be constrained by institutions, so that the process can be prevented from reaching change dynamics. That is, lock-ins reinforce the *status quo* context (Bellini et al. 2010), according to which a system of beliefs and cultural assumptions "embodied in existing institutional and community approach to development" leads to "outdated, inappropriate and unsustainable" place branding strategies (Singleton and McKenzie 2008).

4.2.1. Brand reality: visual identity and behavioral identity

As said, the place identity is defined by splitting the notion into main components. The above section defined the brand identity and its relation with the place identity, while this section highlights an additional component, i.e. the brand reality[13]. The brand reality is the set of tangible assets (e.g. infrastructure, landscape and artefacts) and intangible assets (e.g. institutions, such as norms, rules and habits) (Hankinson 2004). We can identify two components of the brand reality, i.e. the visual identity and the behavioural identity. The former mainly refers to the tangible elements that signal the identity throughout a sensorial experience, e.g. infrastructures, monuments, landscape and brand logos, while the latter relates to the 'doing and choosing', i.e. the behaving of local stakeholders, such as local government and residents.

Concerning visual identity, logos are tools summarising the place brand identity. Let us think of the most famous brand logo (this can be also deemed the most successful at least in terms of global spread and longevity), i.e. "I LOVE NY" (Figure 3.1.), which is the logo of New York City designed by Milton Glaser. This logo has to be considered as the top of an iceberg of the branding actions started back in the 1970s. The catastrophic September 11, 2001 was expected to impact negatively on the image of New York City, on the mood of the New Yorkers, and consequently on the city's attraction capacity, thus downsizing the city's status of international economic hub. The revised logo "I LOVE NY MORE THAN EVER" (Figure 3.1.) epitomized the qualities of the New York brand, made of the values of strength and pride. According to some, the power of the images evoked by the New York brand contributed to a quick economic recovery of the city whose global leadership has not been challenged so far (see Greenberg 2008).

Beside logos and slogans, the literature provides evidence of the relevance of the built environment (re)shaping the place identity. Trueman et al. (2004) claimed the need for positive visual evidence in order to strengthen the brand and region's confidence. What individuals identify as part of the urban landscape gives evidence of the place identity. Iconic and flagship buildings play a major role in urban regeneration, including the re-

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[13] This is in line with corporate branding. Balmer reported that "corporate identity is fundamentally concerned with reality, 'what an organization is' i.e. its strategy, philosophy, history, business scope, the range and type of products and service offered and its communication both formal and informal" (1998:979).

use of existing buildings or brownfield areas, which do signal a shift in the history of the city (Kirby and Kent 2010). An example of powerful identity-builder is the Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao, an iconic example of "architecturally adventurous building" (Hankinson 2007) that symbolizes a historic change of path in the Basque Country.

There can be a relationship between logos and other forms of visual identity. According to Medaway and Warnaby (2010), logos can rely on either the built or the natural environment in order to emphasise place differentiation. Primary visual symbols, e.g. river, coastline, mountains, as well as bridges, historic building and other cultural symbols, can enhance an associative property in favour of the place. Many are the examples. The Südtirol brand logo (Figure 3.1.) represents the skyline of mountains coloured in a way that communicates energy and authenticity, which are values at the core of the brand (Medaway and Warnaby 2010). Then, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, which is a strong landmark, was incorporated into the logo of Pisa Tourism Board, showed in Figure 3.1. (Medaway and Warnaby 2010). Put simply, the identity construction is a matter of conflating narratives, maps, logos, imagery, infrastructures and landmarks, producing a mindset and a vocabulary which are supposed to be uniquely linked to the place.

Figure 3.1. Brand logos
Source: http://www.pisaunicaterra.it/; http://www.iloveny.com/;
http://www.miltonglaserworks.com/product.php?productid=16279; http://www.suedtirol.info/it/

The visual identity can be interpreted as a representation of the region aimed at influencing experiences and behaviours of relevant communities (Simon et al. 2010). This implies a link between the visual identity and the behavioural identity. The relevance of insiders' behaviours has been widely acknowledged in destination branding, where the idea of local actors as "frontline staff" well suits tourism and tourism services whose high quality standards depend upon how services are delivered (Hankinson 2010). The service marketing approach considers people as physical evidence of the brand, so that necessarily the whole alliance of tourism actors has to align culture to brand values (Hankinson 2007, 2010). Hankinson (2010) made the example of the taxi

drivers in Glasgow, who underwent a brand training before obtaining a taxi licence in order to homogenize service standards.

Beyond destination branding, the behavioural identity is generally salient to place branding. The so called city's behaviours consist not only in services delivery but also, for example, in the type and scale of events hosted by the city, the types of policies in the domain of socio-economic development and city leaders' vision (Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2009). Anholt (2007) defined 'policy' as an angle of the hexagon representing the competitive identity, which is the mix of elements allowing the place to earn a positive reputation. In fact, the style of governments' decision-making reflects how things get done within a place. The Anholt-Gfk Roper Nation Brand Index substitutes policy with governance in the hexagon, thus giving further relevance to how a country is managed. We report the five questions composing the questionnaire investigating reputation throughout an assessment of the competitive identity hexagon (Anholt-Gfk Roper NBI 2009):

- Is the country competently and honestly governed?
- Does the country respect the rights of its citizens ad treats them with fairness?
- Does the country behave responsibly in the areas of international peace and security?
- Does the country behave responsibly to protect the environment?
- Does the country behave responsibly to help reduce poverty?

A branding strategy itself may reveal important aspects of the place identity. Assuming the brand identity as conscious manipulation and selection of values and meanings, brand strategies can be defensive or proactive, top-down or bottom-up. Moreover, the definition of brand governance, i.e. the set of formal actors participating to the design of the brand strategy, does mirror the place identity. At the basis of the brand governance, a vision has to be shared and consensus has to be built (Pasquinelli 2010): the processes and methodologies adopted to pursue consensus and define a vision do tell about the identity of the place. The "be Berlin" campaign, for example, was supposed to be a "new kind of city branding, one which relies on the contributions of Berliners themselves", that is a brand "made by Berliners for Berlin", thus embracing a bottom-up approach to branding (Colomb and Kalandides 2010:186).

Beside public behaviours, private behaviours do compose the behavioural identity of the place. Anholt's competitive identity hexagon helps to clarify this point. 'People' is an element of the competitive identity and includes not only high-profile leaders and celebrities, but also the whole population (Anholt 2007). Population's behaviours consist, for example, in the treatment of tourists or immigrants, the attitude shown when spending time abroad, the openness to diversity and tolerance (see, for example, the Bohemian and Gay Indexes by Florida 2002; Florida and Tinagli 2004). Not only welcoming attitude and friendliness shape the place identity (Anholt-Gfk Roper NBI Report 2009), but also the reliability and trustworthiness earned by the population. For example, according to the Anholt-Gfk Roper Nation Brand Index Report, in 2009 United States registered a higher index score in response to the election of President Obama. This score did not increase because of an improvement in the 'Governance' indicators, rather because of an improvement in the 'People' sub-score. That is, by electing Obama, Americans regained the esteem and trust that were globally lost after the second election of President Bush (Anholt 2010b).

4.3. Place brands and Communication

There are two main types of communication described in place branding literature. Primary or unintentional communication refers to the communicative effects of 'city actions' when communication is not the primary goal (Kavaratzis 2005, 2010; Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2009). This is much related to the behavioural identity since there is a reference to strategies, policies and governance. On the contrary, secondary or intentional communication is formal and takes the shape of advertising, graphic design and media deployment (Kavaratzis 2005, 2010; Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2009).

While traditional secondary communication campaigns can still be effective for destination branding, this seems not to be sufficient for other functions of place branding. While communicating a tourism destination by means of slogans and promotional materials is perceived as legitimate, since a destination is conceived more as a set of tourism services than as a place, audiences tend to mistrust traditional communication when promoting a place and its qualities to influence major decisions about relocation regarding residents, students, workers and investors (Anholt 2010b).

Despite the controversial aspects of communication, brands remain tools for visibility, and their communicative function cannot be overlooked. Part of scholars agrees on shifting the level of analysis from the surface of communication, e.g. marketing campaign, towards a deeper level referring to the construction of place narratives. In place branding literature much attention is drawn to narratives and their relevance for brands and branding geographies. It is said that narratives influence decision-making, while contributing to enhancing brand equity. In fact, the "projected narrative" is the way in which communication creates and delivers brand meanings (Govers and Go 2009:19). In this regards, Govers and Go (2009) collected four main discursive strategies: the first puts emphasis on heroes, leaders or great events that represent the essence of the place, the second on continuity and timeliness, the third concerns the invention of traditions, and the fourth is based on the foundational myth of a "pure, original people or folk" embedded in history (2009:20).

In the research field of city management Czarniawska (2002) dealt with the narrative of the modern European capital, by reflecting on the construction of regional identities. The narratives of the three cities under scrutiny, i.e. Warsaw, Stockholm and Rome, result from an intertwining of both a 'global model' driving the cities to converge in terms of identity, and 'local stories' fuelled by inhabitants, politicians, managers and media alongside a "continuous battle over words and images" (Czarniawska 2002:59). Facts become "the stage of grand dramas" where the narrative is developed by means of four mechanisms (Czarniawska 2002: 65). These are (a) the construction of social memory residing in rituals and practices, (b) the invention of traditions and tradition of modernity which are needed by cities in order to follow the globalization and Europeanization path, (c) the (selective) rupture or continuity with the past, and (d) the interplay between the definition of identity and alterity (while identity states what the city is, alterity reflects what the city is not).

Urban branding is said to be a selective storytelling or the re-imagining of the city (Jansen 2007), alongside the emergence of a number of competing yet coexisting representations (Greenberg 2000). Jansen (2007) argued that the narrative is a way to

define branding, thus providing a model for investigation. Accordingly, the narrative is composed of three elements. Firstly, a selective appropriation of past events and facts, secondly a temporal frame and sequence, and thirdly a relational emplotment of past events into a general story, providing causal or moral lessons to be learnt (Jessop, 1997 cited in Jansen 2007). That is, narratives are never neutral, rather they tend to be biased by power games. This means there is a "representational power" (Greenberg 2008:21) that impacts on society and promotes hegemonic narratives.

Narrative represents a broad discourse composed of stories. These are characterised by a plot and a terminology which may succeed in legitimating certain actions (Jansen 2007). At the same time, according to Anholt (2010b), symbolic actions have to fuel stories on a place. The symbolic actions are in charge of representing and giving evidence of the brand values in a way that is understandable to international audiences.

There is a two-way relation between narrative and identity. On one hand, narratives are capable of re-imagining a place, thus propelling an identity change. On the other hand, narratives are rooted into local identities. In fact, evocative narratives need a strong spatial reference (Vanolo 2008) so that we can name them "spatialized narratives" (Jansen 2005:217). Spatialized narratives shed light on the relationship between power, society and place (Jansen 2007), by producing a selective storytelling (Jansen 2005). Just from the relationship between power, society and place, the typology of storytelling derives. It can be polyphonic if a collective and shared vision is sought, or it can be monophonic when designed by brand managers and brand professionals (Kadembo 2010). An example of polyphonic storytelling is the 'be Berlin' campaign which attempted to give voice to the Berliners in the production of stories about their city (Colomb and Kalandides 2010).

Place branding is a discursive place making, playing a role in urban planning (Therklelsen et al. 2010:140). Alongside this discursive process "space is turned into place through acts of discursive representation" (Short, 1999 cited in Therkelsen et al. 2010:140). This is an important statement because it introduces a definition of the place that is not based on physical and political boundaries. Rather, the place is defined by the emergence of shared narratives.

We consider the narrative as a way to create and deliver place brands. The narrative, however, is not a communication tool to be understood as alternative to traditional communication and marketing tools. Rather, communication has to provide a mix of channels for making the narrative heard and enriched by internal and external communities. Media maintain a vital role because they offer a framework within which narratives are further emplotted and diffused (Ward 2000). The perspective we have presented in this section interprets narratives as a way of thinking of communication on a more strategic and unstructured level, while the design of communication devices and channels are a subsequent operative level.

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Chapter Two

Inter-territorial branding. The nature and process of cross-border collaboration[14]

Abstract - Place branding relies on the assumption of inter-territorial competition which plays a crucial role in place management. Competition involves not only cities but also provinces, nations, states, villages and supra-national regions. However, there is room to sustain that competition is not an exhaustive key to understand local and regional development and, accordingly, to define the place branding rationale. Within the frame of global competition cities and regions can undertake inter-territorial cooperation in order to enrich their offer and enhance competitiveness. In this regards, a gap in place branding literature is identified. This paper will contribute to filling this gap, by proposing an analytical insight into the process of inter-territorial branding, to be intended as those branding initiatives designed for a space crossing administrative borders. Assuming cooperation as a viable strategy to face global competition, this research is in charge of providing an understanding of the likely forces at stake and the phases of the process leading to the emergence of inter-territorial brands. A secondary research is carried out, building on the review of twelve inter-territorial networking experiences in Europe and US. Evidence suggests that, beside pragmatism inspired by "market" principles, there are political forces influencing and shaping such process. Concerning the relevant phases, the inter-territorial branding process is likely to face critical points including the challenges to be faced in keeping momentum on the brand. Even more than place brands, inter-territorial brands seem to suffer of a weak vision and a weak political commitment which can be evident especially in the long run, when the lack of an overarching political authority is likely to make the fragility of the inter-territorial brand emerge.

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1. Introduction

Place branding is usually interpreted in light of globalization, which has pushed public authorities towards the adoption of an entrepreneurial attitude to local and regional development. Place branding consists in an adaptation of business theories and practices to places with an emphasis on corporate branding, in order to establish a fair reputation and build a brand equity supporting the pursued development path. This is sustained on the basis of the 'market metaphor' according to which places - just like companies – face competition in gaining investments, tourists, talents, etc. in the pursuit of economic development.

Place branding derives from the concept of the entrepreneurial city (Kirby and Kent 2010) and relies on the notion of entrepreneurial governance characterised by a sense of management and promotion, risk-propensity and profit motivation. This regards a neo-liberal shift in public management (Harvey 1989), which is parallel to the building of coalitions among public and private actors which are believed to maximize efficiency in the development process. In this framework place branding is deemed "a marketing-led strategy of economic development" (Greenberg 2008:35), which translates business techniques and concepts into tools for public management.

As a matter of fact, a "philosophy of place management" emerged (Ashworth and Voogd 1995:39) and has built a link between two very distinct worlds of speculation and practice such as geography and business management. In particular, place branding is considered to be an approach "to integrat[ing], guid[ing] and focus[ing] place management" (Kavaratzis 2005:334).

'Marketization' is synonymous with modernization in public management (Czarniawska 2002) and, accordingly, the logic of competition is now extended not only to cities but also to provinces, nations, states and supra-national regions (Anholt 2010). In Anholt's viewpoint, "a globalised world is a marketplace where country has to compete with country – and region with region, city with city – for its share of attention, of reputation, of spend, of goodwill, of trust" (2005:119). Globalization and the disappearance of frontiers for investments and credit have made a place's capacity of attraction crucial to economic development (Lebedenko 2004) so that place branding is now inevitable for those geographies that do not want to be left behind (Gertner and Kotler 2004).

Cities undertake branding initiatives in order to enter a short-list of geographical areas that are potential localization spots for businesses and talents. To make a place attractive, there is the need to 'do and label', that is improving reality (e.g. services and infrastructures) and communicating the unique advantage of investing and living in a region. Put simply, cities need to construct their own competitive advantage in order to position themselves in a 'market of geographies', an open territorial competition space where new development opportunities might spill out.

This chapter is in charge of furthering a discussion on branding potential and pitfalls by analysing collaborative strategies as an alternative approach to constructing and communicating the local competitive advantage. In the frame of global competition, the cooperative and co-opetitive branding rationales are investigated. The process of collaborative branding involving an area that crosses administrative borders, i.e. inter-

territorial branding, will be under scrutiny by discussing the forces driving the emergence of inter-territorial brands and the likely phases characterising the underlying process.

Accordingly, Section 2 will explain the assumptions of this research, by stressing the roots of place branding in the frame of local and regional development studies. Section 3 will present how the issues of competition, cooperation and co-opetition have been treated in place branding literature. Section 4 will provide an insight into inter-territorial brands by means of an exploratory review of cases. Section 5 will attempt to discuss the forces shaping the collaborative branding process and the relevant phases concerning the analysed cases. Finally, Section 6 will reflect on the limitations of the paper and will suggest directions for further research.

2. Competition, cooperation, co-opetition: theoretical assumptions

Despite the evident hegemony of the competition assumption in the debate, there is room to sustain that competition is a necessary but not exhaustive key for interpreting place branding and marketing. Competition and competitiveness, i.e. the regional capacity to compete, are said to be the "new conventional wisdom", a *mantra* in development policies which has been sustained both by the European Union (Bristow 2011) since the 1980s, alongside the process of European integration (Cheshire 1999), and by the promoters of the New Urban Politics in US (Cox 1995). Bristow (2005) argued that the notions of competition and competitiveness are understood by entrepreneurial constituencies, thus emphasising their rhetorical power rather than their validity as pillars of development policies. As a matter of fact, regional competitiveness remains an "ambiguous and contested" concept (Martin 2005:4) since the academic debate has not achieved a shared and agreed definition, falling victim to the "theory led by policy" mechanism (Bristow 2011:344).

Although there are still unsolved analytical problems related to territorial competition, this does not imply that geographies are not involved in global competition. According to some, geographies do compete in many different ways. Gordon (1999) refers to the rivalry within product markets, for inward investments, for the attraction of desirable residents, for funding or events from higher levels of government, as a consequence of the integration across national borders and the internationalization of economies.

In this frame, places need to undertake a "purposive territorial competition", thus playing a "collective role in securing the conditions to promote competitive success for firms and individuals based in their area" (Gordon 2011:33). Geographies play a major role in enhancing competitiveness, and this is confirmed by Martin when stating that competitiveness resides not only in the competitiveness of individual firms but also in "social, economic, institutional and public attributes" of the region (2003:35), including networks of informal knowledge, trust and social capital. However, there is the need to identify the region as the suitable scale in which territorial competitiveness spills out. Put simply, competitiveness resides also in the capacity of defining the economically relevant territory in light of complementarities with other areas, which should not be treated as mere competitors (Gordon 2011). In fact, the competitive success of one place is not

necessarily at the expense of another (Turok, 2004 cited in Bristow 2011) and poor performance of one city may negatively impact other cities sharing the same networks (Unwin, 2006 cited by Bristow 2011). That is, the most effective scale for constructing the competitive advantage may cross the borders of individual city government units (Cheshire 1999).

Cooperation across administrative borders is, thus, a way to deal with global competition and enhance competitiveness for those places that share networks of services, businesses, etc. Cooperation offers the chance to reach both a critical mass in favour of network members (Meijers 2008) and assets diversity. This is very important to cities - now more than ever - in light of current economic instability experienced worldwide. Diversity is, in fact, said to favour mechanisms of resilience which are deemed fundamental to regional development (Bristow 2010).

That is, in the frame of global competition geographies can seek advantages by undertaking cooperative strategies. To understand this twofold approach, according to which competition and cooperation are not mutually exclusive, we can refer to the notion of co-opetition (Nalebuff and Brandenburger 1996). Just like competition, this is borrowed from business studies.

Co-opetition, which is a well-known concept in business network studies and business-to-business marketing, refers to the benefits that firms may have from undertaking both cooperation and competition relationships with actors in the value chain (including competitors) simultaneously (Bengtsson and Kock 2000; Nalebuff and Brandenburger 1996). This is a "hybrid behaviour comprising competition and cooperation" which determine a strategic interdependence and, thus, a co-opetitive system of value creation (Dagnino and Padula 2002:2). Co-opetitive relationships are enacted by two types of interactions: hostility due to conflicting interests and 'friendship' due to the pursuit of common interests characterise actors' relationships (Bengtsson and Kock 2000).

However, we have to reflect on the limitations of adapting business notions to places, rather than suggesting their uncritical adoption. Scholars have underlined the conceptual differences to be faced when dealing with businesses and places. Arguably, these differences are going to play a role in the translation of the notion of co-opetition from the former case to the latter. There are three crucial issues to be considered, such as aims, complexity and ownership. While companies aim for profit, have the chance to deal with a relatively well-defined brand which is strategically designed, and have a legal ownership of it, place brands aim at political and socio-economic achievements, are complex entities since not having clear boundaries in space and time, and are not properly owned (see Pasquinelli 2010). These elements are likely to impact on the way to conceive co-opetition since blending competition with a cooperative attitude can be (or can be perceived as) even riskier than in the case of businesses, on the basis of a lower control on co-opetition effects and pay-offs.

To conclude this section, we suggest a variety of viable development strategies and, consequently, branding strategies that places can undertake. Within the global arena such strategies vary (and are characterised) in relation to the intensity of competition and cooperation. Generally, when two or more cities choose to share resources in order to exploit developmental opportunities jointly, the rationale of cooperation is added to the one of competition. In terms of local development this means to take into account

those policies that seek economies of scale or scope and try to reinforce policy learning across urban or regional borders.

3. Competition, Cooperation, Co-opetition: the place branding debate

Since the 2008 crisis and during the ongoing economic downturn, looking beyond administrative borders for shaping branding strategies is even more salient than before. While "maintaining or increasing the level of place branding is not politically easy in a recession" (Burghard 2009:50), the global economy is experiencing a shortage of investment projects and attracting talents seems to be even more crucial than before for the economy to recover. That is, territorial competition is further increasing so that place branding and marketing are likely to be even more needed than before. In this context the chance of single towns and cities to compete successfully is reducing because only the most diverse economies will have the possibility to win (Eisenschitz 2010). That is, one single place closed within its own borders is likely not to be the optimal scale for competing and 'winning' global competition.

As said, cooperation is a strategic option to be considered in place branding. This has been claimed by Osgood who stated that "as funds for economic development become scarcer, cooperation can increase the scope of a campaign through the aggregation of resources" (2010:266). The example is the Greater Louisville branding initiative which succeeded in pooling US$ 1.07m for launching and sustaining the brand (Osgood 2010). This was deemed an amount of resources not reachable by the individual towns and cities participating to the Greater Louisville network. This branding initiative would not have been possible outside a cooperative framework.

In this regards, a gap has been identified in literature, but never filled in. Anholt wondered whether place branding is necessarily a zero-sum game (2004 cited in Osgood 2010), Ikuta et al. lamented a significant lack of attention to regional branding (2007 cited in Osgood 2010), and Kavaratzis and Ashworth stated the need to widen the current understanding of inter-urban competition (2008 cited in Osgood 2010).

Concerning tourism in the rural U.S., Cai (2002) underlined the need to achieve a critical mass across multiple communities, thus suggesting a cooperative approach to destination branding. We can argue that, while cities may be strong brands thanks to their richness in assets and diversity, those areas lacking leading urban centres and characterized by minor economic patterns might struggle to be 'on the map'. To attract and retain investors, visitors and talents, small and peripheral communities need sources of diversity in order to be capable of triggering an economic revitalization. As Kalandides claimed, " [the] prerequisite of a different city marketing concept would be a deep understanding of the interrelatedness between places. The consequence would be prioritizing cooperation and networks over competitive strategies" (2007:14).

Along with an increasing competition, interdependence is rising among cities. Accordingly, Williams argued that "anticipating, responding to and coping with rapidly changing intra- and inter-metropolitan relations [by determining an adequate scale]" (1999:173) is crucial to designing appropriate urban marketing strategies for metropolitan areas. He clearly stated that, in a metropolitan area, cities have to 'behave'

as both competitors and partners simultaneously, thus implicitly suggesting the validity of co-opetition as an approach to development and to marketing places.

Co-opetition is confirmed to be worthy of attention. As said, place branding is usually interpreted as a competitive, quasi-mercantilistic approach to regional and local development, but this is an "increasingly unrealistic or at least partially misleading [perspective] in the network-like co-opetitive scenario of today" (Bellini et al. 2010:91).

Although cooperative and co-opetitive schemes are fairly overlooked in the place branding debate, a few additional scholars have taken into account the possibility to enrich the prevailing competition-based interpretation. Moilanen and Rainisto hint at cooperation by saying that a single city may need to be part of a "larger location" for place branding purposes, in order to reach a critical mass alluring the desired targets (2009:27). That is, branding can result in a positive-sum game where even those areas that are not capital cities can reach a critical mass by pooling resources.

As Hankinson stated, a place defined by legal boundaries sometimes is not "a unique and meaningful product" (2001:129). There is an opportunity for place managers to cross administrative boundaries "to combine two or more places together in order to provide a more attractive offer" (Hankinson 2001:130). Hankinson (2001) made the examples of the Yorkshire Coast and the Shakespeare Country destination brands in the United Kingdom. Frequently tourism promotion capitalizes on imagined geographies crossing administrative boundaries because of identity elements that, inherited from history and cultural heritage, build a shared imaginary for a variety of towns and cities. Accordingly, inter-terrirotial brand management is sometimes needed in order to exploit an already existing opportunity in the tourism market rather than being *a priori* chosen and designed as a collaborative strategy.

4. Inter-territorial brand cases

In the following paragraphs a selection of inter-territorial brands is presented in order to explore the process and the rationale underlying the emergence of collaborative branding initiatives. Table 1.2. shows the twelve cases, their brief descriptions and the related sources. The selected cases regard those brands labelling forms of cooperation involving two or more geo-political units, being local (involving cities, e.g. MiTo and Ruhr Metropolis), regional (involving administrative regions, e.g. HabitatMed) or national (involving countries, e.g. the Baltic Sea Region). Accordingly, the inter-territorial brand covers a space 'managed' by diverse public authorities which decide to collaborate voluntarily.

Table 1.2. Inter-territorial brands: the selected cases

Case	Description	Source
Old West Country, US	Cooperative branding across seven rural towns	(Cai 2002)
Waterland, NL	Rural region composed of 8 municipalities	(Simon et al. 2010)
Noordoostpolder, NL	Rural region composed of two municipalities	(Simon et al. 2010)
Thames Gateway, UK	Regeneration plan involving 3 regions and 16 local authorities. London Olympics will be located in the Gateway area	(Allmendinger and Haughton 2009; Binks 2005; Bennett and Morris 2006; CABE 2006; van Gertler and Roberts undated; English Heritage 2004)
Cascadia, US-Canada	Cross-border region of Pacific North America including parts of 7 jurisdictions	(Smith 2008)
HabitatMed	"Region of origin" brand involving 12 Mediterranean regions	(EuroMedsys 2007; VVA Valdani 2007)
MiTo, Italy	Cultural brand ("MiTo SettembreMusica") involving two cities, Milan and Turin	(http://www.mitosettembremusica.it/; http://www.netdiap.polimi.it/Lab/mi-to/index.htm; La Stampa; Mellano and Rolando 2007)
Baltic Sea Region	Region encompassing 11 countries. Branding initiatives under the supervision of Anholt's and Olins' consultancies	(Andersson 2007; http://nation-branding.info/2006/12/19/creating-competitive-identity-baltic-sea-region/; http://nation-branding.info/2008/06/16/branding-baltic/; http://eu.baltic.net/)
Cruise Baltic	Cruise network in the Baltic Sea Region: 26 destinations in 10 countries	(Lemmetyinen and Go 2010)
Øresund	Cross-border region involving Copenhagen area (Denmark) and Scania (Sweden), particularly the city of Copenhagen and Malmo	(Lundquist and Winther 2006; Hospers 2004; 2006; Pedersen 2004; Berg and Lofgren 2000; Lofgren 2000; Berg 2000; Ristilammi 2000; Linde-Laursen 2000)
Ruhr Metropolis, Germany	This region encompasses 11 cities and 42 smaller municipalities working together for an economic transformation through culture	(Kunzmann 2004; Krajevsky 2008; http://www.essen-fuer-das-ruhrgebiet.ruhr2010.de /en/home.html; http://www.ruhrmetropolis.com/ index.html; http://www.metropoleruhr.de/)
Greater Louisville, US	Regional brand involving 25 counties across two states	(Osgood 2010)

The criteria guiding the selection of cases were two. The first criterion regards the coverage of the diverse typologies of place branding analysed in the literature. Such typologies are related to the function that branding is supposed to carry out and, thus, to the targets it is supposed to allure. Branding can be either sectoral , thus targeting visitors or supporting the export by targeting goods consumers, or integrated, thus assuming a holistic approach to place promotion. The case selection aimed on one hand at demonstrating the relevance and spread of inter-territorial branding as a practice, on the other hand at providing a multifaceted insight into inter-territorial branding by taking into account multiple branding functions. Figure 1.2. highlights the multiple functions of inter-territorial branding, in line with the other geographical branding scales (i.e. national, regional, local), and consists in a development of the Geographical Branding Matrix in Chapter One (Figure 1.1).

Function \ Scale	National	Regional	Local	Inter-territorial
Destination Branding				Old West Country, Baltic Sea Region, Cruise Baltic
Place of Origin (export)				HabitatMed, Baltic Sea Region
FDI promotion				Thames Gateway, Baltic Sea Region
Culture & Entertainment Branding				MiTo, Ruhr Metropolis
Integrated Place Branding				Waterland, Noordoostpolder, Thames Gateway, Cascadia, Öresund, Ruhr Metropolis, The Greater Louisville

Figure 1.2. Geographical Branding Matrix (extended)

The second criterion regards the availability of sources of information. The secondary research included those cases that either received attention in literature or were exhaustively illustrated by multiple sources, such as official documents, websites and practitioners' viewpoints collected from blogs and magazines.

In light of the selected cases, we can state that inter-territorial brands can either be designed strategically or spill out from inter-territorial networking spontaneously (meaning in absence of a designed branding strategy), by involving contiguous or less proximate areas. Networking areas tend to express a need to communicate their interconnections in order to make their collaborative efforts visible.

In the case of the Old West Country, Cai (2002) argued a principle of similarity among the partners in light of a similar composition of their natural and cultural attractions. A degree of homogeneity also characterises the Cruise Baltic brand where all partners offer cruise services and experiences on the basis of agreed brand performance and values (Lemmetyinen and Go 2010). In these two cases, the involved destinations are in direct competition, since all of them have to attract the same target, i.e. visitors, so that a co-opetitive strategy is chosen to pursue a positive-sum game.

Co-opetition is explicitly mentioned in regards to the MiTo brand. The analysis of an Italian newspaper archive showed an explicit reference to co-opetition alongside the process of collaboration between Milan and Turin. Competition is evident among the two industrial poles in Northern Italy, competition which is now extended to the domain of cultural economy (La Stampa 27.10.2009[15]). At the same time, there is a set of common problems requiring collaborative efforts and, in this regards, a positive-sum game is claimed. However, this has not been effectively translated into policy-making so far (La Stampa 17.10.2004[16]; La Stampa 27.10.2009).

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[15] This news reported the success of the MITO Music Festival and the additional cultural event following it and focused on contemporary art. In this article Mr Chiamparino, Mayor of Turin at that time, acknowledged that "this is a further element to be added to the general plan of creating an integration between Milan and Turin. It is not easy though and, in fact, the project concerning a unified transport system failed before starting. However, there can be other future projects in the future".

[16] This news reported on the re-launch of interest for MITO cooperation around 2004 and the need for the two local governments to focus on similarities and common problems, rather than emphasising competition

In the Öresund region, complementarity was sought. Hospers (2006) stated a mutual interest of Denmark and Sweden. Copenhagen had to develop a metropolitan area to compete with the other metropolises of the Blue Banana, while Sweden had to relaunch the economy of Scania, a peripheral and poor region on the Southern border of the country, by linking it to Western Europe. While the Copenhagen area is urban and cosmopolitan, Scania is rural and offers a high quality of life. The Öresund, thus, is 'a mix of soft and fast', an alternative to the overstressed style of the global metropolis (Lofgren 2000).

Concerning governance, a great variety was found spanning from simple cooperation to more sophisticated arrangements. Sometimes governance consists in collaborative schemes led by public authorities (e.g. Waterland and Noordoostpolder), sometimes private-public partnerships are settled in order to build on the contributions of a wide range of actors (e.g. Old West Country). A successful example of public-private partnership is the Greater Louisville Community Branding Project which is "a coalition of civic leaders including state governments, economic development actors, the corporate and philanthropic communities, educational institutions, and cultural entities" (Osgood 2010:267). Governance arrangements can be very complex, as the Thames Gateway demonstrates by giving an example of 'meta-governance' in light of number, scale and diversity of the involved actors (Allmendinger and Haughton 2009).

5. Unfolding the process of inter-territorial branding

5.1. Forces driving the process of inter-territorial branding

The cases in Table 1.2. allow us to discuss aims and motivations pushing local, regional and national authorities towards undertaking collaborative strategies and, accordingly, inter-territorial branding. As said, in the case of the Old West Country the rural communities sought a critical mass because of the small number of attractions owned by the villages individually (Cai 2002). In this regards, Cai (2002) argued that, only by packaging together a network destination, brand associations could be steered in visitors' minds. This is not an issue only for small rural communities. Assuming a different scale, Erki Peegel, who is director of the marketing unit of Enterprise Estonia, claimed that the promotion of the Baltic Sea Region brand is fundamental for Estonia's performance in different fields, such as investments, tourism and exports, since it is a small country with limited assets and resources (Collier 2008).

Inter-territorial collaboration offers the chance to achieve a higher quality of international marketing campaigns at lower costs for individual partners, thus improving the cost effectiveness of initiatives. This was the goal of Cruise Baltic offering the cruise sector as one single product, thus further improving the quality standards of facilities and services across the region (Lemmetyinen and Go 2010). The general improvement of quality standards across the involved locations determined an increase of the Cruise

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which, by the way, was said to be intrinsic to the history of the two cities. The article lists the themes in which cooperation was said to be sought: research and universities, transport and trade exhibitions.

Baltic brand equity because the brand provided visitors with a high quality experience consistently in the whole region.

The cooperation space can be considered as the appropriate space for planning. This is claimed about the Thames Gateway, which is defined as the space of opportunities, rather than being shaped according to administrative borders (Allmendinger and Haughton 2009). The 'network as space of opportunities' was also the rationale for MiTo collaboration in the starting phase. The project is rooted in the late 1980s when the two Italian industrial poles, Milan and Turin, started declining and the rising unemployment made these cities look at cooperation as a possible way to relaunch growth (La Stampa 8.10.2004[17]; Mellano and Rolando 2007). Cooperation is also deemed a way to reach an appropriate size, as in the case of Öresund where, as said, the cross-border region was seen as the scale for competing with the Blue Banana metropolitan regions (Hospers 2004).

The network is also chosen for propelling transformation and change. The Ruhr Metropolis brand is conceived and communicated as a network mobilizing resources for change. The Ruhr in North Rhine Westphalia was one of the most important industrial areas in Europe, going through an intensive structural change since the 1980s. Historically linked to heavy industry and coal which experienced a tough decline, the region "has undergone a major transformation and has changed from a grey industrial area into a modern and trendy culture metropolis"[18]. According to Krajevsky, "a conglomeration of post-modern leisure facilities and creative experience economies has established in Ruhr Valley" (2008:1) and is based on leisure and tourism industries as well as on technological innovation and service sectors. This 'cultural' transformation was stigmatized by the European Cultural Capital designation in 2010[19].

According to the 'flexible functional boundaries' theorized by Kunzmann (2004), the transformation is labelled as 'Ruhr' and is fuelled by increasing towns willing to cooperate and capitalize on regional culture and its economic potential. Actually, the Ruhr Valley economy "is still formed by coal, steel and heavy industry", but an image change has been triggered (Krajevsky 2008:2). The aim of propelling change and transformation is at the basis of the Greater Louisville brand that, with the slogan 'Louisville: Possibility City', is succeeding in counterbalancing the regional image of 'old south', i.e. slow and 'behind the time' area (Osgood 2010).

The aim of cross-border cooperation can also be fostering international relations among local systems. There is a need to promote openness and the capacity to interact and collaborate internationally to move and grow in a global market (see Bellini et al. 2008). An example of 'decentralized co-operation' was put in place by the Interreg program EuroMedsys, which was the framework for working on the idea of the 'Mediterranean identity' for the industry of home design and furniture. The HabitatMed brand was, thus,

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[17] This news reported about the results of a study deeming an integration between Milan and Turin, starting from infrastructures such as fast railways, fundamental to avoid an economic decline for the two cities. In addition, the mentioned report stated that "if the two cities keep working separately without exploiting the synergies between the two areas, they will renounce to 176 billion Euro annual extra-income" which, according to the experts in charge, was the estimated payoff of the cooperative project.
[18] http://www.ruhrmetropolis.com/. Accessed: April 2011.
[19] http://www.essen-fuer-das-ruhrgebiet.ruhr2010.de/en/home.html. Accessed: April 2011.

in charge of favouring synergies for an identity-building in the space of the Mediterranean partnership (Bellini 2007).

Collaborations across administrative borders may emerge to exploit opportunities coming from policies and incentives from higher levels in the governmental hierarchy. For example, in the case of the Öresund project, the European Union influenced the process (Pederson 2004) and EU funding was crucial to starting cooperation (Hospers 2006). In fact, the European Union backed the 'Euroregion' (label) and celebrated it as the best practice towards the construction of an European open space and a new enlarged market (Linde-Laursen 2000). Also in the case of the Cruise Baltic brand European funds played a role and, when the funding program was over, both private and public partners were willing to keep cooperating (Lemmetyinen and Go 2010).

It seems that, in order to exploit development opportunities, an apolitical and technical decision-making is sustained and deemed necessary for the creation of a 'new institutional geography' according to which "what works best" is chosen (Allmendinger and Haughton 2009:622). As stated by Berg and Lofgren (2000), the Öresund region-building process was pushed and sustained by industrialists who were certain of the economic opportunities in the space of the network, while there was a weak political interest in the network project -"who wants to be a politician in a region that does not exist?" (Berg and Lofgren 2000:10) from administrative and political perspectives.

However, according to Lundquist and Winther, the Öresund project was led by a political rhetoric and propelled by expectations that emerged through "political ambitions and wishful thinking of key actors [rather] than through analysis of the economy" (2006:115). "A statement of belief in the region" rather than a rational calculation of economic and social pay-offs (Berg 2000: 58) were said to lead the process.

An ever-changing mix of factors driving the emergence of the inter-territorial brand is witnessed by the Cascadia case. Assuming a historical perspective, Smith (2008) found that the "enviro-branding" - which stressed the ecological and environmental profile of Cascadian network – at the beginning was promoted and supported by industrialists willing to exploit opportunities related to the green economy in the region. Afterwards, the Cascadia brand reached the policy agendas of the local authorities geographically involved, thus leading to the definition of a trans-boundary common environmental policy in the Pacific Northwest network. A change in the nature of the brand, which became something 'wider', provoked a change in the range of actors participating in brand development.

In regards to the selected cases, Table 2.2. shows a summary of goals and motivations at the basis of inter-territorial brands and branding in relation to branding typologies.

Table 2.2. Inter-territorial brands: multiple branding typologies, goals and motivations

Branding Typology	*Brand Cases*	*Target*	*Goals and Motivations*
Destination Branding	Old West Country Baltic Sea Region Cruise Baltic	Visitors	Critical mass Critical mass Lower costs for a better (standard) quality; EU funds/incentives
Place of Origin (Export)	HabitatMed Baltic Sea Region	Goods Consumers	International relations for synergies Critical mass
FDI Promotion	Thames Gateway Baltic Sea Region	Investors	Space for planning; Space of economic opportunities Critical mass
Culture & Entertainment Branding	MiTo Ruhr Metropolis	Culture Consumers Culture 'Producers'	Space of opportunities; Facing similar problems together; Critical mass Transformation and Change; Image Change
Integrated place branding	Waterland and Noordoostpolder Thames Gateway Cascadia Øresund Ruhr Metropolis The Greater Lousville	Mix of targets: investors, residents, talents, visitors	Identity-building; place-making Identity-building; place-making Space of economic opportunities; space for policy-making Appropriate size to compete; EU incentives; space of economic opportunities Transformation and Change; Image change Transformation and Change; Image change

5.2. Phases of the inter-territorial branding process

Two are the types of process identified across the analysed cases, i.e. linear and non-linear. The first type consists in a linear sequence of phases, i.e. coalition building, naming and identity-building. Concerning the Thames Gateway, the consultants Olins and Jones (cited in CABE 2006) affirmed this regeneration project consists in a 'placemaking', i.e. the generation of a region intended as a process of meanings-attachment to a networking space. This process needs to get through, first, the building of a coalition (that is a network of collaborating actors) and, second, the naming and nurturing of the spirit of the place. This seems to be relevant and, according to Bennett and Morris (2006), poor sense of place and a weak sense of community in the Thames Gateway have been challenging the attractiveness of the whole area. Similarly, Berg (2000) argued that the region-building process develops across the phases of actors' involvement, imaginative creation of a regional imagery and emergence of collective enthusiasm and spirit. This is a matter of identity-building in the space of a network.

Lemmetyinen and Go (2010), who analysed the Cruise Baltic brand, described a linear process composed of three temporal phases, i.e. initiation, integration and identification,

which are signalled by the achievement of subsequent levels of cooperation, i.e. functional, relational and symbolic. The initiation phase is often led by dominant actors who are able to propel cooperation. However, at this stage all the other actors realize the advantages of collaboration increasingly, thus achieving a functional level of cooperation. When the actors reach coordination, the integration phase starts, thus leading the actors to share experiences within the network and contributing to a common identity-building. When the identification phase starts, the symbolic level of cooperation makes participants conceive the brand as distinct entity and develop commitment towards it.

The second type of process is non-linear. The Öresund case showed that inter-territorial networks can emerge from a non-linear sequence of doing, naming and nurturing. Since the beginning of the process iconic infrastructures, especially the bridge but also other flagship projects, were the catalysts of the process and, in fact, were built in order to embed the idea of an emerging region in people's minds (Berg and Lofgren 2000). The bridge was said to make the cooperation credible, visible and tangible so that the volatility of relationships across the border (relationships among companies, universities and institutions) would have been counterbalanced (Berg 2000). In the case of the Öresund the identification of a process is controversial due to a series of 'improvisations' and 'experimentations' (Berg 2000). For example, in 1999, the Öresund brandbook was published, thus witnessing the emphasis on identity-building. The birth of the region was invoked (The Birth of Öresund, 1999 cited in Berg and Lofgren 2000), even though the region "[did] not – yet – really exist!" (Berg and Lofgren 2000:7).

Not only the built environment but also the natural environment can provide a symbology for regional identity-building. This has been sustained concerning the river Thames, its estuary and the parklands in Thames Gateway (CABE 2006). Concerning the Öresund it was said that identity construction is a matter of conflating narratives, maps, logos, imagery, infrastructures and landmarks in order to produce a new mindset and a new vocabulary which are at the basis of change (Pederson 2004). By analysing Waterland and Noordoostpolder, Simon et al. (2010) argued that the visual identity works as a representation of the region aimed at influencing experiences and behaviours of relevant communities.

Events can play a significant role in drawing attention to the cooperative project and, accordingly, to the inter-territorial brand, thus making it achieve momentum. In regards to the Öresund, events played a key role in attaching meanings to the brand, thanks to their persuasive power and symbolic intensity, which shaped the episodes of the Öresund narrative (Berg and Lofgren 2000). According to Ristilammi (2000), event management in the Öresund concerned the orchestration of attention and the creation of a positive feeling of expectations for the future of the region. In the same vein, the Thames Gateway is going to host the 2012 Olympic Games, and this is expected to improve a local sense of place. Also the Ruhr Metropolis sought visibility and international recognition by means of the 2010 European Capital of Culture award, thus sealing the cultural engagement of the region. In addition, the MiTo brand was re-launched in 2007 as a cultural event, an international music festival promoted by the two cities jointly.

5.3. Forces challenging the process of inter-territorial branding

Within the inter-territorial branding process there are forces challenging brand sustainability over time. There is evidence confirming that administrative borders do challenge the network and, accordingly, the credibility of the brand. Borders tend to play as administrative and regulatory barriers which can prevent the inter-territorial cooperation from progressing (Mcleod and Jones 2007), while a lack of cross-border planning tools and policy-making along with a lack of homogeneous and comparable statistics for process monitoring, can weaken collaborative initiatives, as the MiTo case suggests (Mellano and Rolando 2007).

Moreover, inter-territorial brands are likely to suffer from a lack of authority and legitimacy. The lack of one decision-making authority together with a lack of unity of purpose among stakeholders was said to be one of the main challenges faced by the Baltic Sea Region brand (Andersson 2007). Concerning the Öresund, Berg and Lofgren (2000) affirmed that the lack of authority and legitimacy determines ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity within the process. Legitimacy is exclusively provided by the success of single steps in the Öresund project. The example is the success of the bridge that, since 2000, evidently has improved the number of contacts (commuters, business contacts, collaborations) between the two sides of the region. However, single failures in network development have undermined brand credibility and legitimacy in local communities. Berg (2000) explicitly spoke of 'fragile legitimacy', which depends upon the acceptance of both the overall project and single initiatives. From a more critical perspective on this generally overemphasized experience, Hospers (2004) stressed that the Öresund development was stagnating because of a delay in political decisions removing regulatory differences within the network.

According to Hospers (2006), the Öresund Euroregion is still not reality. This is demonstrated by the lack of enthusiasm shown by inhabitants who seem not to visualize the region in their daily life. Hospers (2006) witnessed even a sort of 'irritation' for the artificial region where substantial barriers still exist, such as high fees to cross the bridge and regulatory differences. Pederson (2004) argued the Öresund failure in light of a lack of democratic participation to the branding process, which prevented residents from feeling part of the project, in contrast with the widespread strong commitment affirmed by Berg a few years earlier (2000).

Figure 2.2. summarizes the forces triggering the emergence of inter-territorial brands and the forces challenging its sustainability according to the analysed cases.
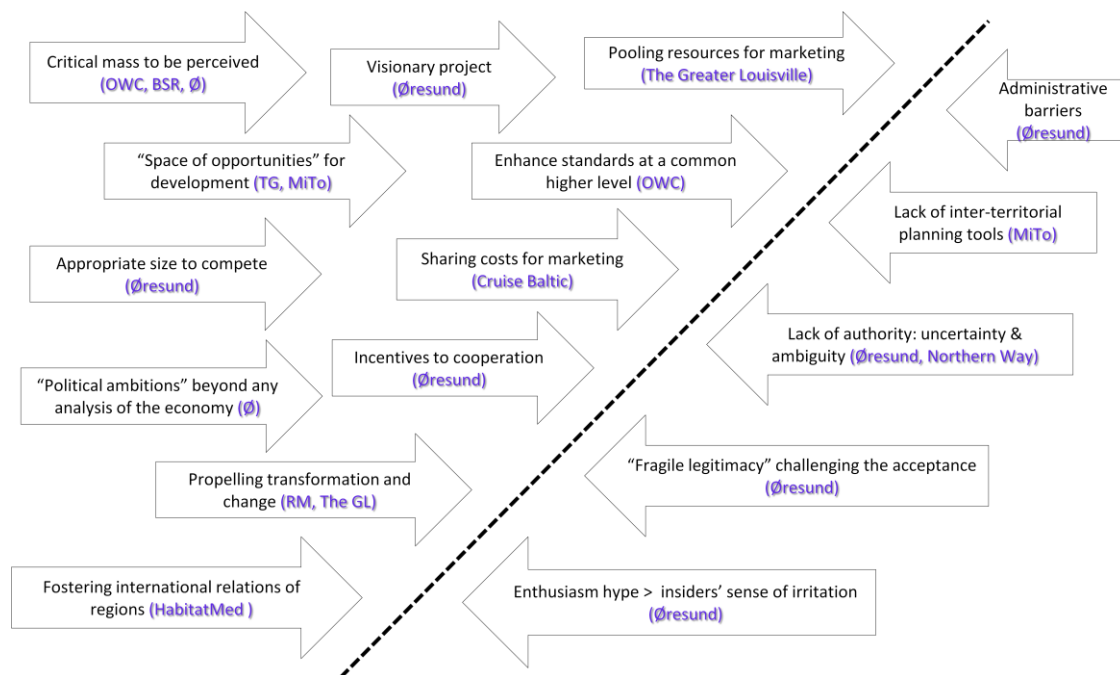
Figure 2.2. Forces driving *versus* forces challenging inter-territorial brands
Source: elaborated from Darby 2006

5.4. Discussion

The forces at stake in the process of inter-territorial branding and the related phases were identified. Evidence gathered from the cases in Table 1.2. suggests that pragmatism, i.e. a 'market-driven' rationale, plays a key role in the emergence of inter-territorial brands. In fact, the search for a critical mass and an appropriate size to face global competition, cost effectiveness, the exploitation of growth opportunities, the construction of a network space triggering transformation and change and, finally, the internationalization of territories, are drivers of inter-territorial branding. That is, an exploitation of economic opportunities for development in a sort of 'market of geographies' seems to be at the basis of collaborative branding strategies.

There is a theoretical lack of political interest concerning networks and inter-territorial brands, since they do not coincide with administrative and political units, meaning that they do not coincide with arenas where political consensus is to be earned. However, some evidence suggests that political aspects can be influential in the inter-territorial branding process. As stated above, behind a cross-border networking project there can be "political ambitions", a political rhetoric or a visionary political project, which are far from a pure 'market' rationale and, thus, from pragmatism. Beyond local economic interests encouraging networking, political gains and consensus-building within the involved territories can be pursued, so that branding plays a significant role in enhancing cooperation visibility. Cooperation and inter-territorial branding can be intended by policy-makers as an opportunity to make a difference in the developmental path, by pushing forward an innovative and appealing way to design local development. In addition, we should not overlook power games among the cooperating nodes of the network, especially in the presence of a dominant one willing to gain power and

leadership within the space of cooperation. Accordingly, the nature of the forces triggering inter-territorial brands seems twofold, i.e. pragmatic and political.

Moreover, the Cascadia case showed that the pragmatic and political rationales can emerge subsequently. That is, branding inter-territorial networks for pragmatic purposes can go through a process of institutionalization of the brand, until affecting the political agenda of local authorities and shaping a policy-making in the network space.

There is room for a distinction concerning goals and motivations among branding typologies, since the focus on different targets seems to impact the inter-territorial branding rationale. It seems that destination (inter-territorial) branding seeks economies of scale in the shape of both a critical mass characterising tourism offer and cost effectiveness. A positive-sum game is pursued among destinations that, though being competitors, decide to collaborate. In these cases, co-opetition is viable in light of clear aims (increasing tourists flows and their satisfaction), which are more operative than strategic, the relatively low complexity of the branded object (one may argue that a destination is more similar to a product than to a place) and the brand ownership shared among identified tourism actors.

Differently, other types of branding, e.g. the integrated place branding, are undertaken in light of more sophisticated goals. The aim can not only be (and not simply) the attraction of net inflows of capital or residents, and it pertains to a complex political and socio-economic dimension. Consequently, the complexity of the brand is higher, the ownership is not identifiable and the overall aim tends to be strategic in a visionary way, but also broader and fuzzier (e.g. the pursuit of a space of opportunities, a structural transformation of local system, an identity-building). Because of such complexity, co-opetition tends to be perceived as extremely risky, since it is not easy to control and balance individual pay-offs for partners which are, at the same time, competitors. Accordingly, cooperation is more likely to be pursued according to a complementarity among partners, according to which the degree of direct competition is very low.

Put simply, in a co-opetition framework less complex brands (in terms of aims, branded object and ownership) tend to be delivered, while in a proper cooperation (where, as said, direct competition is very low) more complex brands seem to be manageable. From a historical perspective, the MiTo case confirmed this argument. In an evident regime of co-opetition, Milan and Turin have never succeeded in concretizing their ambitious cooperative goals, though deemed strategic to face common problems and start a new deal of development for both cities. The cooperative project was put into practice only recently in the frame of the MiTo Music Festival whose scope is narrower, operatively focused on the attraction of an international target of cultural tourists.

The set of forces described above leads the system from competition to collaborative approaches that, hence, span from co-opetition to a proper cooperation. Two models of collaborative process were identified, i.e. linear and non-linear. In both process types, the importance of iconic infrastructures, flagship projects, elements of natural and built environment and events was stressed. It seems that the emphasis on these elements as part of an integrated platform of communication helps the network to become a recognized identity and attaches a sense of place to the space of the network. That is, in light of the quite intangible nature of the network, which is mainly relational rather than simply geographical or political, these elements are in charge of providing a tangible

evidence of the network existence. In lack of a place identity inherited from history, which is usually at the core of place branding initiatives, inter-territorial brands rely on symbolic representations according to which the network of places earn meanings, values and, thus, identity.

The symbolic representation helps the network to achieve momentum. This refers to a capacity of catalyzing attention toward the network and the overlying developmental project, thus fostering a peak in visibility and credibility for the inter-territorial brand. Particularly the mechanism of visibility is crucial prerequisite of an effective branding, since the targets have to become familiar with the branded object, i.e. the cooperation across borders. This puts the inter-territorial brand on the map, which is a pre-requisite for earning reputation and brand equity, i.e. the ultimate goal of branding. As said, events, iconic infrastructures and other symbolic elements, especially when coupled with a customer relationship management programme (as in the Greater Louisville case), are capable of provoking enthusiasm for and commitment to the network project.

However, the analysis suggested the likely emergence of forces undermining the sustainability of inter-territorial brands in the long-term. Such forces are related to the many challenges in managing networks of places, for example the hard and slow progress of the project. In addition, it seems that inter-territorial brands end up being felt as artificial by internal audiences who tend to lose interest and commitment for the network.

Accordingly, to fully explain the process of inter-territorial branding (Figure 3.2.), there is the need to understand how to keep momentum, that is, how to keep a high level of attention, credibility and visibility directed at the network of places. Tackling this phase of the process is of vital importance. Two possible outcomes of inter-territorial branding exist, depending on the degree of success in keeping the momentum. In case of success in keeping the attention upon the network, the result is a sustainable brand lasting in the long term and, thus, potentially producing a positive network reputation. In fact, in the place branding literature only long lasting brands are deemed capable of earning a positive reputation. On the contrary, if momentum is not maintained over time, there is a risk of interest loss and disappointment for the undeliverable promise. Crucially, an early halt of the inter-territorial brand can undermine the credibility of the whole cooperation project as well as the reputation of the involved partners.
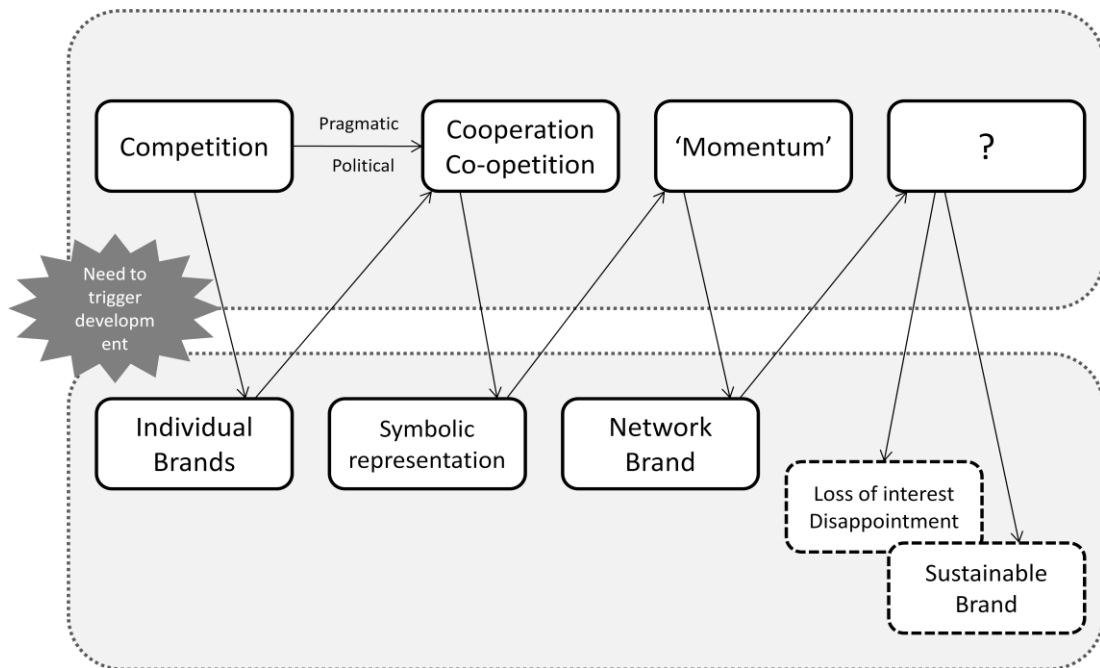
Figure 3.2. The process of inter-territorial branding
Source: author's elaboration

6. Conclusion

This paper argued that, beside the assumption of territorial competition, cooperation and co-opetition are viable strategies for branding places, so far being only marginally considered in place branding (Kalandides 2007; Bellini et al. 2010; Cai 2002; Hankinson 2001; Moilanen and Rainisto 2009). Cooperation and co-opetition allowed us to introduce the inter-territorial brand into the debate from a theoretical perspective. Being the unit of analysis for the present discussion, the inter-territorial brand is defined as covering a relational space "managed" across administrative borders.

A secondary research reviewed twelve inter-territorial networks to provide an analysis of the branding process. This was discussed by considering the forces at stake along the process and the related phases. While pragmatism seems to be the dominant rationale, political forces are also likely to shape inter-territorial brands. Although the network space does not coincide with a political arena where consensus is sought, political elements seem to emerge in the process of inter-territorial branding, similarly to what usually happens in place branding (see Therkelsen and Halkier 2008; Ooi 2004; Bellini et al. 2010).

Concerning the process phases, keeping brand momentum is deemed crucial to brand sustainability. Once identified this as the challenge to face in delivering successful brands, there is now the need to focus on viable modalities to maintain inter-territorial brands credibility and visibility. This is a potential issue to be further investigated in this field of research.

This paper has limitations. The analysis was built on cases at different scales, while arguably issues regarding inter-municipal brands are different from those regarding networking regions and countries. Such difference certainly regards governance arrangements and the related challenges in the management of collaboration, which were not the focus of this paper. Differently, the aim of this paper was providing an explorative insight into cooperation and co-opetition as viable branding strategies, their rationales and the main characteristics of the related branding process. Moreover, the arguments presented in this paper were based on a secondary research, thus drawing from fragmented sources of data and information. There is the need to undertake primary research in order to deepen the insight into inter-territorial brands and branding. This contribution has to be considered as a necessary preliminary stage providing an analytical framework for further research in this field.

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Chapter Three

Crossing borders for urban regeneration. The case of the NewcastleGateshead brand

Abstract - In post-industrial economies there is the need to reflect on geographical settings that are capable to trace alternative tracks of local and regional development. In the literature on relational spatialities there is an evident gap concerning viable forms of organization to manage and deal with geographical networks and relational spaces. This paper develops a framework to analyse the process of formation of an organizational identity across administrative borders, i.e. a relational space, pursuing urban regeneration and socio-economic revitalization. In the frame of cross-border cooperation, the organizational pattern, the process of interaction, the evolution of agency, and the main challenges are investigated. The paper will unfold the process shaping the partnership between two municipalities, the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the town of Gateshead in the North East of England. The case of the NewcastleGateshead brand is treated as an example of collective action representing an effort to manage complex and unpredictable routes of development. The analysis will highlight that place brands are organizational identities and will show the potential of interpreting them as relational socio-spatial organizations. By arguing the importance to recognize the emergence of "branded" relational spaces, the results of this research contributes to the discussion on relational spatialities by suggesting the role of the construction of meanings and communication in the creation of geographies.

1. Introduction

A rich stream of geography research considers places as not necessarily closed and fixed spatialities. Such literature is linked to the debate on post-industrial economies which has fostered a search for geographical settings capable of tracing alternative tracks for local and regional development. Accordingly, space has been interpreted relationally such that flows of interactions fuzzily shape places, while the notion of place as "fixed areal, self-contained, and more or less unique unit of socio-spatial organization" has been challenged by the concept of interspatial interconnectivity (Jessop et al. 2008:390). According to Jessop et al. (2008), four spatial turns characterise the geography debate, thus focusing on the concepts of territory, place, scale and network. Networks refer to the notions of interconnectivity, interdependence and to the definition of space of flows outlining the relational constitution of places.

Beyond a "pre-given set of places, spaces or scales", there is a need to deal with the fact that "new places are emerging, new spaces are being created, new scales of organization are being developed and new horizons of action are being imagined" (Jessop 2002:179). Allen et al. (1998) claimed that the region is a series of open and discontinuous spaces made of social relationships which develop in relation to specific purposes, thus overcoming formal boundaries. However, there are still many difficulties in "thinking space relationally" since, although this has become a sort of common sense in geography, the deep meaning and nature of the relational space has never been well investigated (Massey 2004a).

The relational interpretation of space and place casts light on the notions of border and identity which are two sides of a coin, since together they determine the "space of agency" and participation (Paasi 2002). Borders do not succeed in isolating bounded social formation, while "regional consciousness" no longer reflects the borders of governmental authority (Paasi 2002). Similarly, Amin stated that boundaries are no longer necessarily territorial or scalar since "the social, economic, political and cultural inside and outside are constituted through the topologies of actor networks which are becoming increasingly dynamic and varied in spatial constitution" (2004:33). Dynamism is also stressed by Massey (2005) stating that space is always under construction, thus suggesting an ever changing and 'always in process' space due to a continuous evolution of relations.

While open to constant reinterpretation, identities are characterised by a "legacy of meaning" (Allen et al. 1998:10) which is at the basis of the formation of identities. Identities represent the discontinuities within a global network so that, since being characterised by different patterns of relationships, they are visible spots on the map. Particularly, two kinds of identity are identified. Firstly, the 'modern identity' is static (Massey 2004b), unchanging and insisting on a bounded space which is internally coherent and differentiated from all the rest, conceived as 'otherness' (Massey 2005). Along with this notion of identity, place is intended as a pre-given geography which is to be discovered and which is controlled by a closed community of local actors (Amin 2004). In contrast, 'post-modern identities' are relationally constructed and highly mutable due to an on-going negotiation and reproduction of practices in an unboundable space (Massey 2004b). In fact, cities and regions do not have "prescribed or proscribed

boundaries" (Amin 2004:33) so that an unbounded space of negotiations and exchange impacts on the formation of identities.

There is an evident need to reflect on viable forms of organization to manage and deal with ever changing identities, which are open to multiplicity and resulting from on-going negotiations in the space of a network. This research aims at analysing the process underlying the emergence of an organizational identity across administrative borders alongside the pursuit of urban regeneration and socio-economic revitalization. This paper will unfold the process shaping the NewcastleGateshead brand deriving from the collaboration between two municipalities, the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the town of Gateshead in the North East of England, which have been cooperating across the river Tyne - physically separating them - in order to trigger socio-economic change by means of culture-led regeneration. This experience is an example highlighting the opportunity to nurture alternative identities representing an organizational effort to manage complex and unpredictable routes of development.

In literature much attention has been drawn to the case of NewcastleGateshead. Previous scholars' contributions claimed the creation of a single unified city in light of an emerging "soul of the city" fostered by urban entrepreneurship (Minton 2003:37); attempted to assess the impact of culture-led regeneration on local identity by stressing local people's sense of ownership of the initiatives (Bailey et al. 2004); interpreted the process from a socio-spatial perspective by unfolding the social construction and reconfiguration of local identity (Miles 2005); discussed the impact of Newcastle and Gateshead partnership on the building of a national image for the region, and argued a related embedding process of a local creative economy (Bailey 2006); described the developmental strategy of the 'creative city' by stressing the originality of NewcastleGateshead initiatives (Sacco and Comunian 2006); stressed the reliance on the bridges on the river Tyne, thus arguing the creation of places by means of an iconic symbology and visual identity (Warnaby and Medway 2008); and assessed inhabitants' perceptions as resulting from the intertwining of multiple spaces and identities at regional and local level (Middleton and Freestone 2008).

However, these contributions did not analyse the organizational process allowing the two municipalities to achieve long-standing collaborative branding. This paper attempts to frame the forces and the rationales as well as the phases of the process of collaboration which drove the formation of the NewcastleGateshead brand. From a longitudinal perspective building on more than ten years of cooperation, an organizational pattern will emerge along with main challenges in nurturing and managing a relational space of collaboration.

2. Brands as organizational identities

There is rising academic interest in place brands among both geographers and marketing scholars. Place brand is a concept allowing scholars and practitioners to deal with place images and reputation which are increasingly considered as relevant assets for local and regional development. Such brand analogy seems to have a significant appeal since

supporting the "philosophy of place management" in the geographical debate (Ashworth and Voogd 1995:39), thus providing a significant link between two very distinct worlds of speculation such as geography and marketing.

A stream of place brand research focuses on the adaptation of corporate brand issues in a geographical context (Kavaratzis 2005; 2010; Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2009; Hankinson 2007, 2010; Trueman et al. 2004; Moilanen and Rainisto 2009). Therkelsen and Halkier (2008) argued both place and corporate brands deal with numerous stakeholders and need to take into account multiple identities. Similarly, Hankinson (2010) suggested that two reasons make corporate brands crucial to the development of a place brand theory, i.e. the presence of multiple stakeholders and the need to support a variety of activities. According to Hankinson (2010), both corporate and place brands rely on the definition of a clear vision aligning organizational culture and organization's images.

According to Anholt (2005), corporate branding rationale can be used as reference for place management when the former is intended as a process not only of visual identity construction, but also of corporate strategy-making, of consumers and stakeholders' motivation, and of definition of ethics and purpose. That is, the parallel between corporate brand and place brand is viable when we consider corporate brands as "central organising function of the company" (Anholt 2005:117), constituting a platform which helps employers, employees and ideally all stakeholders to share beliefs and values and adopt consistent behaviours.

The umbrella brand is an example of adaptation of corporate brand theory to the geographical context. This concept induced to think of corporate brand as valid reference on the basis of the multiplicity of stakeholders, purposes and expectations that one single organization has to satisfy. Due to the highly demanding and fragmented environment where businesses have to play, corporate brands started being interpreted as umbrellas under which a range of different products have to be promoted (Hankinson 2010). Assuming a co-existence of multiple interest groups living, working, visiting a place, all bearing different complex expectations, the notion of umbrella brand was borrowed by place brand scholars.

Since spanning several industrial and functional contexts to favour economies of scale and resources pooling (Therkelsen and Halkier 2008), the umbrella identity requires mediation efforts to reduce potential conflicts and to harmonize multiple realities (Bellini et al. 2010). Due to the diverse stakeholders' assumptions on what the place is and must be in terms of space, time and agency (Therkelsen and Halkier 2004), the umbrella brand can result as heavily 'skewed' focusing on certain activities at the expense of others (Therkelsen and Halkier 2004). Each stakeholder, in fact, identifies the space according to specific mental maps, made of a hierarchy of social relationships where specific roles are ascribed to actors (agency mapping) and a clear causal relation and direction of change is assumed (historical mapping). Accordingly, there is a complex process of negotiations for the selection of brand values, which is determined by stakeholders' interactions (Bellini 2004; Ooi 2004; Hospers 2006; Jensen 2007). Such selection can create conflicts because, even in case of an effort to be inclusive, inevitably it tends to reward the hegemonic place narrative (Philo and Kearns 1993; Ward 2000; Therkelsen and Halkier 2004; Greenberg 2008).

As a matter of fact, place brands are defined by inter-organizational negotiations and consensus-building involving three types of stakeholders, i.e. public authorities, businesses and citizens (Kotler et al., 1999 cited in Therkelsen and Halkier 2004). According to Ooi (2004), promoting, maintaining and enacting the brand imply 'politicking', that is negotiating the process throughout the mobilization of support and cooperation, and the creation of a unique, appealing and persuading story about the place for triggering interactions and communication flows among stakeholders.

Networking and coordination of multiple actors is, thus, crucial to place brands but "only few contributions analyze the process of interaction among place marketing stakeholders and how they come to agree on given strategies and actions" (Therkelsen and Halkier 2008). Brands are challenged by centripetal forces of competition and by a lack of capacity to recognize the added value of cooperation. Four main obstacles challenge collaborative place branding. Firstly, backing a place brand may imply the (partial) revision of a successful branding strategy pursued by actors individually (Ooi 2004). Secondly, as the Danish case suggests in regards to destination branding, even "seemingly democratic processes" (Ooi 2004:119) of values selection through meetings, discussions and the analysis of people's expectations, may not end up producing unanimous consensus, since many local players may be convinced that the brand is not in line with their individual profiles (Ooi 2004). Thirdly, the participation to a place brand and the pursuit of a cooperative approach to place branding carry the risk of partners' free riding, as Tregear and Gorton (2009) demonstrated by highlighting the managerial challenges related to shared brands. Fourthly, it is worth remembering the risk (perceived and/or real) of blending competition through the pursuit of cooperation.

According to Therkelsen and Halkier (2008), there are three conditions to create a coordinated brand: (a) the individual strategies should have a sufficient common denominator in order for cooperation to be attractive for all actors; (b) the perceived usefulness of the images of participating organizations increase the inclination towards a coordinated brand; (c) the involved organizations have to prioritize the common brand to the same extent in order to avoid deleterious free riding behaviours. In addition, Therkelsen and Halkier (2008) argued that the barriers to inter-organizational cooperation are due to asymmetric assumptions on the common brand's potential among the involved actors.

However, Ward's analysis on urban regeneration in Manchester (2000) demonstrated that 'symmetric' assumptions can be not enough. He analyzed the brand partnership in the frame of growth coalition where growth is conceived as "key operative motivation for consensus" creating a commonality, i.e. a shared interpretation of places as 'growth machines'. Despite the intentional efforts to conciliate a wide set of interest groups, a collective will was never achieved, while the most active entrepreneurs ended up affirming their individual interests against the collective brand campaign of Marketing Manchester.

The interactive and negotiative nature of brands suggests the importance of considering internal perceptions, i.e. internal place images. This concerns local communities and their perceptions of the place, which are earned by means of first-hand experience by living and working on site. The internal image is also called 'brand purpose' (Anholt 2007), which relates to "the spirit or the state of will" of local actors. Inhabitants, like company's employees, play a vital role in brand success by showing team spirit, local pride and

sense of purpose (Anholt 2002). This impacts on the place identity. In fact inhabitants, like businesses' staff, tend to translate perceived values into actions, thus turning perceptions into identity elements.

While place brands are usually analysed according to the symbology that shapes the visual brand identity, according to a sensorial place experience, place brands have also to be understood from a behavioural perspective, thus referring to the 'doing and choosing' of stakeholders, such as local government, businesses, associations and residents. For example, 'city's behaviours' are mirrored by provided urban services, type and scale of hosted events, policy-making style, and by city leaders' vision for development (Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2009). In other words, like for companies, identities represent the ethos, aims and values of the place (Ashworth and Kavaratzis 2009), mirrored by policies' contents and by how they are shaped. For example, the "be Berlin" campaign was supposed to be a "new kind of city branding, one which relies on the contributions of Berliners themselves", meaning a brand "made by Berliners for Berlin", thus embracing a bottom-up, open and participatory approach (Colomb and Kalandides 2010:186) to the formation of the place identity.

This section has explained the notion of place brand according to those elements that connote it as organizational identity. As said, place brands refer to multiple stakeholders and need to represent multiple identities; they are linked to a strategic framework for pursuing development and have to be headed by a clear vision; they rely on a rich symbology capable of embodying values, beliefs, ethos and aims which tend to be mirrored by stakeholders' behaviors; behaviors are entangled in dynamics of negotiations and interactions that emphasize the networking and relational nature of the brand. This interpretation allows us to investigate place brands as organizational identities.

3. Towards the organizational identity: critical elements of the collective action process

This chapter is in charge of explaining the mechanisms that drive multiple stakeholders to behave as a collective organization under a common brand label. This implies to reflect on how multiple actors achieve a collective action, which turns them into an organizational identity. This issue is addressed by building on policy studies and organization studies, focusing on network organizations and a cooperative rationale. Particular attention is drawn to the politics of organizing, since this perspective emphasizes relations of power among stakeholders and, accordingly, individual stakeholders' deliberate efforts to exercise influence on the other members of the network. This is a relevant element of the public management of collective affairs within which place branding and development strategy-making are included.

The collective action is undertaken by a group to further members' common interests (Carlsson 2000) and it is a voluntary association seeking a non-market solution to individual or group problems (Knoke 1990). Carlsson (2000) proposed the policy network theory of collective action, thus offering a platform to analytically reflect on the

relevant mechanisms driving multiple actors – including public authorities, i.e. policy-makers - to undertake a collective action. He stated that a policy network is a 'collectively acting unit', where an 'intelligent conformity' is sought on the basis of a resource interdependence connecting a cluster of organizations. In other words, the collective action results from a coordination across organizational boundaries by means of informal networking rather than by means of formal procedures (Healey 1997).

Network analysis has mainly focused on three elements, i.e. power, interdependency and trust, which are manifested into the quantity, quality and typology of relationships among network's actors (Thorelli 1986). Each actor's power depends upon the other actors and their resources (Thorelli 1986), so that the attributes of individual actors help to explain how relationships develop within the network. These mechanisms shape the governance which, by identifying the structure of power dependence among actors (Stoker 1998), relies on the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities in order to tackle social and economic issues. That is, networks are a set of relationships capable of pooling power and resources to manage and pursue collective goals.

'Soft' elements distinguish policy networks from other non-hierarchical collaborative arrangements (Borzel 1997). Sebatier claimed that the members of a network share a specific beliefs system, i.e. "a set of fundamental values, causal beliefs and problem perceptions" (1993 cited in Borzel 1997:6). Beliefs, values and consensual knowledge have an explanatory capacity in relation to networks, while ideas and identities are "constitutive for the logic of interaction between the members of a network" (Borzel 1997:7). That is, since members develop a consensual knowledge and collective values, the network achieves a shared perspective on and a common perception of collective problems.

At the same time, collaborative capacity is crucial to the emergence of such 'soft' common background. Weber and Khademian argued that, when facing 'wicked problems', i.e. unstructured problems about which there is little consensus on both nature and possible solutions, a collaborative capacity is essential to achieve a collective mind-set because it triggers a necessary knowledge transfer across the actors. Different interest groups have different experiences and, accordingly, develop different discourses on a same issue so that "the softer aspects of network management" (2008:340) are crucial to avoid barriers to collaboration. According to Carlsson (2000), network coherence and coherent actions depend upon actors' mutual understanding which implies an increasing agreement on what is 'good' or 'bad', priority or irrelevant issue.

Communication of soft elements, and consequently their visibility, is beneficial to the achievement of a collective action. This concerns "the communication as related to the need of individuals to express the desire to each other that they should forego their immediate self-interest for the benefit of the group" (Frohlich and Oppenheimer, 1998 cited in Ostrom 2007:7). It is also said that communication contributes to a "moral suasion" and helps the group "to gain a sense of solidarity" (Kerr and Kaufman-Gilliard, 1994 cited in Ostrom 2007:8), thus improving the likelihood of delivering a cooperation promise.

The following section presents a model for an interpretation of the process leading the formation of a collectively acting unit. The steps of the collective action process will be

unfolded and how individuals (or individual organizations) become one collective organization will be outlined.

4. Unfolding the process of collective strategy-making: an analytical framework

Within the frame of collective action, the model designed by Healey (1997) allows us to deal with the process of collaboration for spatial strategy formation analytically. Healey refers to collaborative planning for "shaping places", that is urban planning involving multiple stakeholders composing a "complex [and] open system" (1997:25). The model is a "technology" carrying out strategic decision-making in a context of extreme uncertainty about the guiding values, the surrounding environment and other stakeholders' related decisions (Healey 1997). That is, the model applies to those systems facing "wicked problems" (Weber and Khademian 2008).

Healey's model is defined as institutionalist and communicative. Firstly, the process of collaboration starts in a given institutional context according to which social relations have established a way to interpret reality. That is, individual identities are heavily influenced by social constructions so that norms, rules and routines, i.e. institutions, may determine lock-ins capable of reducing the range of viable strategic decisions. Secondly, the practice of discussion and continuous communication are at the core of the process, thus aiming at the creation of a discourse. In a sociological sense, the discourse determines a system of meanings that impose "organizing concepts" and a "vocabulary of images" according to which a strategy is designed (Healey 1997:276). Relying on stories, ideas and metaphors, discourse creation is said the most important as well as the most dangerous step of the process. In fact, once the discourse has reached momentum and has become powerful and persuasive, it tends to be a stable source of legitimacy for certain social actions and behaviours.

It is worth stressing that the communicative and discursive approach to collaborative strategy-making is particularly meaningful when dealing with place brands. These embody a communicative function, thus making local discourse reach visibility. According to Jensen, brands are "articulations within discourses", meaning that brands are "articulated in specific vocabularies, and transformed into a social reality" (2007:220) by means of social agents' actions which communicate the emerging discourse within a given institutional context.

The collaborative (inter-organizational) strategy-making is said to trigger at a given moment which is the "moment of opportunity" for an organizational effort (Healey 1997). This is a discontinuity in power relations and in the pattern of interdependence, which favours an awareness about the need to change. In organization studies it is said that the propensity to act collectively comes from a turbulence which represents the exit from a relational equilibrium. According to Carney (1987), such disturbance may origin either from within the ecology in relation to some organizations willing to alter the established interactions' pattern, or from the outside environment.

There is a need to identify the upcoming opportunity and have the capacity to invest on it. Healey (1997) stressed the role of the 'initiators' opening up the process, being the first to "feel" that something has to be done and that there is potential for positive change. These are the leaders of the collaborative process since, seeing the opportunity, they make an effort to shape a network of interests around it. Such leadership is not acquired because of a formal status within the system, but simply by virtue of a visionary and pioneering capacity.

The leaders trigger an informal discussion in order to mobilize interest groups and propel their participation. In an attempt to be as much inclusive as possible, the initiators have to maintain the discussion open and fluid in order to allow new forces and ideas to participate in the construction of meanings. In the discussion the adopted language and style do influence the formation of the discourse, because these are the expression of how crucial issues are generally conceived.

Concerning the mobilization of interests, Healey's approach is complemented by Knoke's (1990) model framing the motivations that push individuals (and individual organizations) to get involved in a collective organization. That is, Knoke outlined a 'motivational model' explaining individual organizations' rationales for collaboration and stakeholders' mobilization. The model includes three distinct approaches explaining how collaborative decisions are made, i.e. the rational choice, the normative conformity and the affective bonding. The propensity to act collectively is 'multi-motivational' since it depends upon a mix of the three types of choice rationale, which are summarised by the following formula

$$D= f(R)*g(N)*h(A)$$

where the individual organizations' propensity to involvement (D) is the result of three functions representing each of the three motivational predispositions to act, such as the rational choice (R), the normative conformity (N) and the affective bonding (A). There is a common thread with Healey's assumptions when stating that the collaborative process goes beyond instrumental rationality and, accordingly, includes moral and emotive dimensions (1997).

Firstly, the rational choice derives from a maximization of an utility function according to which the decision to collectively act comes from a calculation of costs and benefits. In line with neo-classical economics, it relies on the "heroic assumption" (Knoke 1990:29) that individuals have enough knowledge and ability to trace and assess all possible actions' outcomes. Such assumption states that cooperation is chosen on the basis of an assessment of its rationality (see Olson 1965). Secondly, the normative conformity is supposed to shape decisions according to the internalized expectations about what is fair and equitable regardless individual interests. In a condition of bounded rationality, institutions necessarily influence organizations' behaviours, thus making self-reinforcing mechanisms emerge. In case of a system rewarding reciprocity and trust (Ostrom 2007), a collective action is likely to be achieved. In general, social learning, imitation and pressure to conformity align behaviours to what is expected, that is either a collaborative or individualistic attitude.

Thirdly, the affective bonding embodies the emotional component of behaviours which is triggered by the identification of individual organizations with a collectivity. Affective

bonding may drive also to non-rational or irrational decisions, since the purpose is to belong to a group in order to be identified with it and be part of its symbolic representation. The emotional component tends to become relevant along the process of collective organizing, since "people who act together get emotionally bound together" (Lasswell, 1977 cited in Knoke 1990:42). This can be a way to solve group cohesion problems since under external threats the affective commitment can be even more effective than other motivations.

Although informality is necessary to the process success, the discussion has to reach a formal arena where the discussed issues acquire political, administrative and legal legitimacy. In order to avoid weak legitimacy and accountability generally characterising policy networks, the process has to reach a formalization which solves ethical problems emerging from a hardly inclusive involvement of stakeholders. After this stage, the discussion is turned into a strategy by means of an agreement on strategic purposes, the related consequences, costs and benefits, following "a collective imagining of possible courses of action and what this could achieve" (Healey 1997:276). Becoming less fluid and more constrained, the process needs a constant maintenance of consensus because the agreement will inevitably produce more advantages for some stakeholders, while new stakeholders will appear on the scene.

Consequently, the process will approach a further step where a "hard infrastructure of institutional design" is fundamental (Healey 1997:313). At this stage informality is low, while the institutional design defines rules for many aspects of the collective action organization and its membership management. The hard infrastructure is thus a formalization of the process which is supposed to be a guarantee of fairness for all members. However, the hard infrastructure risks imposing a bureaucracy which may challenge members' direct connection and participation in decision-making. That is, "the more detached the members become, the less obligation they feel to support the collectivity, and ultimately the less successful the organization is" (Knoke 1990:15).

Direct connections with stakeholders are favoured by a constant monitoring of membership's pulse. That is, the outcomes of the collaborative strategy and the degree of satisfaction among members have to be monitored in order to undertake a "reflexive critique" (Healey 1997: 281) which might help to keep on the mobilization of interests and commitment. Accordingly, the process flows through feedback loops that recast and reshape the construction of meanings and, thus, the discourse and terms of agreement. Internal and external facts as well as conditions' change impose a reflexive update of the collaborative strategy which, only evolving, succeeds in maintaining consensus and determining a durable collective action.

According to Healey (1997), the outcome of this collaborative spatial strategy-making is twofold. On one hand, it provides a viable solution to collective problems faced by many stakeholders who learn how to trust and understand one each other. On the other hand, this process is said to produce an institutional capacity improving the value of actions within a network. These aspects may contribute to creating a "cultural community" and emancipating network systems from lock-ins constraining development.

Figure 1.3. shows the collaborative process for spatial strategy-making, as resulting from a combination of Healey's and Knoke's analytical frameworks.
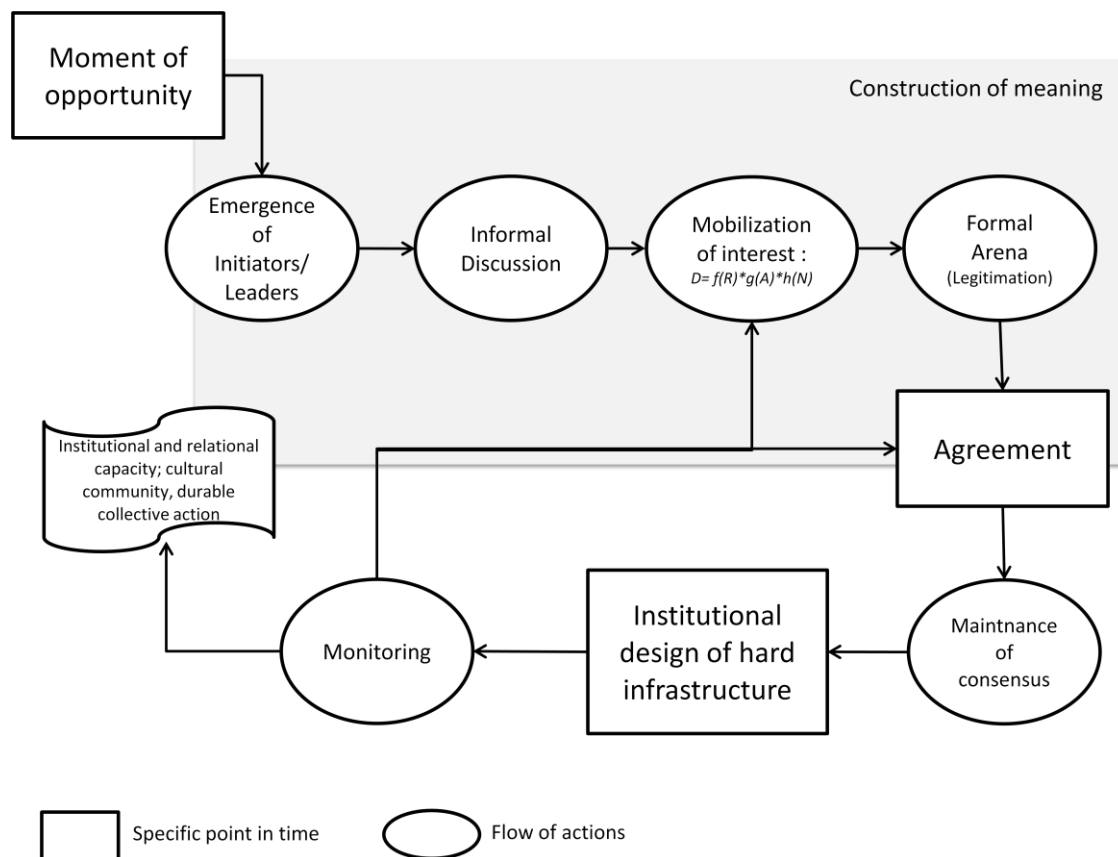
Figure 1.3. The collaborative process for spatial strategy-making
Source: adapted from Healey 1997; Knoke 1990

5. Case study: the NewcastleGateshead brand

NewcastleGateshead is the partnership that around 2000 was set by Newcastle City Council on the north bank of the river Tyne and Gateshead Council on the south bank, in the North East of England. Such collaboration, within the frame of culture-led regeneration, was an answer to the restructuring process started in the 1980s when the decline of many traditional engineering companies determined a loss of jobs and technical expertise (CURDS 2006). Actually the North East started being a "problem region" since after the First World War when the limits of regional specialisation in shipbuilding became evident (Tomaney 1999:6). Beyond the past rivalry between the two Councils (CURDS 2006), NewcastleGateshead cooperation has been deemed "a successful transformation from coal city to culture city" (Minton 2003:18) so that "instead of a small city divided from the opposite town by a river, a decent European city with a river at its centre" emerged (Minton 2003:18).

NewcastleGateshead does not coincide with a functional geography or self-contained functional labour market area, but it is said to make sense from a political perspective because of the history of collaboration between the two councils "over branding, image, culture and other issues" (Seex et al. 2007:29). From a functional perspective, in fact, the two councils have important economic links with other areas, e.g. the links between Newcastle and North Tyneside (Seex et al. 2007).

From an economic viewpoint, there is a complementarity between the two partners. While in Newcastle there is a dominance of finance and business services, information technology, healthcare and education, in Gateshead there is a dominance of manufacturing, construction and retail (1NG 2010). Tourism industry has grown and NewcastleGateshead has become a popular city-break and cultural tourism destination (1NG 2010:71), recording 19,248 full time equivalent jobs in 2009 (NGI 2010). Newcastle and Gateshead's dependence upon public sector jobs is evident (1NG 2011), while local business stock is relatively weak (Newcastle City Council 2011), as shown for example by the number of VAT registered businesses which is the lowest in UK (Bailey 2006). Even before current global crisis, Newcastle city-region's performance was worse than national average regarding productivity, employment growth, percentage of higher educated workers, R&D expenditure and number of start-ups (Urbact 2010). Accordingly, the need to enhance the reputation as the right place where to create and grow a business is currently claimed (Newcastle City Council 2011).

National and local contexts have been rapidly evolving, thus posing new socio-economic challenges. In 2010 the Coalition Government announced dramatic public budget cuts to which North East cities are realistically vulnerable because of the concentration of public sector jobs (Centre for Cities 2011). Northern Rock, Sage, Nissan and Findus are only few companies that have cut jobs in the area so that the unemployment rate grew from 3.3% to 5.2% in 2008-2010 (Urbact 2010). Within a context of austerity and uncertainty, the area is experiencing "unprecedented changes" (Newcastle City Council 2011:147), meaning institutional changes e.g. the abolition of the regional development agency One North East and the Localism Bill devolving power to local authorities and neighbourhoods, and financial challenges e.g. the crisis of the bank Northern Rock along with a loss of credit for urban development and, as said, the public spending cuts. Despite this, there is the need "to maintain the momentum to capitalise on culture and raise the game on services and skills" (1NG 2010:71).

The rapid change makes NewcastleGateshead a good case to investigate the process of collaborative strategy-making approaching further stages of development and characterised by high uncertainty, after ten years of inter-municipal cooperation. The empirical investigation was carried out by means of a primary and secondary research which took place from January to May 2011. Beside a secondary research, twelve in-depth semi-structured interviews[20] were carried out with local and regional organizations which have been involved in the process of collaboration across the river Tyne.

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[20] In the text the interviews are numbered according to their temporal sequence.

5.1. The process of collaboration: findings

The 'NewcastleGateshead' label came into existence in 2000 with the foundation of the NewcastleGateshead Initiative, but its roots are traced back in the 1960s when, alongside the decline of traditional industries, the availability of national public subsidies to arts in UK outlined the tracks for a culture-led regeneration process (Comunian and Sacco 2006). A regeneration of the natural environment, i.e. the river, and a city development have been at the core of the process. In Newcastle such regeneration started in the late 1980s when the Tyne & Wear Development Corporation (TWDC) was set to improve the quality of Newcastle and of the north bank of the river Tyne, including the Quayside and the business park in the city (I1; I3). Although geographically belonging to Tyne & Wear, Gateshead rejected the TWDC and, at this time, the two councils were distant and following distinct routes of development (I1; I3). While in the 1990s Newcastle focused on urban redevelopment involving private sectors, Gateshead was proactive in retail development and, especially, cultural projects, reaching a hype with the as much iconic as contrasted Angel of the North (I1). In contrast, Newcastle was not able to exploit national funds for culture because of a twofold reason. On one hand Newcastle was lacking of space for urban cultural projects (e.g. a concert hall), on the other hand, as a consequence of an uncontrolled urban development in the 1970s (Hetherington 2011), there were an "anti-development atmosphere" and a weak political leadership not keen to support big projects (I1).

Differently, Gateshead demonstrated to have a strong political willingness and ambitions (I3) as well as availability of lands and a "commitment not to be subsumed by Newcastle" (I1). The Council demonstrated an entrepreneurial attitude and ability to achieve national government's resources, and "for the first time in history Gateshead saw the opportunity to take the lead" (I1) by means of outstanding cultural projects. The entrepreneurial capacity of Gateshead Council made it the leader in cultural projects development, although Newcastle was the historical and "natural leader" of the area (I1). The opportunity to lead the process arose from understanding that culture and visual arts would have been a significant source of resources. These resources were aimed at a democratisation of culture (Bailey et al. 2004), at improving the perception of arts and encouraging people's involvement (NGI 2009). The idea that culture would have played a crucial role in regeneration in the North East was at the core of the process of change (I7).

Around 2000 Newcastle and Gateshead decided to produce a joint bid for the 2008 European Capital of Culture, an opportunity to achieve a huge amount of national funds. The rationale of such collaboration was reaching an appropriate size (I2), also in terms of population, to become a "hub" for the whole region (I8). The joint bid made an "economic sense" showing the potential of a medium-size city according to a complementarity between the two partners (I4). On one hand, Gateshead had completed and planned many cultural projects and had gained skills in bidding for national funds, as a result of an engagement in public arts (I8). On the other hand, Newcastle had fundamental assets for constructing a 'cultural capital' such as two universities, a historic city centre, several minor cultural venues and, not least, a national reputation (I1). Then, in 2000 the liberal democrats were elected to lead Newcastle City Council and a new "pro-development and keen to partnership" political environment was established (I1).

The bid was a "turning point" and the formal partnership agreed in 1998 became in 2001 "an effective partnership in response to an opportunity" (I1). It was agreed that a common strategy had to be pursued and the NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI) was established to work on the bid, by relying on public and private support (I10). NGI was in charge of making decisions, while the two Councils gave up direct control on strategy-making (I8). NGI arranged a series of large scale events in an attempt "to put the place on the map" (I8) and focused on delivering a distinctive strategy based on local characteristics (Comunian and Sacco 2006). This was possible also thanks to media that turned the bid into a "soap opera" (I7), by creating a "photogenic space" which produced images in national consciousness (I7).

Although NewcastleGateshead was deemed a potential winner, the bid failed in 2003. At this time there was the need to maintain momentum in order to capitalise on culture-led regeneration. Consequently, a new project turn started with the launch of Culture10 which included a plan for keeping investing in culture with the support of One North East's and local authorities' resources (I7). NGI continued to play a role as destination marketing agency, promoting membership among local tourism businesses which have been keen to pay a fee in exchange for NGI promotional activities and services such as advertising and communication targeting specific tourism sectors (I10). Despite much disappointment for the failed bid, the benefits of this phase were easily recognized by politicians and by the whole local community (I8). In addition, tourism shifted to a value of £1.2 billion in the area starting from scratch, while the impact of NGI activities have been monitored accurately in order to provide evidence of NGI's contribution to local economic development (I10).

In 2006 the OECD published a report into Newcastle and North East economic perspective which listed criticalities of the regional economic and institutional system. This report focused on the primary role played by public sector but, at the same time, highlighted its weak contribution to innovation and economic growth. OECD was extremely critical of leadership and institutional capacity at regional, city-regional and local level (Seex et al. 2007). One year later a report commissioned by the Newcastle City Council identified the whole Tyneside and its local authorities as a functioning labour market area with relatively self-contained economic flows and, on the other hand, the NewcastleGateshead unit as a meaningful level for institutional collaboration, thus complicating the framework of economic planning (Seex et al. 2007). The conclusion was that NewcastleGateshead was the realistically workable geography in terms of delivery capacity, even though not being "the first best" economic geography. Accordingly, the report suggested a strengthening of the "umbrella" role of the Newcastle-Gateshead partnership in favour of further developments of the regional urban core. The idea of collaboration across the river Tyne was, thus, reinforced and elevated to a sort of *mantra* on the basis of the long-lasting experience of cross-boundaries collaboration.

This discussion was ahead of facts that recast the context for the NewcastleGateshead organization. The financial crisis has put the system under pressure along with a re-affirmation of competition as dominant model in UK, that is "stimuli for collaboration are now low as well as the incentives, while the cost of collaboration is high" (I1). Government budget cuts are significant and the problem of public funds scarcity is evident (I8). In addition, the speed of change and of public spending cuts challenges decision-making and makes "ambitious choices, such as the pursuit of collaboration and partnership, very difficult" (I8).

Some sustain that the public spending cuts urge to recast the collaboration from a geographical point of view, until shaping a Tyneside partnership in order to pool additional resources (I3). Some others argue that there is a problem of sustainability of NewcastleGateshead because the local communities are not keen to contribute to it, "as demonstrated by Culture10 which was highly participated until 2008 because of the abundance of resources. Since 2008 the resources decreased following the crisis and, consequently, the general interest became scarce" (I7).

In the second half of the 2000s, two organizations worthy of attention emerged. In 2005 Newcastle Science City was established, a national brand aiming at making science vocation of UK cities visible nationally and internationally. In 2009 Newcastle Science Company Ltd was established by the Newcastle City Council, Newcastle University and One North East in order to fulfil the Science City vision focusing on science and business innovation in the fields of ageing and health, sustainability, stem cells and regenerative medicine, which represent the research excellence in Newcastle (I6). Despite an increasing coordination with NGI, "the project shut out Gateshead which is closer to Northumbria University (in Newcastle) with a focus on arts and design" (I1).

In 2008 the NE1 business improvement district company was established for promoting and supporting the businesses located in Newcastle city centre. Financially sustained by local companies, NE1 is in charge of marketing, events management, activities for better quality in the city centre, such as street rangers, street cleaning, and business lobbying. The NE1 gives an answer to "the historic feeling that the NewcastleGateshead initiatives were designed mainly for the promotion of Gateshead (...) which is too focused on culture, and too little on business" (I5). In addition, NE1 attempts "to stand out of the public local governance and, accordingly, out of the many layers of bureaucracy reducing the efficiency of the initiatives" (I5).

In 2009 the partnership between Newcastle and Gateshead approached a further step with the establishment of 1NG[21], which is a city development corporation in charge of producing a joint economic strategy focused on urban physical regeneration. This is said to "prove an evolution of the collaboration between the two councils which today want to develop according to a shared strategy" (I8). In 2010 the 1PLAN was delivered as a "spontaneous evolution" and "a pragmatic answer" to the rapid change (I11). This is an economic masterplan which "shapes the profile of one medium-size city" pursuing a sustainable development over the next twenty years (I4). It consists of "an exciting place-making strategy for the urban core of NewcastleGateshead" (1NG 2010:5), and it goes beyond tourism, thus extending the collaboration to other economic sectors such as low-carbon industries, science and technology, culture and creativity, and business services,

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[21] It is worth reporting that in September 2011 Newcastle and Gateshead Councils decided to abolish the 1NG. The two Councils sustained this does not imply a decrease in their commitment to their partnership. However, former board member David Faulkner (the previous leader of Newcastle City Council) suggested "this is a backwards step for economic development. It reveals muddled thinking and a lack of ambition by the councils. 1NG will be missed. It has done a good job in difficult economic circumstances. It is just the sort of cross-border function that the coalition thinks should be developed to provide excellent services while sharing costs. In contrast, the Gateshead Council leader stressed that "we will now strengthen the Gateshead and Newcastle partnership further to attract the businesses we need to deliver jobs and investment for the future" (http://www.journallive.co.uk/north-east-news/todays-news/2011/09/29/multi-million-pound-regeneration-firm-1ng-to-close-down-61634-29505985/2/. Accessed: November 2011).

thus "providing the building blocks to business winning in NewcastleGateshead" (1NG 2010: 33).

Building on the 2006 OECD report, the plan is to deal with the fact that "in terms of output, growth and job creation NewcastleGateshead hasn't performed as well or developed as quickly as other core cities" (1NG 2010:15). This reflects a weak business leadership also due to a small number of indigenous large companies in the area which left room to public sector's dominance (I1). As a matter of fact, "developing an effective business system" is deemed crucial and currently there is an attempt to sustain NewcastleGateshead as the geographical unit ensuring "a good supply of investable propositions for inward investments" (Newcastle City Council 2011:33).

On one hand the financial crisis is said to push towards a stronger collaboration across the river and, accordingly, the first reaction of the two councils to the economic downturn was providing additional funds to the NGI (I8). However, in a recession there is an even higher need to monitor and continuously provide evidence of the collaboration's impacts and benefits and, along with the increased complexity of the partnership's aims, this task becomes much harder over time (I8). In addition, when financial pressures are high, demonstrating the impact of culture which has been at the core of the partnership, is even harder (I9). The challenge is currently "to define a common thread among all the initiatives going on in Newcastle and Gateshead, thus aligning actions and communication" (I4), while there is the need to tell a multi-faceted story about NewcastleGateshead not only to visitors, as the NGI has successfully done so far, but also to residents, students and investors" (I10).

Table 1.3. summarizes the facts impacting on the process of collaboration between the two councils.

Table 1.3. Facts shaping the cross-border collaboration

1960s-70s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
Coal mines closed "Can-do spirit" in Newcastle – uncontrolled urban development Start of UK public subsidies to Arts	**1987** retail development in Gateshead (Metrocentre) **1987** Tyne & Wear Development Corporation – urban planning for Newcastle Northern Rock expansion – financing cultural projects 80 works of art commissioned by Gateshead Council	**1990** Garden Festival in Gateshead **1995** Northern Arts - the cultural programme **1996** successful bid for UK region of Visual Arts **1998** Angel of the North in Gateshead **1998** Newcastle and Gateshead partnership **1999** One North East Regional Development Agency	**2000** Newcastle Gateshead Initiative (NGI) **2000** Bid for 2008 European Capital of Culture – *"Beyond Imagination: A Blueprint for Change"* **2001** Millennium Bridge (Gateshead) **2002** Baltic (Gateshead) **2003** Fail of 2008 ECC bid; Launch of Culture 10 **2003** Bridging NewcastleGateshead **2004** Sage Gateshead **2005** Newcastle Science City **Since 2005** about 12 cultural urban projects in Newcastle **2006** World Summit on Arts & Culture **2006** OECD report **2007** Tourism Tyne & Wear **2008** NE1 Business District **2009** 1NG City Development Corporation	**2010** 1PLAN **2010** One North East abolished (March 2012) **2010** Newcastle Gateshead Local Economic Partnership – rejected **2011** Bridging NewcastleGateshead abolished **2012** Gateshead acquiring the status of City?

5.2. The NewcastleGateshead Brand: findings

The NewcastleGateshead brand is rooted geographically in the wider North East region and historically in the industrial society which locally determined a sense of identity characterised by heritage, humble roots and an open and friendly attitude (Middleton and Freestone 2008). In the post-industrial context the North East has been linked to such negative perceptions that the regional image became a barrier to development (I9). As a consequence, there was broad agreement on the need to propel an image change (I9). This was pursued by the local community by taking a distance from the past and "wiping out the old industry" (I12).

An image shift was triggered by the Angel of the North, a twenty metres sculpture standing in Gateshead (Figure 2.3). This was an ambitious project aiming at change, by relying on local culture and demonstrating that change was possible in the North (I7). This was a controversial project though, and a press storm recreated a charming and passionate story about it by reporting the many engineering problems as well as the "Stop the Angel" campaign promoted by Conservatives claiming that the Angel was a waste of money (I7). After the successful opening, the Angel was so visible and famous that it became the most iconic symbol in Northern England, thus persuading regional

community that culture was an important lever for re-launching development (I7). At regional level, the One North East campaign 'Passionate People Passionate Places' echoed such success, by playing the role of a regional umbrella brand.

Figure 2.3. The Angel of the North
Source: the author

Within the regional context 'NewcastleGateshead' stood for culture and raised confidence and pride during the bid process (I8). Afterwards this label improved the reputation of tourism destination, thus becoming a "symbol of success" (I10). Currently, however, NewcastleGateshead is "in a flux" because of the need to become a holistic brand, thus going beyond the destination brand role. On one hand there is a need to fill the gap left by the abolition of the One North East which provided a successful campaign working as a "regional glue" (I11). On the other hand there is an increasing mismatch between the brand and the communities of potential participants. Accordingly, it is said that "if NGI has done a lot for culture and tourism, it can succeed in targeting also residents, students and investors" (I10). Local stakeholders increasingly consider managing the brand reputation in a more consistent way as necessary (I2; I4; I5; I6; I11) so that currently the challenge is re-launching a common interest in the brand since all actors are to have a clear and renewed motivation to participate in it (I11).

The brand is currently characterised by a contradiction. While the brand conveys a message referring to become one place – this is mirrored, for example, by the 1NG and 1PLAN - there are two separate identities, i.e. Newcastle and Gateshead, that are not merging in terms of sense of place. "The appellation of city is creeping into usage" (Hetherington 2011:10) since many official documents and media represent NewcastleGateshead as a city, "a city separated by a river" (I11) and a capital city. Also the powerful visual identity of NewcastleGateshead built on the iconic bridges linking the two councils (Figure 3.3), has been suggesting a 'place-making' process (Warnaby and Medway 2008).

However, Newcastle is deemed "the real brand", being recognized as such at local and national level (I3; I10), while Gateshead inhabitants are proud of their own town identity and, just like Newcastle inhabitants, consider NewcastleGateshead as simply "a marketing initiative packaging a destination offer" (I10). Sometimes the brand is not understood or accepted (I11) because "at the end of the day residents are from one council and not from NewcastleGateshead and this is going to be a challenge" (I4). That is, when speaking of NewcastleGateshead people do not understand what this is about, even though there is sense of pride for the iconic buildings and related events. On one hand it is said that "the lack of brand recognition is not relevant since this is just a title, while the underlying projects have to be credible" (I8), on the other hand it is claimed that there is "no emotional attachment to NewcastleGateshead which has failed in terms of consumer-relationship marketing" in regards to internal audiences (I5).
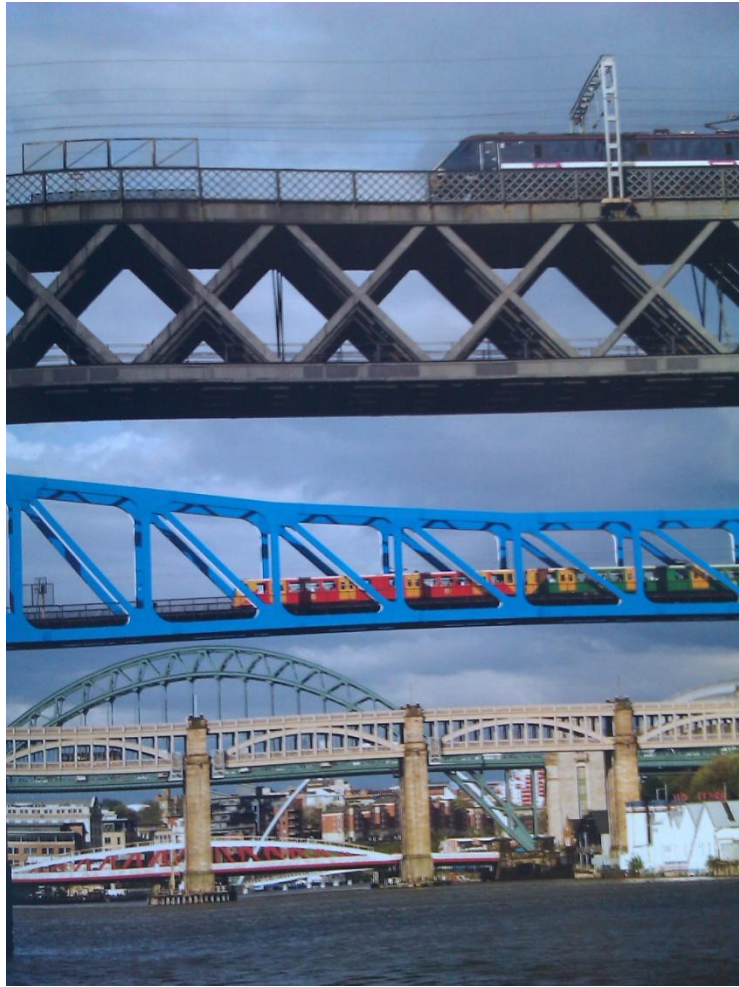
Figure 3.3. The bridges linking Newcastle and Gateshead
Source: Hetherington 2011

The two councils are committed to keep their own political and administrative identities (I11). The narrative has been focusing on "working together for mutual competitive advantage and driving the economic growth" (1NG 2010:21), by moving at a strategic level rather than at an operative one (e.g. urban services provision). Both councils are constantly looking for "a balance between the partnership benefits and the loss of control on the process" (I8). It is a 'symbolic marriage' (Miles 2005) whose partners maintain distinct identities which should be kept visible to tax-payers composing two separate constituencies (I12).

5.3. Discussion
The whole process of collaboration can be divided into three main phases, i.e. the bid, the post-bid and the transition phase (Table 2.3). The first phase was focused on the definition of the bid for the European Capital of Culture which represented the moment of opportunity for starting the cross-border collaboration (see Figure 4.3). There was a common interest in achieving national funding and the two councils recognized their

mutual resource interdependence according to which individual bids would have been unsuccessful. Gateshead had got lands for urban development projects, political ambitions, an entrepreneurial attitude, skills in the design of national bids and the capacity to manage high quality cultural projects. On the other hand, Newcastle had important city assets for the bid such as universities, cultural venues, the old city centre and the hospital, as well as a reputation regionally and nationally. According to technical skills and visionary capacity, Gateshead led the bid process, even though Newcastle had been the regional leader historically. Evidently, in a collaborative process the power is delivered by the resources owned and mobilized by the involved actors.

Table 2.3. Framing the collaborative process

Phase	Motivations	Discourse	NG Brand
The Bid	Rational choice	Public arts Visual arts Culture for all Culture for regeneration	The Brand of the Bid The Brand of Change
Post-Bid	Rational choice Normative conformity	Cooperation Public arts Culture for all/for regeneration Culture for tourism	Destination Brand
Transition	Normative conformity Rational choice	Need for private initiatives "Business winning system" Strong, legitimate, accountable leadership	Umbrella Brand

In this phase the motivations favouring a collective action were mainly related to the rational choice. The need to reach a critical mass in terms of population size and assets was clear and deemed necessary to determine a significant urban unit capable of defining a successful bid. This motivation was so strong that succeeded in breaking the institutional barriers historically constraining cross-border collaboration, i.e. the rivalry between the two councils.

The first phase was rooted in the precedent decades starting the culture-led regeneration in the region. This had triggered the emergence of a discourse based on the relevance of culture and public arts for socio-economic regeneration in the North. The process went through a proper construction of meanings built on the notion of culture, regeneration and public authorities' engagement. Accordingly, these became the values of the NewcastleGateshead brand. The brand was designed as 'the brand of the bid' which embodied a deep sense of change pursued in the whole region.

The post-bid phase was pushed forward by the need to keep capitalising on culture and working for a socio-economic change, despite the bid fail. That is, there was recognition of the fact that the partnership had to evolve because it was outlining the path of development for the region. Beside the rational choice characterising the first phase, the normative conformity played a role in confirming the validity of the collaborative arrangement. The cooperation crossing the administrative borders was recognized as the most appropriate, and even 'natural', organizational unit for triggering regeneration.

That is, cooperation between the two councils became part of a collective mind-set, meaning a shared set of values, causal beliefs and problem perceptions, reinforcing the partnership. Accordingly, the brand became a destination brand in line with the strong commitment of the NGI to improve the tourism industry in the area. The NGI was successful in maintaining the consensus within the tourism community, by offering membership incentives such as promotional and business services and by providing evidence of its impact.

Currently, NewcastleGateshead is experiencing a third phase, i.e. the transition phase. This is related to the evolution of the discourse about the area. The 2006 OECD report suggested a new discourse on the region by means of a critical assessment of the socio-economic regional performance. This was followed by initiatives highlighting the emergence of multiple constituencies that, although relevant in terms of local development, were not fully represented by the NewcastleGateshead brand. A new construction of meanings has been carried out by focusing on the idea that private actors should play a bigger role in the region to build a 'business winning system' fostered by a strong, legitimate and accountable leadership. There is an on-going change in the logic of interactions and negotiations shaping the collaboration across the river, and a new equilibrium is sought involving an enlarged and renewed set of stakeholders.

In terms of dominant discourse, it is worth stressing two elements which are becoming source of legitimacy in strategy-making. Firstly, there is an on-going shift from a focus on culture improving the urban profile and quality of life in the region, to a focus on business and the need to attract companies and embed start-ups. Secondly, the claimed need to face uncertainty by means of a strong, legitimate and accountable leader may clash with complex organizational arrangements crossing administrative borders, where the leadership is necessarily shared by two distinct councils. In addition, external forces e.g. the Localism Bill, do propel the emergence of a new element in local discourse. There is a chance that this change in the discourse might decrease the perceived usefulness of the collective brand so that the inclination to sustain NewcastleGateshead might reduce eventually.

However, the choice of maintaining the collaboration was made and the partnership approached a further step. The collaboration was extended to the definition of an economic strategy for NewcastleGateshead, i.e. the 1PLAN. This together with the 1NG[22] constitute the hard infrastructure of the collective organization which aims at strengthening and enlarging the meaning of NewcastleGatehsead. The motivations pushing towards a collective action are both rational and normative. From a rational perspective, the critical mass issue keeps being crucial even though resources and incentives to collaboration have decreased. However, there is a widespread feeling that the spatial unit capable of re-launching the area, by attracting businesses and embedding new industries, is no longer NewcastleGateshead, while the Tyneside region is. Accordingly, the rational motivation is weakening, while normative conformity plays a

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[22] See the precedent footnote reporting about Newcastle and Gateshead Councils abolishing the 1NG in September 2011.

major role in maintaining the partnership. In fact, the dominant discourse is that NewcastleGateshead is not a functional geography but it is the workable one, that is the one realistically capable of shared decision-making. The organization is thus turning into an institution, while the existence of collaborative arrangements rooted in the local history of regeneration seems to become the strongest motivation to collaborate.

The brand has currently to become an umbrella brand and the NGI is now in charge of this transformation. Facing this transition is challenging because of the need to define a new organizational identity characterised by a renewed and expanded agency, vision and symbology. That is, the legacy of this brand has to change and become wider but, as literature suggests, once an organizational identity comes into existence this is institutionalized so that any change requires breaking existing institutions. That is, a new process of collective action should be started and a new moment of opportunity is likely to be necessary.

This transformation is challenging also because of the weaknesses of the brand. NewcastleGateshead, in fact, missed developing affective bonding, meaning that the local community has not been developing awareness of and loyalty to the brand. This was said not to be a problem by many interviewees but, arguably, when the rational and normative motivations are weakening, the development of affective bonds may be crucial to helping the collective brand to survive and giving it the chance to renew its legacy. The aligning process, i.e. the brand politicking, which has been undertaken by the NGI in an attempt to enlarge the brand membership, is likely to be challenged by a scarce recognition of 'NewcastleGateshead' added-value from local communities (other than the tourism local community). Consequently, the brand sustainability can be negatively impacted by those centripetal forces currently produced by the stakeholders 'feeling excluded' and far from the brand.

The lack of affective bonding derives from a difficulty in dealing with and managing multiple identities. In fact, the two councils have triggered the partnership at a strategic level, thus avoiding the pervasiveness of the collective brand at an operative level (e.g. urban services like transport or waste management) which is, instead, highly visible to the internal audiences. This can be explained in light of the fact that NewcastleGateshead is not a functional geography and, accordingly, it is not necessarily the best unit to manage operative functions. As a matter of fact, it is a geographical unit chosen for contingent marketing purposes (i.e. the bid).

As a result, residents have not familiarized with the idea of living in NewcastleGateshead - this has never been part of the strategy - even though this would have been the basis for developing a sense of belonging to this imagined space and an affective bonding that would have helped to face the transformative phases. This has been functional to the preservation of two distinct political and administrative identities, the Newcastle City Council and the Gateshead Council, committed to demonstrate their individual actions and impact to their respective constituencies.

The need for brand affective bonding is going to be evident alongside the transition phase since the capacity to monitor the results of the cross-border collaboration - and thus the strength of the rational motivation - is going to be weaker than before. In the past the success of NewcastleGateshead had been easily proved. Firstly, during the bid process the stunning media coverage was clearly seen as breaking with the long-lasting

silence on the North East and the experience was deemed a success despite the failed bid. Secondly, the post-bid brand performance was monitored by the NGI providing statistics on the growth of tourism sectors, whose performance was easily compared with the past when tourism was almost inexistent. The transition phase, differently, will be challenged during the monitoring step since, alongside an expansion of the brand coverage, which is related to the aim of transforming the brand into an umbrella brand, the complexity of the undertaken actions will impose higher complexity in the measurement of impacts. This will challenge the capacity to provide evidence of the importance of keeping on with a collective action on a rational point of view and, hence, the mobilization of interests will need to strengthen alternative rationales of involvement.

Figure 4.3. NewcastleGateshead: The cross-border collaborative process of branding
Source: the author's elaboration

6. Conclusion

This paper attempted to analyse forms of organization that are capable of managing and dealing with relational spatialities resulting from on-going negotiations emerging in a networking space. The aim was providing a framework to focus on the process underlying the formation of an organizational identity across administrative borders, pursuing urban regeneration and socio-economic revitalization. This contribution fills the gap concerning the analysis of the process of interaction among stakeholders, thus outlining how they come to an agreement on strategies and actions. In fact, the paper was in charge of explaining what are the mechanisms driving multiple stakeholders to behave as a collective organization under a brand label.

The collective action was used to explain the formation of a collectively acting unit in relation to Healey's model explaining the phases of the collaborative process for collective strategy-making. Complemented by Knoke's multi-motivational model, the resulting framework was applied to the interpretation of the process of collaboration across municipal administrative borders, i.e. the case of NewcastleGateshead brand. Accordingly, we discussed the organizational pattern behind the brand, the process of interaction and negotiation, the brand agency evolving alongside the process, and the related challenges.

The discussion highlighted the opportunity to treat place brands as organizational identities because of their central organizing function. On one hand, the brand is characterised by the elements that constitute an organization, such as multiple stakeholders, strategic framework, vision and symbology which tend to inspire stakeholders' behaviours within the network. On the other hand, we saw that, beyond the visual identity with which brands are often identified (e.g. the logo), there is an evolving brand structure made of (power) relationships among a huge set of stakeholders.

This paper contributes to the discussion on relational spatialities. We have to consider not only administrative and functional spatialities, but also those relational spatialities that emerge for marketing and branding purposes. Although the analysed case does not represent a functional geography, by means of a process of communication and construction of meanings, a new relational space came into existence and created a new space of action. Consequently, the construction of functional links across administrative borders was fastened and strengthened by the construction of a "branded" relational space. In line with literature on relational spatialities, the brand under scrutiny built a legacy of meaning such that any evolution of the underlying collective organization necessarily has to deal with the set of meanings and values associated with the imagined geography.

As a matter of fact, relational spatialities can be created in an attempt to market an area in those cases in which neither administrative nor functional spaces can be successfully marketed because of their lack of appeal in the "market of geographies". This does not mean that these relational spatialities exist only as visual entities, are just logos or promotional spots. Rather, the analysed case showed that such relational spaces become organizational identities which are crucial to framing a strategy-making for local and regional development. That is, beneath collective brands, complex territorialities can emerge outside of institutional demarcations.

However, it is worth suggesting that 'branded' relational spaces may suffer of a lack of sense of place. In fact, though being organizational identities, relational spaces might not be perceived as such by local communities. Hardly these are aware of the formation of a new relational geography which, though being an experienced and lived space, tends to be subsumed by the participating administrative geographies. Hardly, in fact, the involved stakeholders are willing to foster a proper 'place-making' (to be intended as the creation of a new spatial identity) since this would be at the expense of individual place (and political) identities. This can be a positive aspect of branded relational spatialities since individual places can benefit from them without being weakened or blurred by the emerging brands. On the other hand, a lack of sense of place characterising the relational space may challenge its sustainability, especially when a turbulence coming from internal or external environments imposes organizational transformations. In fact, under the impact of contextual change the agency of the branded relational space might not be able to recompose behind an 'empty label' so that the maintenance of the collective organization is at risk.

Further research is still needed to better define relational spaces in order to understand their meaning and nature (Massey 2004a). This paper raised the issue of branded relational spaces for marketing purposes and, thus, enriched the discussion on the relational spatialities by casting light on a different type of 'relation' between places. This relation is stated by an on-going construction of meanings and the communication of an imagined relational space. Nevertheless, this paper has limitations since it raised this issue without providing further analytical insight and it relied on one single case study. Accordingly, there is a need to undertake a systematic theoretical research to focus on diverse typologies of relations and relational spatialities, as well as to undertake an empirical research casting further light on the organizational characteristics.

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Chapter Four

Can a Network of Places be a Brand? The case of Val di Cornia[23]

Abstract - In the literature there is a significant gap concerning the cooperative approach to place branding. This implies to think of branding in the space of a network of places cooperating for economic and political revitalization. Accordingly, the Italian case of *Val di Cornia* will be analysed in order to understand the extent to which a network can be shaped, conceived and perceived as a brand, by highlighting the contribution of multiple stakeholders to its formation. Furthermore, the hypothesis of network brands as viable tools to determine re-branding effects in declining areas will be discussed. Conventional variables of place branding, i.e. brand image, brand reality and brand identity, will be interpreted in light of the relational paradigm and looked at through the so called "relationship eye-glasses". The result is twofold. On one hand, the network brand is said to be capable of producing significant re-branding effects. Accordingly, from a normative perspective, network branding strategies are suggested to be considered as a viable way to re-brand geographies. On the other hand, by building on the relational reading of brands, a dynamic conceptual model of brands is proposed, highlighting the mechanisms according to which multiple stakeholders mutually influence their relationships with the brand.

Keywords - place branding, network brand, relationship marketing, social network analysis

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[23] The contents of this working paper were published as follows: a) Pasquinelli, C. (2011) "Place Branding and Cooperation: Can a network of places be a brand?" in Pike, A. Brands and Branding Geographies. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 230-247. This paper focuses on the relational paradigm and its contribution to the definition of a dynamic model of brand formation; b) Bellini, N., Pasquinelli, C. (2011) 'Il Brand Reticolare. Strumenti di Analisi per costruzione di un Marchio di Luogo', Mercati e Competitività **3**: 65-84. This paper focuses on the methodology and the use of social network analysis for an investigation of place brands and branding issues.

1. Introduction

In light of distinct trends of discussion, place branding can be intended as an approach "to integrat[ing], guid[ing] and focus[ing] place management", while the change of place perception and the "creation of place identity" are only "the simplest level" (Kavaratzis 2005:334). Beyond any definition, it is worth considering the scale at which place branding is analysed. The existing literature focuses on cities, regions and nations, whereas a significant gap concerning brands for networks of places remains to be filled. Networks are here intended as systems of places cooperating for development, throughout a pooling of resources and the pursuit of economies of scale.

While cities may be strong brands thanks to their richness in assets and diversity, the areas lacking leading urban centres and characterized by minor economic patterns struggle in being 'on the map'. Indeed, to attract and retain investors, visitors and talents, small and peripheral communities need sources of diversity to trigger an economic revitalization. Concerning the rural US, Cai (2002) underlined the need to achieve a critical mass across multiple communities, thus suggesting a cooperative approach to destination branding. Accordingly, Lee et al. argued that not only "by encouraging a single and unified sense of identity in a rural area, the territory can be marketed as a tourist destination and for consumption of niche products", but also "the region can be marketed to itself as a way of creating social capital since a stronger sense of shared identity will foster trust and cooperation" (2005:273).

The point is network brands can help break path dependency by providing visibility to an innovative vision from both political and economic perspective. That is, by encompassing multiple towns, the network brand can be a framework where coordination is pursued and diversity spills out. Networks of places may trigger an image change by recasting a new space fuelling imagery. This is a fundamental issue for old industrial regions where the decline of socio-economic and cultural systems compels to reconsider the place identity. For instance, to cope with the decline of coal and iron industry, the Ruhr city-region chose cooperation involving forty-five local governments coordinated by the inter-communal agency in charge of marketing the network (Kunzmann 2004). According to the 'flexible functional boundaries' theorized by Kunzmann (2004), the Ruhr brand involves increasing towns willing to cooperate under the label *Ruhr Metropolis*, capitalizing on regional culture and the related economic potential (see Chapter Two).

To deal with the legacy of deindustrialization, many cities have focused on branding in order to shift from a negative industrial image to a post-industrial one. Glasgow, Bilbao, Turin, and Pittsburgh are only few examples. All these cases demonstrate the fundamental role of the city centre and the urban dimension alongside the attempt to present "their freshest faces" (Gomez 1998:110). In fact, regeneration and iconic projects, cultural or sport events, and crucial urban resources like universities capable of mobilizing talents for new tracks of development, are all viable 'tools' for change within urban contexts. How can a peripheral non-urban area cope with deindustrialization challenges? The networking of existent material and immaterial resources including imagery is here suggested as a viable way to carry out post-industrial branding in marginal areas.

This paper will investigate a network of places cooperating under an umbrella brand, i.e. the network brand. Usually intended as cross-sector brands spanning several functional contexts (Therkelsen and Halkier 2008), 'umbrellas' are here considered from a spatial perspective. This means the analysis of brands crossing institutional borders and, consequently, spanning cooperating municipalities in need for re-launching development. A relational reading of umbrella brands implies a network representation, giving a chance to analyse and evaluate interconnections among the involved communities. In addition, there is the opportunity to assess the extent to which branding a network of places can foster re-branding effects for the area by means of a definition of a new space nurturing local identity. This implies to reflect on the way in which a network can capitalize on material and immaterial relationships in order to change the reputation and the images of those places involved in the cooperation.

Accordingly this paper attempts to tackle the following research questions:

(i) To what extent a network of places can be a brand? That is, to what extent a network of places can be shaped (brand reality), conceived (brand identity), perceived (brand image) as a brand?

(ii) To what extent network brands can foster re-branding effects?

The case study of *Val di Cornia* will test the capacity of the network brand to produce re-branding effects, by changing the image of a rural area hosting a declining old industry. Originally being an important industrial area in Italy, Val di Cornia is composed of five municipalities, led by Piombino town where steel factories historically provided jobs and economic security to locals. Since the 1980s a crisis has arisen, and this paper will investigate the capacity of the Val di Cornia brand to re-launch the place image by shaping a new space nurturing the local identity. Accordingly, the emergence of the *Val di Cornia* brand will be tested and its 'creators' will be analysed in light of the industrial crisis meta-narrative (Somers 1994).

2. Place brand: static *versus* dynamic reading

Concepts from product and corporate branding are critically adapted to places by stressing the intrinsic differences between the two branded objects, i.e. on one hand the product or the corporation, on the other hand the place. It is said that "place branding differs significantly from conventional products and product branding" because of the place identity (Therkelsen and Halkier 2008:161). However, it seems that the rationale is offering the place as the best 'package' possible to the relevant targets, being residents, tourists, investors or rather all of them. Certainly, place identity plays a vital role, and often branding efforts consist in entangling the place in its positive or, even better, unique characteristics. However, by treating places as 'packed' objects, brands end up being mere static entities confined to a set of attractive features and selected symbols.

Alongside the 'packaging' process, place identity is supposed to guide branding, since the lack of rootedness in reality will produce unsustainable brands, even provoking negative reactions across local communities (Greenberg 2008). For this reason, local authenticity and the *genius loci* are at the core of discussion. However, in the pursuit of

distinctiveness, the selection of authentic brand components may 'freeze' the place into becoming a closed set of symbols and characteristics, i.e. a static brand. Paradoxically, in the effort to 'package' distinctiveness, cities end up promoting the same features. Turok (2009) argued the result is sameness, which, emerging from serious lack of imagination and risk aversion, is very ineffective.

3. The relational paradigm: Dynamic Brands

To deal with the dynamic dimension of brands, the relational paradigm provides a support when considering the immaterial, ever changing and invisible world around brands. It draws attention to the relationships established between all stakeholders and the brand (Figure 1.4). The rationale is that the focus should no longer be on the object in itself, i.e. the place, but, rather, on the set of relationships built with and around it.

The relational paradigm has already been considered in place branding debate. Hankinson (2004) claimed that brands are relationship-builders, and conceptualized a brand model based on the 'relation exchange paradigm'. Lury defined brands as 'new media objects' capable of activating multi-directional communication flows (2004), and suggested that place brands may be interpreted as 'meeting points' for the actors interacting with it (2007). Govers and Go (2009) argued that place marketers have to deal with 'the space of flows', since the network society makes participatory relations and global interactions crucial to place brands.

Within the frame of cultural-led regeneration studies, Julier referred to a relational understanding of places and their identity. He investigated the urban designscape of three European cities, which is "the network of activities and artefacts that produce place-identity" (2005:869). On one hand, the role of multiple actors and their interaction is acknowledged in identity formation. On the other hand, the "hegemonic network of signifiers" (Julier 2005:869) mirrors the urban elite driving cultural change throughout the steering of specific types of relationships. From the same network perspective, Martinez (2007) confirmed that the relational pattern is shaped by power mechanisms in the case of the affirmation of fashion as collective identity in Antwerp.

Although many arguments demonstrate the need to fill this theoretical gap, little attention has been drawn to the relational content of place brands. In contrast, the relational paradigm suggests that the brand relational capacity is to be at the core of brands and branding, since being a strong source of distinctiveness. The relational capacity is, in fact, capable of providing a durable competitive advantage, because the relationships established locally and with the outside world constitute those attributes that, as Turok (2009) said, other places cannot easily reproduce. Such relational perspective on brands is particularly in line with the relational nature of the place identity. In fact, Allen et al. (1998) argued that the discontinuity in the pattern of relationships within space is the condition for different regional identities to exist.

In this regards, relationship marketing calls for attention. It is defined as "a marketing perspective on the network organization and the network society", and its purpose is "to identify and establish, maintain and enhance, and when necessary terminate

relationships" (Gummesson 2002:257) with the relevant actors. The rationale is that all actors' goals are to be met through a continuous "mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises" (Gronroos, 2000 cited in Gummesson 2002:293). Accordingly, the concepts of exchange and relationship are at the core of the dynamic interpretation of place brands, as the next section will show.
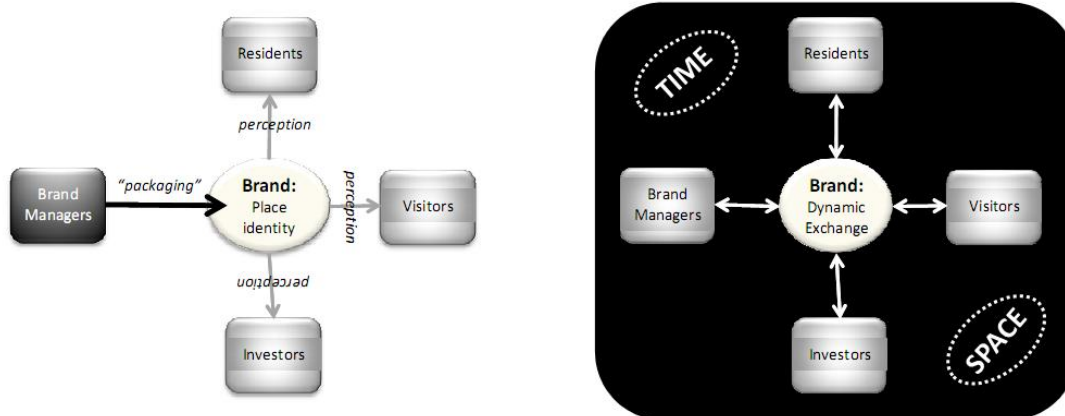

Figure 1.4. a) Static Interpretation of Brands; b) Dynamic Interpretation of Brands
Source: the author's elaboration

4. The relational paradigm: a toolkit for analysis

Relationship marketing was born in the 1970s when marketing started being interpreted as relationships management aiming at creating, maintaining and managing a network of long-term relations with multiple stakeholders (Bottinelli 2004). Gummesson (2002) demonstrated the potential of the relational paradigm by listing the 30Rs, that is the thirty relationships defining the space of marketing actions. The theoretical platform for the investigation of relational brands borrows an alternative lens for observation from relationship marketing, i.e. the 'relationship eye-glasses' (Gummesson 2002). Through this lens, traditional branding variables, i.e. brand image, brand identity and brand reality, are interpreted.

4.1. Brand image

In order to translate the brand image into a relational variable, the 13th relationship described by Gummesson is used, which belongs to the list of the special relationships. Conventionally defined as "the perception of the brand that exists in the mind of the consumers or audience" (Anholt 2007:5), the brand image is here conceived as a bundle of relationships boosted by the brand. Concerning local communities' perceptions, Anholt (2007) suggested undertaking an internal branding in order to develop a cohesive place image among insiders, which is capable of pushing local communities to develop a shared vision for their place by means of a construction of a common discourse on development. As a matter of fact, the relation between image and local actors is crucial. Bellini (2004) underlined the self-reinforcing mechanisms of images due to actors' propensity to

conform with their own expectations which are influenced by images. The place image is, thus, said a "filter" influencing the perception of the area, of its quality of life, of services, and of local development (Bellini et al. 2010).

According to the relational paradigm, the image is here intended as the set of 'parasocial relationships' (Gummesson 2002) that, relying on objects, symbols and other non-tangible phenomena, links targeted people to the brand. Such relationships define the "whole of the invisible world of perceptions" (Linn, in Gummesson 2002:112) around the brand, so that they are intended as a proxy of the brand relational content. Different from social relationships, the parasocial relationships involve an individual and an immaterial object, i.e. the brand. However, similarly to social relationships, there is a 'meeting' stage and, consequently, the chance to establish trust relationships until brand loyalty emerges. This is the pattern of brand development which makes the place brand similar to product or corporate brands.

There is a reference to customer-brand interactions whose relevance is increasingly acknowledged by branding literature. The brand is considered as a relationship partner with whom the relationship tends to evolve, thus changing typology and intensity (Fournier 1998). According to Keller and Lehmann (2006), there is a need to evaluate and manage not only positive relationships but also negative or neutral ones. Assuming the metaphor of the social relationship, Aggarwal (2004) argued the emergence of behavioural norms that guide consumers' evaluation of the partner (i.e. the brand). Generally, the construction of a relationship with the brand is functional to the production of the 'customer-based brand equity' which is determined by the degree of brand knowledge (Keller 2003).

Recently, the interactions between consumers and brands are drawing much attention in the literature which has been discussing the notion of *co-creation*. Payne et al. argued that "brand identity is co-created with consumers and other stakeholders and this element of co-creation is especially apparent in consumer groups such as brand communities" (2009:381). That is, around a brand a community tends to aggregate, thus determining a cluster of individuals who identify themselves with the brand. This is the definition of brand community (Muniz and O'Guinn 2000). The brand is no longer simply created (and owned) by the company, but it is co-produced by a complex network of stakeholders through a "collective and dynamic process" (Merz et al. 2009:337). This adds meanings and symbols to the brand through social interactions.

As said, such interactions may spill over parasocial relationships. Gummesson (2002) described the 'meta-product' as the set of relationships linking individuals to the brand. The relationships coincide with the perceptions that carry brand meanings, thus contributing to an increase of the brand equity. According to this rationale originally referring to product and corporate brands, there is room to argue that the 'meta-place' is key in place branding. On one hand, place management is in charge of fostering relationships with and within the place, by involving diverse internal and external communities that are crucial to development. On the other hand, being understood as content of the meta-place, parasocial relationships could be a candidate for driving a place brand analysis. In fact, they bear information on the type of relationships that communities have established with the place.

Are the relevant targets developing parasocial relationships with the brand? And, what are the brand attributes that make these relationships exist? In order to answer these salient questions, theoretical concepts have to be translated into analytical devices for an empirical investigation. In this regards, associations and mental maps can be used as proxy of the brand image in order to make the brand attitude emerge (Jevons et al. 2005). Assuming the relevance of monitoring brand attributes and associations (Kotler and Keller 2007), scholars have introduced the 'associative network' which is based on the relational paradigm. Iacobucci et al. (1998) defined the brand associative network as a way to represent and quantitatively deal with brand associations, while Roedder John et al. (2006) proposed the brand concept map as an alternative method to analyse the network map of associations.

The brand associative network can be used as an analytical tool for monitoring and diagnosing brand problems. It helps to understand nature and intensity of the relationships between the relevant targets and the brand. Accordingly, on the basis of both first and second-order associations, the relational content of the brand can be measured (Iacobucci et al. 1998; Henderson et al. 2002; Roedder John et al. 2006).

This is the analytical framework selected to interpret the network brand image relationally. In conclusion, the essence of the network brand is revealed by the web of parasocial relationships that diverse communities (belonging to different administrative units as in the case of network brands) develop with the brand.

4.2. Brand reality

Arguments support a relational interpretation of the brand reality, i.e. place tangible and intangible assets including institutions like norms, rules and habits (Hankinson 2004). In light of the relational paradigm, the brand reality relies on the analysis of both intensity and nature of the relationships that local players develop under a common label. In this regards, Hankinson proposed "the relational network brand" (2004:114), while Lee et al. (2005) argued the strong connection between a shared place identity and relationships, spilling over into social capital. This means that, behind a brand, there might be dynamics of membership that are potentially capable of building communities through a collective dialogue, exchange and conflict.

Similarly, relationship marketing focuses on 'nano-relationships' inside an organization. This is represented as a network composed of 'many-headed' actors, i.e. bearing a set of diverse interests, each establishing formal and informal relationships with all the others. The relationscape, i.e. the set of relationships consciously included in the network, is a useful concept for brand analysis, since it helps deal with the fact that relationships are "active and visible or passive and invisible but still influential" (Gummesson 2002:174). In the same vein, it is said that relationships have to be steered with and within a place, by involving a multiplicity of actors. Accordingly, beyond the traditional outside-looking place marketing, mainly aimed at attracting foreign direct investment and visitors, internal place branding is increasingly taken into account in light of the need to establish relationships with the internal audiences.

In contrast to what happens with product and corporate brands, place managers cannot select the relationships composing the brand by cutting off the useless or even harmful

ones. On one hand, it is claimed the list of branding participants can never be fully inclusive (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005), on the other hand inclusiveness seems to be the only possible approach to managing place brands. In fact, how can we determine who is entitled to add meanings to the brand and who is not? The question of 'what kind of brands and branding and for whom?' (Pike 2011) draws attention to a core issue.

4.3. Brand identity

Brand identity is usually defined as the mix of tangible and intangible attributes representing the way in which managers want the place to be perceived (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005). In relationship marketing the brand identity is represented as a process of exchange of promises to be delivered in order to maintain trust. Inclusiveness is relevant alongside the brand identity formation. Christopher et al. (2002) reflected on the importance of a collective determination of the brand identity, but admitted this may be not viable due to conflicts that might emerge especially in case of radical change within an organization.

Similarly, in place branding Trueman and Cornelius emphasized tensions among public and private actors fighting on what the city "has to symbolize and should be symbolized by" because of the "multiple layers of place identity" (2006:4). According to much evidence, the problematic determination of collective brands can hardly be solved with a collective selection of brand values, since even the most sophisticated mix of symbols cannot fully represent the complexity of identity. On the other hand, Govers and Go (2009) underlined how the brand identity is constructed through political processes, especially at local level, thus echoing local power struggles.

However, may collective behaviours emerge through the steering of multiple relationships with brands? In relationship marketing Cristopher et al. (2002) suggested that a 'vanguard group' should pioneer the new brand values until all the others are persuaded, by creating ferment and momentum. This means brand aggregating power has to be triggered over time so that an increasing degree of complexity can be represented. Put simply, instead of focusing attention on the packaging of the brand identity, more effort should be made in developing the brand relational content. For this reason, from an analytical perspective, monitoring brand identity components is useful for identifying the brand governance (i.e. the set of formal participants) and for understanding the extent to which the relational process succeeds in being collective or, rather, ends up being led by an elite holding the brand.

5. A Network of Places: the case of *Val di Cornia*

Val di Cornia (VdC) is in Southern Tuscany (Italy) and is deemed part of Maremma (Pazzagli, 2003) whose image of 'otherness' in relation to the rest of the region was claimed (Bellini et al. 2010). Five communities compose the network, among which Piombino, the industrial town, leads the surrounding municipalities (Table 1.4 and Figure 2.4). Feeling far from urban contexts, an awareness of homogeneity and the

subsequent need for integration compelled the rise of a network in order to counterbalance the absence of a strong leading city (Pazzagli 2003).

This case is an example of the cooperative approach to (re-)branding in an attempt to foster change and overcome lock-ins due to local economic and identity crisis. Historically relying on one of the biggest Italian steel factories, nationally known for the facts concerning the public company become private in 1992 and, then, sold to a foreign MNC (the Russian Severstal), VdC has still now to cope with a deep crisis of the traditional industry which has dramatically impacted on local community and local identity[24]. Consequently, this case offers clear evidence of re-branding effects consisting in the shift from the strong brand identity of the leading centre, i.e. Piombino, focused on 'steel', to a new brand identity characterising the network involving the local communities.
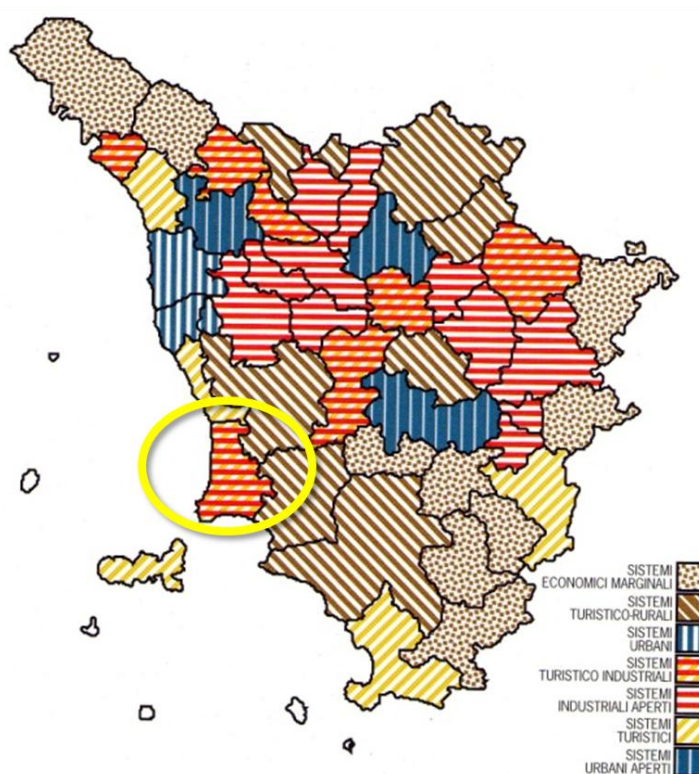

Figure 2.4. Val di Cornia: A Map
Source: Cavalieri 1999

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[24] Recent news report about the announcement of a production halt for the whole steel factory in Piombino for about one month. This compels to the deployment of a redundancy funds scheme for 2.200 workers and impacts on the local economy heavily (il Tirreno, 19 November 2011).

Table 1.4. Val di Cornia: A description

Val di Cornia, Tuscany (Italy), 2008	
Population	
Piombino	34.825
Campiglia	13.197
San Vincenzo	6.973
Suvereto	3.104
Sassetta	590
Total Population in Val di Cornia	58.689
Population Natural Increase	-289
Net Migration	757
Total Surface (kmq)	366
Hills	63%
Plain	37%
Coast (km)	64

Source: Luzzati and Sbrilli 2009

The name *Val di Cornia* means the valley of the river Cornia, but this geographical definition was replaced by a political one when, in 1998, the Circondario was established. Recently abolished by a national law (4.42, 2010), Circondario was the inter-municipal institution in charge of rural and urban planning in the space of the network. Network boundaries are an ongoing, debated issue. This is confirmed by survey results, showing that 80 per cent of respondents cannot identify the institutional borders. Actually, 76 per cent of respondents know of Circondario and its functions, but evidently this is not enough to frame the area spatially.

Historically, VdC has been characterized by a closed economic system. Since the 1950s, it has seen flows of workers into the steel factories, on the one hand making Piombino town the socio-economic epicentre, and on the other hand reducing the rest of the area to a steel-workers' dormitory (Figure 3.4). Accordingly, Piombino has been defined "the little Manchester" of Tuscany and similarly "[it] is hardly trying to be also something else" (Pazzagli 2009). In fact, since the 1990s a new equilibrium between steel and other sectors, Piombino and the rest of VdC (Casini and Zucconi 2003), has been sought. While "in the past young generations dreamt the steel factory, now they escape (...) and everybody looks at it as a giant condemned to death" (Caracciolo 2009:49). Table 2.4. reports the dramatic loss of jobs that compelled 'the irreversible change' (Casini and Zucconi 2003) and the claim of 'the end of the Iron Age' (il Tirreno 1997).

Figure 3.4. The steel factory in Piombino
Source: FIOM 1991; the author

Nevertheless, there are contrasting perspectives on the steel industry in VdC on the basis of its on-going relevance in local political agenda and economy. Recent facts concerning the Severstal announcing the will to sell the factory reveal the still strong and deep interest of local community for Piombino industry, on which local community seems to still believe firmly (il Tirreno 2010)[25].

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[25] This was also proved by a recent protest hold in Piombino. The wide participation of local community made the protest an event echoed by national newspapers and raising national attention back to the 'steel problem' in Italy (Corriere della Sera, 15 November 2011).

Table 2.4. Employment 1981-2001 and Employment per sector in Val di Cornia: Trends and Trajectory

	Total Employment: Units				
	1981	1991	2001		
VdC	25.149	21.252	20.132		
	-	-16%	-5%		
Tuscany	1.259.398	1.212.312	1.367.876		
	-	-2%	+4%		
Italy	16.883.286	17.430.784	19.410.556		
	-	+3%	+11%		

	Employment per sector in VdC				
VdC	*Manufacturing (Steel)*	*Trade*	*Health System*	*Professionals & Entrepreneurs*	*Hotels&Restaurants*
Composition % (2001)	19.40	19	7.50	9.40	6
Trend % '91-'01	-34.60	-7.80	+21.50	+77	+4

Source: IRPET 2005; Luzzati and Sbrilli, 2009
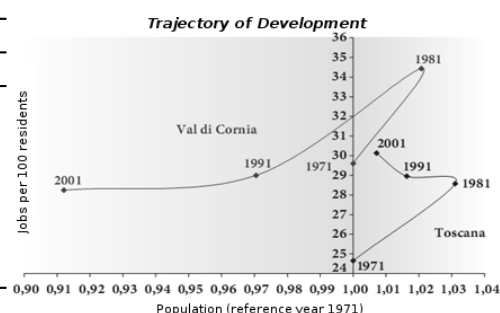
5.1. Methodology

A multi-method strategy was adopted for the empirical investigation, including both primary and secondary research. After the analysis of documents, reports, websites and local newspapers, primary data were gathered through ten in-depth semi-structured interviews to key informants and a survey questionnaire. The empirical research was carried out from March to July 2009. Interviewees were selected on the basis of their role in the network, i.e. mayors and representatives of organizations relevant to local development. They were identified as formal or informal participants in the institutional setting, while their cooperation was investigated through face-to-face interviews.

The survey questionnaire was completed by a convenience sample composed of 100 inhabitants, 20 for each sub-sample, i.e. each municipality. Residents are the selected target, since, though said vital 'to make' a place, little attention has been drawn to them in empirical research (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2007). The sample was selected through the 'person on the street' method and is composed of respondents between 18 and 65 years old, 58 females and 42 males, the average age being 42, which is below the actual average age (i.e. 47) in order to involve the youngest active layers of local population.

The questionnaire was composed of two sections. The first was dedicated to the brand awareness by asking respondents about the characteristics of VdC. For example, questions were aimed at investigating respondents' knowledge of local institutions, local economic profile and VdC geographical borders. Descriptive statistics were applied to these data. This section gave a chance to use a conventional analysis as a robust base to double-check the results of the second section which introduced a methodological novelty in this field of research.

The analysis relied on the relational interpretation of the brand image, which was the main variable used for this investigation. Accordingly, the second section of the questionnaire investigated the parasocial relationships through the collection of raw 'relational data' (Scott 2000), highlighting the relationships between each respondent

and the brand. Particularly, respondents were asked 'When you think of *Val di Cornia*, what comes to mind?' (James 2005; Henderson et al. 2002; Roedder John et al. 2006). They had to elicit at least three elements - or brand attributes - associated to the brand. Among the 300 collected associations only those elicited by at least 20 per cent of each sub-sample were considered for the analysis.

The open-ended free association question was selected because it uncovers those attributes that are salient to respondents, although they are not taken into account by the researcher. This is especially relevant in the field of place branding for two reasons. Firstly, there is the need to deal with cases in which no branding strategy has been carried out so that there is no closed list of brand values to check for. Secondly, a place brand is unavoidably more complex than the set of values triggered by branding efforts which never work on a *tabula rasa*. Actually, this methodological issue is meaningful not only for places, but also for products and companies due to the complexity of co-created brands.

To deal with the relational data, the social network analysis (SNA) was utilised. The software UCINET supported the analysis by treating the data in an automated way. Network analysis consists of a series of techniques that study a network intended as a set of items, i.e. nodes connected by edges. Network analysis is well-known in social sciences for the exploration of the pattern of interactions among the units of analysis. Social network analysis has seen many different applications and, in relation to the aims of this paper, it is worth stressing the investigation of semantic networks studying the relations among words in the use of language (Newman 2003).

In branding studies, Iacobucci et al. (1998) pioneered SNA for brand measurement. The authors aimed at analysing the pattern of associations in customers' minds. Accordingly, the brand associative network was designed. Different from traditional scaling methods, this not only has "the ability to uncover associations such as those that would be counter-intuitive to researchers" (Henderson et al. 2002:404), but it is also an effective diagnostic tool for an exploratory brand analysis (Iacobucci et al. 1998).

For the analysis the relational data were introduced into the full associative matrix (FAM, Iacobucci et al. 1998). The elicited elements fill a quadratic matrix composed of 15 rows and 15 columns. Shown in Figure 4.4, the FAM sub-matrixes have different meanings. Firstly, the Brand Description Matrix links the five brand images, i.e. the five different sets of perceptions related to the five investigated communities, to the elicited attributes. Secondly, the Brand Dimension Matrix highlights the associations between elements through the frequencies of their co-occurrence. Accordingly, we are informed not only of primary associations but also of the degree of compatibility of diverse elements in people's perceptions. Thirdly, the Brand Convergence Matrix contains the number of times that each combination of brand images refers to same attributes. This matrix is consistent with the aims of this paper and is designed to analyse the degree of perceptions' cohesion across the five communities.

Figure 4.4. The full associative matrix for the SNA
Source: the author

5.2. Brand identity: Fragments of the emerging change

The VdC brand emerged along with a rising interest for cooperation, which was deemed crucial to facing the economic crisis. During the 1980s and the 1990s the local political elite had to be nurtured from scratch, since until then the local arena was composed of national government owning the steel companies and trade unions which were the symbol of blue-collar culture. On the basis of coordinated planning since the 1970s (IRPET 2005) and the strong political cohesion, the Circondario Val di Cornia brought important competences locally. In addition, regional and national authorities fostered the emergence of a network governance. For example, in 1999 the *patto territoriale* Piombino-Val di Cornia, i.e. a public funding programme, triggered cooperation for a new deal in the area and, since then, the label *Val di Cornia* has been synonymous with regeneration.

A proper branding activity was never carried out, yet a series of brand identity components emerged. The narrative of change became crucial. This was fuelled by the idea of economic diversification and, consequently, tourism started being a priority (IRPET 2002) in the pursuit of a post-industrial economy. In fact, *Val di Cornia* arose as a post-industrial brand that was sought by a community experiencing a dramatic identity crisis and seeing the only local economic engine (the steel factory) to sink without leaving anything to build on for the future. The old industry was even said to have stolen human capital from alternative development, while local actors became familiar with the idea of deindustrialization. Only recently, official documents have spoken of 'reindustrialization', thus explicitly retaking into account the old industry (Comune di Piombino 2008).

In 1993 Parchi Val di Cornia SpA (Parchi SpA) was founded. Deemed "the clue of *Val di Cornia*" (Caracciolo 2009:2), the company is owned by the five municipalities and is in charge of managing the biggest natural and archaeological parks system in Tuscany

(IRPET 2005), which represented Italy for the European Council's 2009 Landscape Award. The parks work as a network of natural and cultural heritage encompassing the five municipalities, and witnessing the work on metals since the IX century B.C. (IRPET 2005). Parchi SpA has been a source of innovation and has provided material and non-material advantages not only to tourists but also to inhabitants (Luzzati and Sbrilli 2009). Politicians have claimed "a project aimed at modifying place identity and image" (Luzzati and Sbrilli 2009:22), while local newspapers have contributed to widespread awareness of change, by steering a sort of "Val di Cornia debate" and making an overarching narrative emerge.

Even in lack of a designed branding strategy, the network brand has been nurtured by numerous stories fuelling the local narrative. Local newspapers have greatly contributed to communicating the 'big change' occurring in *VdC*. Both local media and politicians have been focusing on the Parchi SpA which has been said to be mirroring "the strong will of environmental protection" (Luzzati and Sbrilli 2009:22). Accordingly, a 'green' vision for the area emerged on the basis of the "enlightened politicians' brave decisions" (Casini and Zucconi 2003:35) that in the 1980s introduced strict planning rules for natural resources protection. The strong reference to environmental sustainability is distinctive (Circondario 2004), being in clear opposition to the uncontrolled pollution characterising the steel industry.

This contrast has contributed to the local interpretation of tourism as the core of a green economy, being the clean alternative to 'steel', regardless the actual impact of the tourism industry on natural resources due to ever increasing flows of visitors. Tourism started being represented as the new economic engine for a sustainable development in opposition to the polluting steel industry. There was a stunning increase in the number of visitors of 44.4 per cent from 2000 to 2007 (Luzzati and Sbrilli 2009) so that no intentional efforts were needed to communicate this new vocation to residents.

5.3. Brand image: How do residents relate to the brand?

The residents' target was chosen to analyse the brand relational content. The related parasocial relationships are investigated and measured through both the degree of brand awareness and the associated meanings. Assuming the rise of the network brand, what have residents picked up over the last two decades? The exploratory survey gave a chance to understand whether or not "the *VdC* identity is still held by the strong identification with the dominating industrial milieu" (IRPET 2002: 22). It is also said that, although the place image is changing gradually (Casini and Zucconi 2003), "residents are not ready to accept the intrusion of tourism (…), neither are they aware of the effective action of Parchi SpA protecting and valuing local resources" (Luzzati and Sbrilli 2009:60).

Although the survey is merely explorative, the five communities seem to be fairly familiar with the *Val di Cornia* concept. In relation to local institutions, i.e. the Circondario and the Parchi SpA, 76 per cent and 78 per cent respectively of respondents clearly know their missions. In addition, the sample showed close attachment to the area since 74 per cent would not like to move elsewhere, having been born on site (73 per cent) or having arrived more than ten years ago (18 per cent). The claimed sense of belonging goes in parallel with the high quality of life perceived, since 88 per cent of respondents declared to live well or very well in VdC.

Generally, respondents showed a clear but not completely realistic idea of VdC. They identified tourism (94 per cent) and agriculture (89 per cent) as the successful economic engines, while 80 per cent denied the relevance of the old industry, which actually still employs about 20 per cent of local workers (IRPET 2005). Across the five sub-samples, no significant differences emerged in light of correlation analysis (Pearson's chi-square and Fisher exact test). Although local media have not forgotten the old industry and still claim its economic potential, respondents seemed no longer to have faith in 'steel' since only 6 per cent of respondents would like the area to undertake a re-industrialization process. The lack of trust in the industrial heritage goes in parallel with an emerging vision focused on tourism and relying on 'nature' as the value guiding economic and political choices. It is significant that Piombino, i.e. the industrial town, is no longer clearly identified as leader, while small rural municipalities are, in relation to their strong tourism vocation.

For the analysis of the parasocial relationships, the brand associative network was used. This is the network deriving from the FAM and is illustrated in Figure 5.4. This shows the five sub-samples (A-B-C-D-E), i.e. the local communities, and the related associations. Evidently the core associations refer to agricultural products, i.e. Wine and Olive oil, and to natural landscape, i.e. the Sea, while the two archaeological parks, i.e. Baratti and Sansilvestro, are the iconic places representing VdC in respondents' minds. No organizations are included in the network, that is neither the Parchi SpA nor the Circondario are crucial to inhabitants' perceptions. Natural and cultural assets are crucial to the sample that seems to back a green vision for the area, by hiding the industrial imagery.
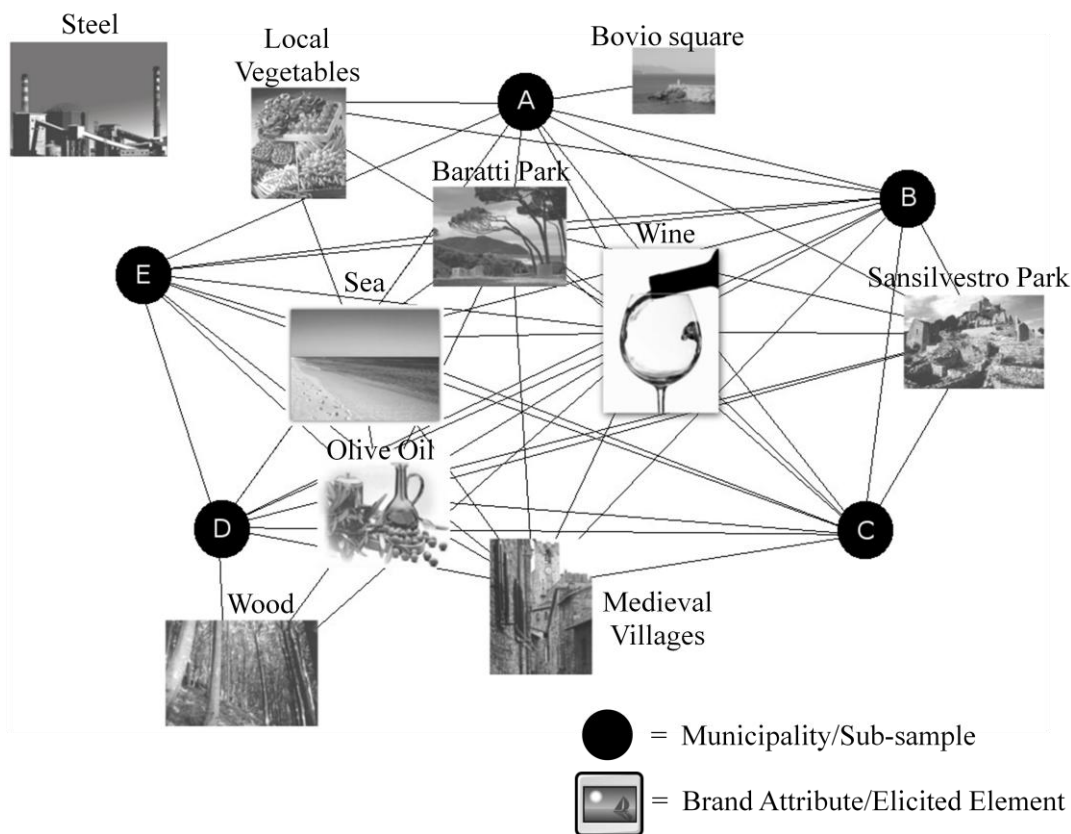
Figure 5.4. Brand Associative Network: The analysis of Parasocial Relationships
Source: author's elaboration

SNA descriptive measures are illustrated in Table 3.4. The 'branded features' are Wine, Olive oil, Baratti Park and Sea. These are pivotal since they can activate the highest number of elements in the network efficiently (degree), can increase the variety of symbols and meanings of the brand (betweenness), and can be very flexible in regards to the easy associations to other attributes (closeness). On the other hand, the cliques of complements show the potential sub-brands related to the intertwining of rurality, agriculture, nature and culture (a. Wine, Medieval villages, Olive oil, Sea; b. Wine, Baratti park, Sansilvestro park, Olive oil).

Table 3.4. Process of analysis and descriptive measures

Matrix	Object	Question	Purpose	SNA Measures	Source
Brand Dimension Matrix	Branded Features	"What brand features are perceived by consumers to be the most important?"	To find central features, the "good candidates" for branding	Centrality measures: Degree, Betweenness, Closeness	Iacobucci et al. 1998
	Complements	"What complementary combinations of features might be leveraged best for the ultimate success of the brand?"	To find the sets of attributes i.e. sub-brands to capitalize on	Clique	Iacobucci et al. 1998
Brand Convergence Matrix (also the Full Association Matrix)	Cohesion	"Do the 5 communities refer to same elements? What are the elements determining cohesion among the 5 brands?"	To evaluate the convergence of 5 brand images, to find the attributes/ associations giving a cohesive perception of the brand	Clique	The Author

Wine is not only flexibly associated to both cultural assets and the rural dimension but also scores the highest centrality, thus playing a vital role in the associative network. It seems that residents prefer linking their area to this product, echoing the internationally acclaimed high quality of VdC wines. In fact, this sector is growing in size and visibility also thanks to the national and international wine-entrepreneurs choosing VdC for their wineries. Wine, which seems a fairly credible attribute, contributes to the cohesion of the five communities since all of them strongly refer to it. In addition, a convergence is also guaranteed by a common denial of the industrial imagery since, for instance, steel, factories and chimneys, are not elicited significantly. Figure 5.4. shows that the node related to the industrial imagery is disconnected from the network, since the five communities do not refer to it significantly.

5.4. Brand reality: The Relationscape

Intended as the set of relationships that multiple players develop under the brand, the brand reality offers further insight into the brand relational content. To operationalize this variable, first the brand governance, i.e. the set of formal participants, is analysed in light of the relationships attaching meanings to the brand. Second, the contributions of those actors not directly participating in the brand formation, yet somehow enriching it, are stressed.

Participants are those players in charge of working for local development in the space of the network. According to the interviewees, only the Circondario and the Parchi SpA seem to have played a clear role in the definition of the VdC brand. Both attached new

values to it by defining a discontinuity with political and economic backwardness. That is, "the Circondario helped face the mental distance from provincial and regional authorities which traditionally had been treating the area as peripheral from all points of view" (I6[26]). Further, "the Tourism Agency[27] in charge of local promotion for the province [used to do] almost nothing for the area", while, as widely confirmed, "Parchi SpA has been the only one to promote VdC, also facing a quite challenging context" (I5).

Despite the central role ascribed to the Parchi SpA, the company cannot provide appropriate support to all local assets as a consequence of its specific mission and limited resources. For example, there is a gap in the VdC network concerning wine sector that, though being core to residents' perceptions according to interviewees, is characterised by almost inexistent collective actions under the VdC label. Neither national initiatives, i.e. Strade del Vino and Città del Vino, nor the DOC Val di Cornia consortium, i.e. the local organization in charge of assuring the wine quality of the Val di Cornia DOC label, are proactive in fostering the place brand (I9). The opportunity to foster a relational thickness around the brand has been missed so far and, consequently, we can argue that the local 'wine' actors (collective actors) are not likely to have attached any meanings to the VdC brand effectively.

Nevertheless, local vineyards are reaching international visibility not only for the high quality of wine but also for attracting relevant wine-entrepreneurs from outside. Much visibility is also given by the media in celebrating local magnificent wine-cellars, designed by popular architects and hosting world-class cultural events, which become local icons. However, while locals refer to wine for representing their place, wine producers often prefer to position their vineyards in Maremma, rather than in Val di Cornia (http://www.petrawine.it/territorio.html). It seems that wine-entrepreneurs do contribute to the brand even though they are not participants in the VdC brand governance.

The investigated aspects of the VdC brand are summarised in Table 4.4. These aspects emerged alongside a description of the three selected variables, i.e. the brand identity (how the network brand is conceived), the brand image (how the network brand is perceived), the brand reality (how the network brand is shaped). In addition, the case study is framed in relation to the brand phases that have emerged both from a temporal perspective (i.e. the evolution of the VdC brand is tracked over time), and from the perspective of its multiple and different facets (Table 4.4.). That is, the different brand phases can be intended as layers of a complex network brand evolving over time. Differently, the brand image was investigated only recently throughout the empirical investigation in this paper, so that it necessarily relates to contemporary perceptions of the network brand.

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[26] In the text the interviews are numbered according to their temporal sequence.
[27] The Regional Law 65/2010, Art. 70 abolished the tourism agencies (APT) in Tuscany, while the Provinces are now in charge of tourism promotion activities. However, the transition to the new system is challenged by a serious lack of financial resources and the partial transfer of assets to the Provinces in charge. Differently, the regional agency Toscana Promozione is now in charge of the strategy-making for tourism promotion.

Table 4.4. The network brand: identity, image, reality

Brand phase	Brand Reality	Brand Identity	Brand Image
I phase (1970s-1980s) The Brand of Change The Brand of Regeneration	Cooperation among the five municipalities (planning) as political vision	Deindustrialization Economic diversification 'Green' Irreversible change Regeneration	
II phase (1990s-early 2000s) The 'Institutional' Brand	Institutionalization of the network/of cooperation	New local 'centrality' (economic/political) Endogenous development – "shaping our future" Cooperation	
III phase (2000s) The Destination Brand	Parchi SpA – an asset for tourism Weak destination brand governance Decreasing degree of institutionalization	Rurality Culture Heritage Local products Natural Landscape	VdC is a natural and beautiful place in Tuscany, where good wine is produced

5.5. Discussion

The investigation of the brand relational content proves the rise of a new local narrative growing in the space of the network. This is the framework within which the narrative of change was nurtured in favour of regeneration. In the absence of a proper branding strategy, major facts, for example the foundation of the Circondario and the Parchi SpA, and stories, for example the death of the steel industry and the 'tiger' tourism, have worked as a re-branding strategy. The recognition of the new brand and the related values was triggered by the change of the (imagined) physical space nurturing local narratives, rather than by a "positive visual evidence of change" (Trueman et al. 2004:321). Networking material and immaterial resources have effectively provided diversity and richness of the local offer so that a new vision became possible. This implied a radical change whose claimed pillars were cooperation, economic diversification and protection of natural resources.

The emergence of a new network brand is confirmed by the analysis of residents' perceptions. It seems that the network narrative holds local communities and drives respondents to develop new relationships with the place, where rurality, history, nature and wine are crucial. The residents' sample is persuaded by tourism and its potential, while the steel industry is forgotten or , rather, not considered as a way to explain the place. Such perspective is strongly shared across the five communities, evidently willing to overcome the sense of frustration induced by the decline of the industrial town with its economy.

In other words, it seems that the network brand helped residents to overcome a sense of frustration on the basis of a denial of the steel factories and their economic relevance (actually ongoing), whose symbols are hidden by an alternative representation of the place. Not only the sense of place (related to the spatial network), but also the politics of the brand seems to play a role in explaining the re-branding effects. In fact, the

119

'forgetting' of the old industry has gone in parallel with the emergence of a new economic and political elite that earned legitimacy alongside the path of change.

While 'steel' is forgotten, new and promising elements are identified by the five local communities, showing a converging perspective on the network. Actually, these are the same attributes alluring national and international audiences, i.e. wine-entrepreneurs and tourists. On one hand, residents' perceptions are held by the imagery relying on those bucolic and cultural assets offered to tourists. On the other hand, wine as core association mirrors both the significant investment attracted and the international prestige achieved by the local wine industry. Residents' attention seems to be captured by those assets that naturally attract other targets. This is particularly relevant for place branding which is in charge of dealing with many different stakeholders simultaneously.

An image shift has been provoked in the minds of inhabitants who are usually said to be the most difficult to persuade. Alongside a path of development lasting for two decades, the five communities composing VdC are elaborating a new, shared and cohesive image of their area. However, behind the effective re-branding, critical issues emerge due to the absence of a designed brand strategy. In fact, respondents' current perceptions are not distinctive and the elements providing the brand with uniqueness are not in focus. For example, the 'systemness' characterising the parks is not included into the brand associative network, while single parks are valued as 'beautiful' icons rather than as part of a unique system. It seems that the relational content is no longer at the core of the brand according to insiders' perceptions.

In addition, in the effort to forget the past, the loss of another source of uniqueness occurred, i.e. the culture of metals, characterising local communities both in the far past and today. That is, the VdC brand is losing a source of differentiation which consists in the history of steel and metals, characterizing this place since the ninth century BC. Consequently, VdC is becoming "the umpteenth stereotyped postcard from Tuscany" (Pazzagli 2009), a beautiful and natural place where wine is produced.

The sample is keen to associate wine to its territory, probably being influenced by the rising attention to the VdC wines nationally and internationally. Moreover, the presence of wine entrepreneurs in VdC is often echoed by iconic elements added to local landscape, such as monumental wine cellars and popular events. The interpretation of wine as core and innovative element of the VdC brand is, however, to be considered carefully. The association between wine and territory is, in fact, fairly easy and immediate, especially within a regional context such as the one of Tuscany. The strong association to wine can signal an effective image shift undertaken locally, but, at the same time, it can also result from a lack of capacity of identifying new and strong identity attributes. That is, local communities end up referring to generic elements that, though being credible, are weakly distinctive.

Consequently, the small size and the recent entry of the VdC brand into tourism and wine industries make it a weak brand in the highly competitive regional arena. Instead of leveraging on the construction of a brand relational content as a source of distinctiveness, meaning the pattern of relationships (both historic relationships related to the "steel" and metals, and spatial relationships related to cooperation for a sustainable development), the brand analysis suggested that the Val di Cornia brand may risk disappearing from the map, since its identity may fade among the other regional

brands, e.g. Maremma and Bolgheri, the former including and the latter bordering the observed network space.

However, while the image of VdC is clear in locals' perceptions, we have to stress that in relation to Piombino (the factory town) the narrative of 'steel' keeps being prominent, as witnessed by media. That is, there is a sort of co-existence between the VdC brand and the Piombino brand, despite the formation of the former as the antithesis of the latter. As a matter of fact, Piombino is part of VdC geographically and, even, it has given a fundamental contribution to the 'VdC project', since being the biggest council in the area. In contrast, there is a propensity to dissociate the two brands which are built on two distinct identities telling two different stories selectively. That is, the network brand seems to add a new narrative to a dynamic and multi-faceted representation of the same geographical space.

In the overall effort to understand whether the network brand can re-launch the place image according to the definition of a new space for local identity, three propositions arise. Firstly, the network space for brands may result in a successful re-branding strategy, making even local residents, who are said to be the most difficult to persuade, think of their place in a new way and (re)discover local values and symbols. Secondly, the network brand may be created through facts, media and political communication provided that a new set of stories at network level introduces a discontinuity with both the past and the single communities involved. Thirdly, in an absence of branding strategy, the rush for change may result in the forgetting of the local reality that can provide the basis for developing unique relationships with the brand.

There is a gap between the brand identity and the brand image. The Circondario and the Parchi SpA are the only actors actively fuelling the brand. The former attached the value of cooperation and the idea of an endogenous development, thus making VdC the geography of resurgence. The latter has pushed forward a green vision and the concept of sustainability, translated into the management of natural and cultural resources, also for tourism development (Figure 6.4a.). However, beyond the meanings attached by the formal brand participants, as said, residents' perceptions reveal further elements, for example rurality and wine.

Thus, other stakeholders are likely to be fuelling the brand by influencing locals' perceptions. If the relationscape indicates that the actors in charge of promoting VdC wine and tourism are completely or partially inactive, how did these elements root in the inhabitants' minds? Other players might have enriched the VdC brand. Regarding wine, both international reward and the attraction of wine-entrepreneurs from outside may have persuaded residents of their land's excellence, while the product coolness may have convinced them of this local vocation. Secondly, national and international visitors may have persuaded locals theirs is a beautiful and natural place worthy of being visited and living in, rather than a declining and polluted area.

This means that among the diverse targets of the network brand there are flows of tacit communication and influence, i.e. relationships, which develop and co-create the brand (Figure 6.4b.). Whereas mechanisms of residents' influence on outsiders are usually claimed in place branding – often, in fact, insiders are said to be effective ambassadors of their own place - , there is room to recognize and exploit the influence that outsiders exert on insiders.

This further confirms that brands are bundles of relationships that 'visible or invisible, passive or active [are] still influential', since a huge set of communities, internal or external and of diverse nature, contributes to the brand formation. Moreover, the communities defining brand's tracks of evolution necessarily go beyond the ones composing the brand governance, i.e. the set of formal participants building the brand.

In place branding is it worth referring to brand governance for understanding a brand? If the brand governance implies a static reading of brands where participants are intended as repository of the place identity or authenticity, this can be heavily misleading, since only a small part of the whole bundle of brand relationships will emerge, especially in the case of (network) brands alongside a path of change. From a relational perspective, the brand governance is a relevant concept because it allows the evaluation of the risk of losing control on brands. The larger the gap between the brand identity and the brand image, the weaker the capacity of the brand governance to give direction to the relationships established with the brand. On the other hand, the brand governance provides a reference to assess the extent to which the gap is bridged over time. This is viable by building relationships with those actors that, though not being formal participants, succeed in attaching meanings to and in co-creating the brand, so that higher degrees of inclusiveness may be achieved.
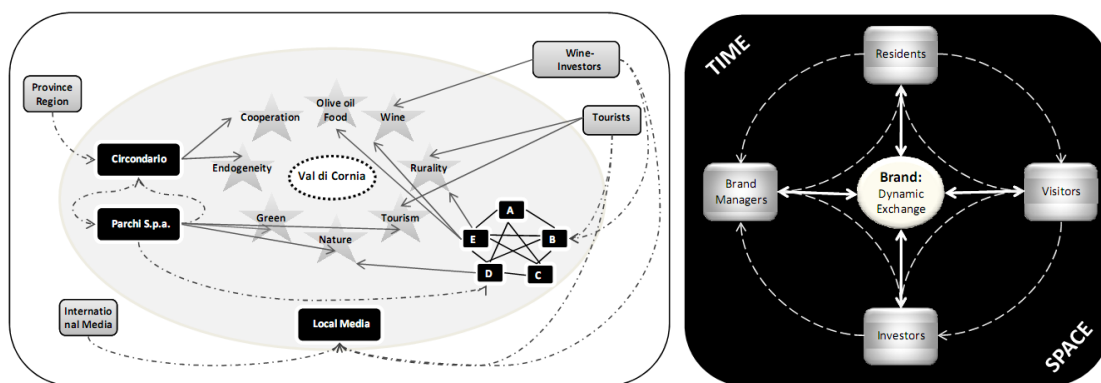
Figure 6.4. a) Val di Cornia network brand; b) Dynamic interpretation of brand (revised)

To conclude, we discuss the VdC brand evolution by referring to Table 4.4. The VdC brand has experienced a transformation alongside its history. Assuming a historical perspective, there has been a loss of intensity and distinctiveness over time. At the beginning, in fact, cooperation and, hence, the brand relational content was conveying a fairly distinctive message about the way in which the area was pursuing regeneration, until becoming part of the brand identity. The institutionalization of the network made the brand a symbol of development. Subsequently the identity lost intensity by shifting from a political and institutional brand to a destination brand. There has been a standardization of the values composing the brand identity, so that the emphasis shifted from a statement of political will concerning the network space (the distinctive element making this area unique at the beginning of the process – which, by the way, is still part

of the local political rhetoric[28]) to a destination brand made of culture, rurality, local products and natural landscape, just like many other brands. That is, the brand reduced in complexity shifting from being "the brand of change" characterized by social, political and cultural values, to the brand of tourism, according to which also wine production seems to be fairly related to the consumption of the place as destination. Alongside this 'simplification' of the brand identity, arguably the opportunity to turn the network into a holistic brand supporting local economic development has been fairly overlooked.

6. Research Implications

The implications of this research are theoretical, managerial and methodological. From a theoretical perspective, this research suggested and gave evidence of the opportunity to analyze network brands, and in general place brands, by 'mapping' the intertwining among three variables, i.e. the brand identity, the brand image and the brand reality. Assuming a relational paradigm of interpretation, the research showed how a comparison across the relational content related to these three variables allows us to reach an insight into the dynamic formation of brands. The elements composing the image, which is interpreted as the bundle of relationships that diverse 'consumers' develop with the brand, are compared with the elements composing the brand identity and the characteristics of the brand relationscape. Such comparison does help brand analysts to identify possible areas of interventions, thus providing practitioners with guidelines for pursuing an increase of the brand relational content. Put simply, the dynamic model proposed above for the interpretation of brands allows an understanding of the intertwining of how the brand is shaped, conceived and perceived. On the basis of this, there is the chance to deal with (and influence) the mechanisms that improve the brand relational content, which is here assumed to be crucial to brands.

From a managerial perspective this research approach shows the opportunity to define branding actions in a way that can increase the relational content of the place brand. As a matter of fact, this is in contrast with those practices that determine brands that are (conceived, perceived and shaped as) distant from local community: as a matter of fact, though said to be misleading, these are widely followed practices. In the literature these brands were proved to be unlikely to develop relationships with the relevant targets and, accordingly, unlikely to survive. In this regards, the analyzed case showed that, once the brand has come into existence, branding actions are fundamental to maintain and nurture the brand relational content, which otherwise tends to fade together with the brand distinctiveness.

From a methodological perspective, the research highlighted an advantage in the use of the social network analysis. Such advantage is twofold. On one hand, there is the chance to monitor the effects of branding initiatives on the perceptions held by the place 'consumers', even allowing to diagnose convergence and divergence among diverse stakeholders' images. This, for example, may be the case of monitoring umbrella brand

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[28] Recent facts have demonstrated current difficulties in building a political project behind the Val di Cornia brand. After the abolition of the Circondario in 2010 the imminent establishment of the *Unione dei Comuni* (an institutional framework for the management of service and planning functions in the space of the network) was proclaimed, but the five councils have not succeeded yet in achieving a formal agreement.

policies and their effectiveness. On the other hand, the social network analysis can be a valid support to investigate the variety of perceptions concerning a place, to be considered as a preliminary investigation before designing a brand strategy and, generally, before investing on branding initiatives. In fact, places usually are related to images even when no branding actions have been previously undertaken.

This type of analysis offers useful information to position the brand. In the case of VdC the SNA underlined the associations that, though being strong and rooted in people's minds, can drive the brand to be weak when competing with other brands (see the arguments concerning the centrality of wine for VdC within the Tuscan context). Additional uses of the SNA were presented by Henderson et al. (1998) proposing it in a frame of inter-network analysis which compares different brands in light of their networks of associations. This analytical procedure aims at unfolding the degree of competition between or among brands, as well as at stressing the overlapping elements of the diverse associative networks. This helps to understand and forecast the effects of cannibalization usually at the expense of the brand with the lowest brand equity. Accordingly, the tools provided by the SNA give advantages not only for brand diagnostic but also for the brand audit, thus revealing the conditions from which the construction of brand strategies has necessarily to start.

7. Conclusion

This paper analysed a network brand labelling cooperation for development and, according to the 'relationship eye-glasses', its relational content emerged. A framework composed of notions coming from relationship marketing, critically adapted to places, drove the analysis. The overall contribution of this paper was to prove the usefulness of the relational approach, looking at brands as complex bundles of relationships. The relational framework aimed at considering the complexity of brands and the multifaceted relationships linking multiple communities to brands. Being aware of and analysing such complexity are crucial not only to scholars, but also to practitioners in charge of intervening to improve the brand performance. If understood as an approach to brand management, this interpretation of brands helps build on the existing 'relational capital', instead of imposing fake and detached brands which usually have little chance to develop long-lasting relationships with the relevant targets.

This paper attempted to explore the network brand by relying on the relational paradigm of interpretation. The findings suggested that a network of places can be shaped, conceived and perceived as a brand, emerging even in an absence of a designed branding strategy, thus resulting from major facts, political engagement and local media, all these fuelling a locally shared debate on the network space. These elements favoured an exchange among multiple communities who developed relationships with the emerging brand. Furthermore, the findings showed the extent to which a network brand can produce re-branding effects for those areas that cooperate under this umbrella (network) brand, by adding a new narrative without deleting the pre-existing ones concerning the single nodes of network. Alongside the re-branding process, opportunities and pitfalls emerged. While the opportunity to re-launch enthusiasm about an area was evident, the lack of a designed strategy and brand management capacity

seemed to lead the brand to a loss of distinctiveness alongside the simplification of the conveyed messages, a loss of momentum and, consequently, a loss of relational content.

The relational approach to the investigation and to the analysis implies structural limitations from both a theoretical and empirical viewpoint. Theoretically, the resulting insight into brands is constrained by the adopted perspective on the observed reality, i.e. the relational one. This means that the achievable understanding is necessarily partial and shaped by the lens used. Empirically, all the existing relationships adding meanings to brands are hardly taken into account. In this case study only the relationships involving residents, politicians, local institutions, and partly tourists and wine-entrepreneurs, were identified, but this is certainly not exhaustive.

Furthermore, from a methodological viewpoint, the explorative nature of this research is to be underlined. The survey involved a small convenience sample so that findings should be carefully interpreted. Moreover, residents are only one of the many 'constructors' of the place image and, accordingly, they provided fragments of the place image which, though significant, offer a simplified insight into the brand.

According to the above limitations, further research is needed to make the relational approach more reliable for research. From a theoretical perspective, there is the need to reflect on the limitations of the relational reading of places. This especially implies the consideration of the set of players developing relationships with the brand. A taxonomy should be designed in order to recognise and manage different kinds of players and the related brand relationships. That is, further research is needed to identify analytical categories of relationships rendering the complexity of place brands. This is related to the need to expand the empirical investigation by including a broader set of communities linked to the brand, for example different categories of entrepreneurs, all fuelling the place brand in different ways. Finally, from a methodological perspective, it could be worth using the web as a rich source of data in order to build a more extensive brand associative network.

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Conclusion

1. The outline of the research project

This research project focused on collaborative strategies of place branding crossing administrative and/or political borders and, thus, involving multiple geo-political units. This research attempted to understand the extent to which cross-border branding initiatives can be a viable way to enhance the reputation of the involved places and, accordingly, their competitiveness. In other words, the discussion dealt with aspects of branding relational spaces, that is spaces composed of multiple geographies undertaking cooperation for fostering economic development.

This topic was named inter-territorial or network branding in order to recall the two main elements entangling the discussion:
- *network*, as said the relational or collaborative space, is the branded object. Although it is part of the broader field of place branding research, network (or inter-territorial) brands and branding refer to an interactive space or a network of places whose historical, cultural, political and sometimes physical boundaries are crossed for the formation of a brand concept;
- *branding*, this is intended as the process establishing a fair reputation and building brand equity, which are both assumed to contribute to economic development. In this research, branding is conceived as either an intentional brand strategy-making, or a spontaneous process leading to the emergence of network brands. The focus is on the mechanisms and processes of network brand emergence and evolution.

In an attempt to cast light on this unexplored research field, i.e. network brands and branding, the Ph.D. project was articulated in the following chapters. **Chapter One** offered an overview of those concepts composing the theoretical backbone of the research project. Such concepts compose the background that provides a theoretical support to further the discussion on place branding. **Chapter Two** aimed at introducing the notion of inter-territorial brands and branding, i.e. brands and branding crossing administrative borders. It provided a definition of the object under scrutiny, i.e. the network of collaborating places, which is here investigated as a brand, and unfolded the major phases as well as the major forces characterising the process of inter-territorial brand emergence. From a theoretical perspective, this chapter presented a discussion on the assumptions at the basis of the whole research project, by introducing the paradigms of competition and cooperation for local and regional economic development. In addition, it refers to the notion of co-opetition that, in line with the adoption of the concept of competition, builds a parallel with business and organization studies.

This part of the research project was based on a secondary research reviewing the available literature on twelve inter-territorial networking experiences in Europe and US.

The cases were selected in a way to cover multiple branding typologies, as defined in place branding literature, and according to the availability of data, information, scholars' and practitioners' opinions. By unfolding the underlying process, this chapter found an increasing relevance of inter-territorial branding rationale and a rising reliance on inter-territorial brands in practice, despite the lack of academic attention. It also found that inter-territorial branding is driven by both 'market' (or pragmatic) and political forces, and the process develops across either linear or non-linear sequences of phases, where criticisms are likely to emerge especially in the maintenance of momentum for the inter-territorial brand.

The main limitations of this research paper concern the fact that the presented arguments were drawn from fragmented sources of data and information. The analysis was built on cases of different types on different scales, which might be characterised by significant differences in terms of complexity. Primary research was, thus, suggested as necessary, in order to overcome such limitations and reach an insight into the inter-territorial branding process. The originality of this contribution resides in challenging the idea that territorial competition is an exhaustive approach to understanding local and regional development and, accordingly, place branding. Within the frame of global competition, cities may undertake inter-territorial cooperation in order to enhance their competitiveness. In this regards, this paper tackled an evident gap in place branding literature, which usually overlooks inter-territorial collaborative strategies.

Chapter Three aimed at unfolding the process of collaborative branding strategies crossing administrative borders and, accordingly, investigating the sequence of steps that head towards the emergence of a collective organization identity. The theoretical framework was based on a definition of brands as organizational identities, by referring to both organization studies and policy studies. Particularly, the elements of the collective action theory were utilized to design a framework that explains the mechanisms characterising a system of stakeholders as well as the individual motivations pushing forward the formation of a collective organization.

From a methodological perspective, the paper followed a deductive approach to research according to which a theoretical model was used to interpret the results of an empirical investigation. Empirical research followed the case study methodology. The analysed case was the NewcastleGateshead brand, which consists in the partnership of two municipalities, the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the town of Gateshead in the North East of England, UK. The research paper highlighted that place brands can be intended as organizational identities, and showed the potential of interpreting them as relational socio-spatial organizations. By arguing the importance of recognizing the emergence of "branded" relational spaces, the results of this research contributed to the debate on relational spatialities, by suggesting the role of the construction of meanings and communication in the formation of geographies.

This research paper had limitations since it raised the issue of branded relational spaces for marketing purposes without providing further analytical insight. In addition, this paper applied the designed framework to one single case study. Accordingly, there is the need to undertake a systematic theoretical research to focus on diverse typologies of relations and relational spatialities, as well as the need for an empirical research casting further light on the organizational characteristics, by means of a comparative study. The

originality of this contribution consists in identifying the need to reflect on those geographical settings that are capable to trace alternative tracks of local and regional development in post-industrial economies, and in tackling an evident gap in the literature on relational spatialities, concerning viable forms of organization to manage and deal with geographical networks and relational spaces. This chapter tackled these issues by assuming a branding perspective whose deep relation with planning for economic development was underlined.

Chapter Four aims at highlighting the extent to which a network of places can be shaped, conceived and perceived as a brand. Secondly, the hypothesis of network brands and branding as viable tools to determine re-branding effects in declining areas was discussed. From a theoretical perspective, the relational paradigm was introduced by means of an application of basic notions of relationship marketing and branding. In addition to traditional academic contributions towards a relational understanding of brands, the theoretical framework included the notion of brand co-creation, which is part of recent literature developments in the field of customer-brand relationships.

This research paper followed a deductive/inductive approach to research, according to which a theoretical model was used to interpret the results of an empirical investigation which, then, contributed to revising and enriching the dynamic brand model initially proposed. The selected case study was the Val di Cornia brand and relied on a primary and secondary research, based on both qualitative and quantitative data. Concerning the quali-quantitative analysis, it is worth stressing the use of the social network analysis, a methodological novelty in the place branding empirical research. The result was twofold. The network brand was said to produce significant re-branding effects so that, from a managerial perspective, network branding can be designed as a strategy to pursue effects of image change. On the other hand, a dynamic model of place brand was proposed, thus highlighting how multiple stakeholders mutually influence their relationships with the brand.

Theoretically the resulting insight into brands was constrained by the adopted perspective on the observed reality, i.e. the relational one. This means that the achieved understanding was necessarily partial and shaped by the lens used. Empirically this study missed considering all the potentially existing relationships that add meanings to the brand. The originality of this contribution resides in the re-interpretation of conventional variables of place branding, i.e. the brand image, the brand reality and the brand identity, in light of the relational paradigm and looked at through a relational lens of observation. The methodological novelty introduced for empirical investigation, i.e. the social network analysis, was functional to an operationalization of the brand image, intended as a bundle of parasocial relationships linking local communities to the brand.

According to an overview of the research project, we can state that:
- this research is multidisciplinary. *Multidisciplinarity* is, in fact, the overarching methodological approach to place branding research. The reference literature streams entangling this research were mainly economic geography, business and organization studies, marketing and corporate branding, and policy studies. In light of the still lacking theoretical development of place branding, this project experienced the need to refer to other disciplines in order to find complementary analytical categories helping to reach an insight into network brands and branding;

- great attention was drawn to the *process of network branding,* intended as the process that, with different degrees of spontaneity and strategic design, leads to the formation of network brands;
- great attention was drawn to a *relational reading* of brands:
  - in regards to the relational content of brands, according to which relationships constitute the brand itself. This is certainly evident in the case of network brands, but arguably this is generally crucial to place brands;
  - in regards to a relational interpretation based on the use of a relational lens to observe the phenomenon. This relational lens can be applied not only to network brands but also generally to place brands.

2. Inter-territorial brands and branding: concluding remarks

Chapter Two offered both a preliminary definition of the network (or inter-territorial) brand, by focusing on the network as the branded object, and a description of the process of network brand emergence and evolution. Differently, Chapter Three and Chapter Four presented two distinct case studies which focused on different aspects of inter-territorial brands and branding. The former further unfolded the process leading to the formation of a collective (cross-border) organization identity, the latter focused on the extent to which a network of places can be a brand, and particularly a brand capable of triggering an image change.

In order to improve the initial explorative framework, this section will add the findings of Chapter Three and Chapter Four to the list of networking experiences outlined in Chapter Two (see Table 1.2), thus enriching the discussion with the results of a 'dedicated' empirical research on inter-territorial brands and branding. In fact, one of the limitations of Chapter Two was the reliance on fragmented sources of data and information that, though being considered exhaustive to describe the networking experience of branding concerning the selected cases, did not focus on the analysis of network brands explicitly. A further limitation of Chapter Two was the inclusion of very different experiences of branding in terms of both type and scale. In regards to this point, Section 2.1. will highlight similarities and differences concerning the two cases, i.e. NewcastleGateshead and Val di Cornia, in order to understand why these two were selected to enrich the list of networking experiences presented in Chapter Two.

2.1. The selection of NewcastleGateshead and Val di Cornia for empirical investigation

The research project went through the stage of case selection. The research was in charge to deal with an unexplored issue, whose main determinants were not known at the beginning of the research project. Within the research process, attempts were made to search for a suitable theoretical framework to be applied. That is, at the preliminary stage of case selection, the main variables were not given. In fact, the theoretical constructs for an analytical interpretation were identified once the empirical investigation had started and produced preliminary findings. Accordingly, the application

of Yin's criteria for the selection of cases, i.e. critical and/or extreme cases, was not possible (1994). It was not viable, in fact, to establish *a priori* if the cases would have confirmed, challenged or extended a theory, because it was not possible to say whether or not the cases did meet the conditions of an actually missing theory (see Carson et al. 2001). At the same time, how to say that the likely findings would have been unique (as required by the condition of the extreme case)? This is also related to the unlikely 'in-depth familiarity' with the cases prior to undertaking an empirical research, in contrast with methodologists' usual assumptions (Seawright and Gerring 2008).

Nevertheless, the cases were not selected randomly. Rather, the selection occurred according to a purposive mode (Seawright and Gerring 2008). As explained below, the aim of the research was exploring and explaining the mechanisms underlying the process of network branding, so that the cases were selected according to the related needs. That is, the selection did not pursue the identification of representative cases, in line with the fact that "case study research is not sampling research" (Stake 1995:4). One of the criteria used for the selection was the "maximization of what we can learn" (Stake 1995:6), thus reflecting not only on the case characteristics that were evident since the beginning of the research process (see Table 1.5), but also on the access to rich sources of data capable of making the insight into both cases exhaustive and reliable, as required in the case of an exploratory research. The choice was, then, guided by a second criterion, i.e. the relevance.

According to the two criteria, i.e. maximization of learning and relevance, two cases, i.e. NewcastleGateshead and Val di Cornia, were selected for empirical investigation. In addition to the wide access to data and information about both cases - for example, both had been widely investigated in literature from many different perspectives-, these two examples of inter-territorial brands and branding were deemed relevant. Relevance is here to be intended in relation to the time frame within which the observation was possible. In fact, both cases have experienced about a decade of developments, so that the analysis of the process leading to the emergence and evolution of the network brand was viable. By outlining the likely phases of the network branding process, Chapter Two emphasised the criticisms concerning the capacity of maintaining momentum on the network brand. Accordingly, only a long-lasting process could have provided an insight into the mechanisms and forces making the network brand sustainable over time. Hence, the criteria of time (meaning long-lasting brands) was adopted for the selection of cases which, thus, were deemed relevant cases.

Although the value of this research does not consist in a comparison between the two cases, this section aims at providing the reader with the elements that were taken into account for the selection (Table 1.5). The two cases have in common a post-industrial legacy, which is the consequence of a dramatic deindustrialization imposing a need to face and favour a structural change in local communities. Both cases have seen a crucial role of public actors and especially of local councils, taking a lead on economic development.

Both are examples of post-industrial brands in charge of triggering a regeneration and an economic revitalization of the involved areas. However, the two cases are different for two main reasons. Firstly, they are different from a geographical point of view. On one hand, NewcastleGateshead covers the equivalent of a medium-size city, that is an urban, metropolitan conglomeration, on the other hand Val di Cornia covers a small size, mainly

rural area composed of five small municipalities where the leading town, which plays the role of the urban core, has a population of about 35.000 inhabitants. Val di Cornia is, thus, an attempt to redefine a territory in contrast with the high fragmentation characterising the Italian context, which is historically composed of a multitude of extremely small councils that, within their administrative boundaries, often end up challenging local development.

Another significant difference between the two cases is the historical relationship with the old industry. In the debate on branding it is worth stressing that, while in NewcastleGateshead the process of deindustrialization can be deemed completed, in Val di Cornia the steel factory is still on-site. Despite waves of delocalization, the old industry keeps being an important part of local economy, as well as visible and daily experienced by the local communities. This is relevant because, while in the case of NewcastleGateshead the wiping out of the traditional industry, though extreme, was consistent with reality, in the case of Val di Cornia the dilution of the old industry perceptions among the local communities widened the gap between place images and reality.

Table 1.5. The two cases: Similarities and Differences

Similarities	*Differences*
Sense of peripherality from core areas	Size
Legacy of deindustrialization	On-going deindustrialization in VdC; completed deindustrialization in NG
Identity crisis (together with a socio-economic crisis)	Non urban rural (VdC)/urban metropolitan (NG)
Post-industrial brand; the brand of change and regeneration	Lack (VdC)/presence (NG) of a designed branding strategy
Heavy industrial past and a prevailing 'blue collars' culture'	Brand label: the area name (VdC); partners' names included (NG)
Leading role of public actors – the role of the Councils	

2.2. Discussion

This research project is in charge of summarizing the overall results of the exploration concerning network brands and branding. Accordingly, the elements emerged in the empirical investigation (Chapter Three and Chapter Four) have now to enrich the explorative efforts presented in Chapter Two in a cyclical way. This research has followed loops of speculation enhancing the explorative framework initially proposed. That is, Chapter Two was in charge of outlining a preliminary conceptualization of the network brand and, accordingly, the following items were discussed on the basis of a secondary research:

- Logic of interaction among the involved administrative units, i.e. the nodes of the network
- Typologies of inter-territorial branding
- Forces driving the process of inter-territorial branding
- Phases of the inter-territorial branding process
- Forces challenging the process of inter-territorial branding

The two analysed cases contributed to expanding the insight into the researched object, and to further developing the discussion on the five points above, thus extending the list of cases in Chapter Two (see Table 1.2). In addition to the five points above, Table 2.5 reports the results concerning main aspects characterising the inter-territorial brand.

Table 2.5. Exploring inter-territorial brands and branding: NewcastleGateshead and Val di Cornia

Case	*Logic of interaction*	*Typology*	*Forces 'towards'*	*Phases*	*Forces 'against'*
NG	Co-opetition	Culture branding → Destination Branding → towards Integrated branding	Complementarity of resources, competences, skills Appropriate size and critical mass Political ambitions Brand institutionalization Top-down incentives	Linear/ Cyclical process Cyclical need to maintain momentum The use of symbols: the bridges, the built environment	Financial crisis & competition Collaboration cost Rapid decisions against ambitions Need for functional geography Hard balance among multiple identities Need for strong leadership/national forces towards localism Separate political/ administrative identities not willing to merge Identity nurturing phase is lacking
VdC	From 'pure' cooperation to co-opetition	Integrated branding (strongly focused on planning for economic regeneration) → Destination branding	Network space to trigger transformation/change The space of opportunity (political intuitions and ambitions) Early brand institutionalization Top-down incentives	Non-linear process Media echoing major facts and novelties creating momentum (uncontrolled process) Symbols: the river, natural environment, heritage	Need for a wider scale for economic development Fading brand – a loss of relational content, from 'network' brand to 'place' brand Weak steering of a brand reality and signals of de-institutionalization

The prevailing *logic of interaction* among the network brand partners seems to be in line with a co-opetitive regime which, mixing diverse degrees of competition and cooperation, implies the pursuit of a positive-sum game, by means of collaborative strategies that benefit partners' competitiveness. Both cases confirm partners' awareness of a necessary collaborative effort, in order to enhance their individual competitive advantage, even though this implies the risk of blending competition with cooperation. In the case of NewcastleGateshead the two municipalities have established a long standing partnership, although the on-going competition is not forgotten. This is not only economic but also political. In the case of Val di Cornia there was a shift from an

approach of prevailing cooperation, on the basis of the strong political brand content, to a more co-opetitive approach in relation to the rising emphasis on the network as a destination brand. Tourism is, in fact, considered as an industry where all the five partners compete, so that the framework of cooperation is maintained as functional to an increase of individual partners' competitiveness.

Concerning the *typology of inter-territorial branding*, the geographical branding matrix presented in Chapter Two (Figure 1.2) is exhaustive in relation to the two analysed cases. The branding types of interest for the two case studies are the cultural, destination and integrated branding. It is worth stressing the functional evolution of network branding, experienced in both cases along with the brands' paths of development. On one hand, NewcastleGateshead has experienced an evolution that, firstly, transformed the brand from being a cultural brand, which was symbol of local regeneration related to the European Capital of Culture bidding process, into a destination brand, where cultural values were preserved and maintained at the core of the brand. Currently, the network brand is approaching a further stage of evolution in an attempt to become an integrated brand, that is a 'holistic' brand capable of conveying a consistent message embracing multiple aspects of local socio-economic reality. On the other hand, the Val di Cornia brand has been experiencing a 'specialization', thus shifting from being the brand of regeneration in multiple fields, i.e. economic, political and cultural, to being a destination brand. That is, in terms of typology, the empirical research made different evolutionary trajectories emerge.

It is worth noticing that, in the case of Val di Cornia, the shift from the integrated brand to the destination brand was spontaneous and easily achieved, but it determined a loss of potential and brand meaning. Such shift was facilitated by the fact that the brand had accumulated a strong credibility over time, especially among the local communities which had familiarized with the notion of 'Val di Cornia' by means of a daily experience. Accordingly, the local communities have been keen to support the brand and to work as 'ambassadors' of the destination brand, whose post-industrial mission seems to be fairly convincing. In contrast, the shift in typology regarding the NewcastleGateshead case, currently turning from a destination brand to an integrated brand, seems to present a variety of challenges. Mainly, we can notice a weak involvement of the local communities that, even though recognizing the value of the underlying cultural projects, have not been developing an affective attachment to the brand. The brand is, thus, weakly credible (even weakly perceived), so that the extension of the brand to multiple and arising aspects of the partnership (currently willing to promote a range of economic industries and marketable aspects of the local area) is hardly fulfilled (see Chapter Three).

Concerning the *forces driving the emergence of inter-territorial brands*, both the pragmatic and the political dimensions, argued in Chapter Two, are confirmed. In the case of NewcastleGateshead, especially at the beginning of the process, there was a strong pragmatism based on the assumption of a complementarity of assets, skills and competences, characterising the city of Newcastle and the town of Gateshead. The partnership was motivated by the need to reach a critical mass and appropriate size, which are in line with the motivations reported in Chapter Two. Moreover, a political dimension seems to characterise the process. The process, in fact, has been pushed forward by political ambitions and aspirations especially characterising the Gateshead Council, which has been committed to redefine the track of development of the area and, at least during the early stages, to re-balance the leadership historically held by the

Newcastle City Council. This is in line with the political aspects of the inter-territorial branding process highlighted in Chapter Two.

In the case of Val di Cornia the branded network space was linked to the need to trigger transformation. There was an evident need to change the place images and improve the perceptions of the area, which was held by a sense of frustration for the irreversible decline of traditional local economy. The branded area covers a space considered as a space of opportunity for a revitalization, which coincides with a network of natural and archaeological parks, an element that helped imagine a post-industrial scenario for the area. In the case of Val di Cornia the identification of a networked space of opportunity is related to a political dimension. This was, in fact, the result of political intuitions and ambitions of local politicians during the 1970s. Subsequently, such intuitions and ambitions became a political vision in response to the chance of financing the construction of the network. At least during the early stages, we can argue that political forces prevailed and shaped the Val di Cornia brand in relation to the emergence of a local political elite and in relation to the need for a local project fostering an endogenous development.

In the starting phase both cases relied on national government's incentives, meaning a wave of financial resources that, at the end of the 1990s, aimed at triggering a new deal for place management, according to which local authorities were asked to reinvent the development path in an 'entrepreneurial' way. On one hand, the NewcastleGateshead spilled out from the bidding process for national funds, aiming at turning the area into the European Capital of Culture. On the other hand, in Val di Cornia the so called *patti territoriali Piombino-Val di Cornia* program required multiple public and private actors to share a common vision and a common strategy to re-launch development. In Val di Cornia cooperation was stigmatized as the strategy re-starting a local growth.

It is worth noticing that the 'Cascadia model' presented in Chapter Two is of a more general interest. The NewcastleGateshead case has experienced an 'institutionalization process' according to which, once come into existence on the basis of a pragmatic rationale, the collaborative brand has become an institution, i.e. a sort of self-reinforcing norm, until being central to the political discourse on local development. In the case study such 'institutionalization' corresponded to the definition of a common masterplan and to the establishment of an organization managing it, i.e. the 1NG. In addition, the emphasis that both Councils put on the partnership is to be considered. Since being long standing and having fostered the accumulation of a collaborative capacity, the partnership seems to be firmly at the core of the two councils' development strategies.

Also the Val di Cornia brand experienced an institutionalization process, which has been intrinsically related to its 'political' nature. Since the early stages a shared planning across the five municipalities and the establishment of 'hard institutions' like Circondario and the Parchi SpA contributed to a quick institutionalization of the brand. However, along the decade of longitudinal observation, we can argue the presence of rising (though weak) signals of de-institutionalization of the brand. This was sustained by part of interviewees witnessing a loss of commitment to the brand, and this was also suggested by the abolition of the Circondario that, though imposed by a national law, left an institutional void.

In regards to *the salient phases* of inter-territorial branding, in the case of NewcastleGateshead the process has been fairly linear, since the coalition building, naming and the identity-building were defined subsequently. However, the process has been cyclical in response to a cyclical need to re-launch the brand and to mobilize a renewed interest across the different brand phases. In fact, there have been steps at which the brand risked losing momentum so that new waves of coalition building, naming (here to be intended more as the linkage of the brand to a refreshed set of meanings), and identity-building, were undertaken.

A different process characterised the Val di Cornia case. Here a lack of designed branding strategy made the brand emerge according to a non-linear sequence of steps. The shared planning in the 1970s introduced the label 'Val di Cornia' (the naming phase), thus identifying an imagined place that created a legacy compelling to strengthen the coalition building. The network identity was constantly nurtured locally, by means of a first-hand network experience for local communities. The label 'Val di Cornia' simply put on the map an integrated and rather self-contained area, while the novelty of the parks network further improved the meaning of the Val di Cornia project, thus contributing to embed the brand in locals' minds. Also the Val di Cornia brand achieved momentum, which was strongly fostered by local media echoing the major facts reshaping the face of the area. However, in this case cyclical mechanisms were not triggered, so that currently the long wave of momentum experienced by the brand is coming to an end. That is, the process, which is highly uncontrolled and unmanaged, is not activating new waves reinvigorating enthusiasm for the brand. Arguably, a weak management of 'waves of momentum' can challenge the brand sustainability over time.

The reference to a rich symbology is evident in both cases. Elements of natural and built environments are used to make cooperation tangible, thus helping the audiences to figure a collaborative space. The presence of a river, which is at the core of cooperation in both cases, has different meanings. In the case of NewcastleGateshead there is the overarching idea "to shape a city" across the river Tyne which historically played the role of physical barrier between the two areas. From here the strong reliance on the iconicity of the bridges, crossing the river and linking the two brand partners. The bridges are iconic infrastructures shaping the profile of NewcastleGateshead and symbolizing the collaboration across the river. Differently, the river Cornia constitutes the common thread across the five municipalities which are physically and historically linked by the presence of the river. This linkage is also echoed by the name 'Val di Cornia' that means the valley of the river Cornia.

While NewcastleGateshead is strongly based on a symbology coming from the built environment, mainly produced by the culture-led regeneration in the region, Val di Cornia heavily relies on a symbology related to the natural environment and the historical heritage. These symbols represent the rediscovery of an important part of the local history before the upturn of the steel industry in Piombino town. Put simply, while NewcastleGateshead is an attempt to construct an identity by building on present actions and developments, Val di Cornia is an attempt to retrieve a 'rural' and 'natural' past characterising the whole area before the industrial age.

Although this project did not analyse brand communication, it is worth noticing the similarities between the graphic elements used for the logo of the Parchi Val di Cornia SpA, which is the company managing the parks network in Val di Cornia, and the ones

used for the logo of NewcastleGateshead Initiative, which is the destination marketing agency deriving from the two councils' partnership. In the former case the natural elements, i.e. green hills, the blue river and the sea, in the latter case the artefacts, i.e. the bridge (the Millennium Bridge) and its reflection in the river, do recall the attention to the linkages across a cooperating geographical space.

Figure 1.5. Val di Cornia and NewcastleGateshead: the brand logos
Source: http://www.parchivaldicornia.it/parco.php?codex=soct-lav; http://www.newcastlegateshead.com/)

In NewcastleGateshead the *forces challenging the process of inter-territorial branding* are fairly related to the current financial and economic crisis, which is generally strengthening the rationale of competition, while enhancing the costs of collaboration. As a matter of fact, collaboration across administrative borders implies costs of coordination in terms of time and control. In contrast, the crisis is asking for rapid decision-making and, as suggested by interviewees, rapidity is a barrier towards the pursuit of ambitious choices like collaboration. There is also a matter of leadership which currently has to be stronger in order to face the crisis, while the two councils' partnership might be perceived as weak to head a process of economic development. In addition, national influences on local systems have to be considered. UK national government is pushing for the enhancement of local authorities' leadership, thus exerting top-down influence in favour of localism and competition among local authorities. This has to be added to the fact that the two councils represent two separate and distinct political and administrative identities, which are committed to maintain their independence in locals' perceptions, in order to establish a dialogue with (and consensus among) their own constituencies.

There is a hard balance when managing multiple political, social and economic identities coexisting in the same geographical space. The identities concerning the two councils separately (e.g. Newcastle City Council, Gateshead Council, Newcastle Science City and NE1) and NewcastleGateshead should be part of a sort of 'brand ecology'[29], where consistency across multiple brands is easily perceived and understood by the audiences or, at least, where the different brands do not determine centripetal forces and conflicting messages, which end up reducing the credibility of the collaborative brand.

The coexistence of multiple identities regards also the Val di Cornia case where, however, the process has headed to a clear separation of the individual (partners') brands from the network brand. This was particularly evident in the case of Piombino town in regards to its relation with Val di Cornia: the former is dissociated from the latter, as if Piombino was not integral part of Val di Cornia. This was possible by defining two different, almost

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[29] The term 'brand ecology' is here used in a non-technical sense. For the technical use, see Percy et al. 2001.

opposite, narratives about Piombino and Val di Cornia, until dividing them spatially in residents' perceptions (see Chapter Four).

The Val di Cornia brand seems to be losing its relational content, which was at the core of the brand originally. The network brand is progressively becoming a destination brand, where fairly standard - weakly distinctive - elements of a tourism destination are 'packaged' statically, such as heritage for example. This means that the emphasis is shifting from networking elements, such as the cooperation for change and the network of parks, which have been the elements of innovation for the area, to an homogenization with the surrounding regional context, i.e. the beautiful and natural place where good wine is produced. There is, thus, a loss of distinctiveness challenging the network brand, since it is losing its original relational content. The point is that, in contrast, the network can be used as a brand value in itself in order to define a distinctive brand, meaning that the networking experience may convey meanings to the brand by telling a new story about the collaborating places.

Both cases raise the issue of the scale at which the collaborative space is designed. In fact, evidence suggests that, along with the development of the network brand, there is the need to recast the space of collaboration in order to include additional areas. In the case of Val di Cornia there is a rising feeling that the network is too narrow spatially for being visible on the global map. Val di Cornia is deemed a functional geography, also being a SEL statistical unit, i.e. a local economic system, used for regional programming. However, according to some, it is so small that hardly it can be marketed as a relevant space to wider audiences. In contrast, the NewcastleGateshead case was defined as an appropriate geography for marketing purposes as the urban core of the region, but it is now challenged by a new wave of development which, according to some, has to be designed within a broader functional space.

The two cases introduce the issue of a dialectic between functional and marketable spaces, which is particularly relevant when analysing the process of branding relational spaces. It seems that the two types of space are likely not to coincide, so that a choice has to be made. Accordingly, this project argues that branding can be carried out not only for administrative and/or political geographies (cities, provinces, administrative regions, countries), but also for:
- functional spaces, which are areas characterised by self-contained flows of socio-economic interactions;
- marketable spaces, which are to be intended as those scales at which distinctive brands can be designed.

The two analysed cases stressed, however, the challenges in making these last two brand types sustainable.

We report some remarks concerning the two *brands* emerging from the analysed processes of network branding. This project drew particular attention to brands' capacity of fostering re-branding effects, that is an image change. Both cases, in fact, were selected in light of their post-industrial legacy for economic development. We can argue that both collaborative brands produced effects of re-branding. On one hand, the NewcastleGateshead brand was effective in creating synergies with the regional brand, and together these brands reshaped the face of the North East of England. On the other hand, the empirical investigation demonstrated that the Val di Cornia brand was effective

in embedding an alternative story about the area in locals' minds, in clear contrast with the one of a declining industrial area, despite the fact that this last still describes local reality.

However, while the Val di Cornia brand succeeded in developing a strong sense of place and in being perceived as an identity, the NewcastleGateshead brand missed developing a sense of place in local communities which, thus, consider it more as a label than as a proper brand. Although local communities have experienced the cultural regeneration related to the brand, this is not perceived as such while the actions and projects labelled 'NewcastleGateshead' seem to improve the brand equity of Newcastle and Gateshead separately. That is, differently from Val di Cornia and despite the rhetoric presented by official documents, NewcastleGateshead is not 'becoming one place'.

To conclude, as a result of the exploratory (theoretical and empirical) insight into network brands and branding, we list the following statements which represent the main findings of this research project (these points are discussed in the Introduction):

- network branding builds on a collaborative rationale according to which a range of strategies mixing diverse degrees of cooperation and competition can be adopted;
- the network branding process is characterised by both pragmatic and political dimensions;
- in a turbulent environment, characterised by uncertainty and resources scarcity, on one hand pragmatic motivations are likely to favour the emergence of network brands and branding, on the other hand the political dimension can challenge the ambitious and costly choice (in terms of time and control) of collaboration;
- network brands and branding are likely to experience an institutionalization process.

This set of statements may guide further research in this field. Each of these points constitute an issue to be tackled by further research.

2.3. Managerial implications

This section outlines the implications of this research project in terms of network brand management. By means of an analysis of the process of network brand emergence and evolution, there is the chance to underline those issues that can guide network branding from a managerial perspective.

Firstly, findings suggest that the network brand can either be the result of *ad hoc* initiatives promoting a collaborative space (as in the case of NewcastleGateshead) or, rather, be a spontaneous outcome of networking on which attention can be catalyzed, for instance, by major facts and local media, claiming a change as well as by local community's first-hand experience of the network (this is the case of Val di Cornia). There are two issues worthy of attention. On the basis of the observation of the two analysed cases, it seems that the spontaneous inter-territorial branding process, covering an integrated area and making local community experience the brand (Val di Cornia), can reach a higher brand equity than the strategically designed collaborative brand, which can result as weakly capable of producing awareness, loyalty and recognition among audiences (NewcastleGateshead).

On the other hand, we saw that in the case of the strategically designed brand there is higher capacity of managing and orienting the unavoidable brand change. In fact, while in the case of NewcastleGateshead brand managers are currently attempting to foster further improvements and an expansion of the brand vision, in the case of Val di Cornia the brand has gone across an uncontrolled specialization, which impoverished and standardized brand scope and meaning. Accordingly, there is the need to balance spontaneous and uncontrolled dynamics leading to the emergence of network brands - as resulting from a 'natural' propensity of territories to network their assets and resources - with the capacity and the need to manage the process, meaning the capacity and need to direct network branding according to a wider developmental strategy.

Secondly, when approaching network brand management, there is the need to take into account and foster network brand's as much as possible. In order to be sustainable and effective over time, the network brand has to face transformations of mission and scope. This is due to the need to revise the development strategy according to the changes of conditions, compelling to reshape the brand. The two analysed cases highlighted a shift in typology over time. Particularly, empirical evidence suggested that starting from sectoral brands, focusing on narrow messages concerning one single aspect of the network, e.g. tourism and the interpretation of the network as a destination, may challenge the capacity to broaden the conveyed message eventually. In contrast, when starting with broader messages typical of integrated brands, the shift towards sectoral brands seems not to present particular challenges.

This suggests the importance of designing network brands as umbrella brands, that is as brands covering as many faces of the network as possible. This can also be said reasonable in light of current trends in place branding stressing how diversity – diversity of assets and, accordingly, of the communicated messages - is relevant in order to allure all the distinct targets. For example, tourists look for a rich place experience going beyond mere cultural attractions, in order to have a 'real' experience of life in a given place, while investors look for a rich local offer including quality of life, leisure and cultural attractions, in order to allure talents and, especially, knowledge workers. Put simply, initially the design of an integrated network brand can be one possible strategy to pursu effective and sustainable - in this case meaning flexible - network brands.

Flexibility should also be sought in terms of spatial coverage. Instead of a static network, the boundaries of such collaborative space should follow the shape of the relational space supporting development mechanisms. The relational space fostering development can change over time, and the network brand should be capable to include new partners, i.e. new territories.

However, this is controversial. Unless the network brand has earned significant brand equity, additional areas will probably be reluctant to enjoy an existing partnership where the rules of the game have been already decided. For this reason, particular attention should be drawn to maintaining the network open, thus guaranteeing favourable conditions for new partners' access. On the other hand, when the network brand has reached significant brand equity, the network brand can work as a magnet alluring an increasing number of territories willing to participate in and be part of the network. This was proved by the Øresund brand considered in Chapter Two. The lack of clear geographical, administrative and political borders, which have been changed and re-discussed over time, made the Øresund a flexible brand, so that even far geographical

areas seemed to be willing to be part of it. For example, Berg (2000) reported about the University of Kiel in Germany applying for becoming full member of the Øresund University project, which is the network of eleven universities in the Øresund region. That is, there is room for the network brand to achieve a sort of agglomerative capacity, thus reshaping the network over time.

Thirdly, the discussion on network brands and branding suggests the importance of the notion of brand architecture. The case of NewcastleGateshead makes us think of the coexistence of multiple identities, characterising the collaborative space and giving voice to different aspects of local community. This case showed that the collaborative brand improved the equity of both Newcastle and Gateshead brands separately, at the expense of the creation of a proper 'NewcastleGateshead' brand. In contrast, the case of Val di Cornia gave an example of viable coexistence of the network brand with the individual partners' (place) brands, as demonstrated by the concurrence of the two contrasting (even opposite) brands of Piombino town and of Val di Cornia. Both are credible brands even though referring to opposite realms of values.

In terms of management the notion of brand architecture allows a conformity across distinct brands which aim at giving voice to different, even distant, stories about places by means of an articulation of multiple brands developed vertically, i.e. at different geographical scales, and horizontally, i.e. inside a specific level and dealing with diverse territorial facets. Network brands have to be conceived within a brand architecture in which synergies with place brands, meaning individual partners' brands, can be sought. Attempting to foster a network brand at the expense of individual place brands can be highly risky, since local communities are likely to reject an artificial network brand as an unfair effort to cover their own historical and cultural identities. That is, places intended as historically and politically self-contained areas, such as cities, regions, countries, have their own place identities whose strength should not be overlooked. However, initiatives of network branding can be carried out effectively, in order to add, improve and refresh the image of the networking places. Put simply, we stressed the opportunity to compose a brand architecture that includes network brands aiming to produce effects of re-branding. Re-branding, otherwise, is hardly achieved within the frame of place branding initiatives (that is, branding within administrative/political borders), because of lock-ins characterising declining areas and mirroring stereotypical negative place images. That is, network branding can be conceived as functional to a rejuvenation of place brands. Accordingly, the impacts of network branding on individual place brands should be favoured and, at the same time, monitored over time.

Fourthly, the analysis of network branding made a cyclical pattern of the process emerge. It is worth noticing that network brands management has to deal with waves of enthusiasm which tend to be followed by losses of brand momentum. Accordingly, there is a cyclical need to foster a collective mobilization of interests and to draw attention to the network space. This is arguably a common problem to all kinds of brands, including place brands. However, in the case of network brands, a decrease of interest, enthusiasm and brand visibility might be a serious challenge because of the extremely fragile legitimacy characterising network brands. This means that the maintenance of momentum is particularly relevant in those cases that, as for network brands, the lack of one single and well-defined accountable authority may weaken the brand project permanently. The loss of momentum is intrinsic to brands. Consequently, network brand

management has to be particularly aware of this and constantly look for a way to re-launch momentum, according to an appropriate timing.

3. Methodology: concluding remarks

It is useful to summarise how the whole research project was conceived according to a twofold perspective, the within-case analysis and the outline of cross-case patterns coming from the juxtaposition of the two selected cases (Eisenhardt 1989). Figure 2.5. represents the components of the research project and gives details of the adopted methodological approaches.

The research project was articulated in five steps. The first, i.e. Chapter One, consisted in a literature review on place branding where the overview of concepts allowed an identification of the overarching theoretical constructs to be used for the research. A preliminary research question was defined according to the identification of a gap concerning collaborative strategies for branding crossing administrative borders. It is worth noticing how the research question was better focused in Chapter Two, where it was clear that a better explorative insight would have been possible by means of an investigation of the process underlying inter-territorial branding. This was in line with Eisenhardt's statements of a constant redefinition of problems, questions and variables in the construction of the case study (1989).

Chapter Two is exploratory in nature and fairly inductive, since it builds on the collection and framing of information and data on the basis of a secondary research. This chapter presented a case-based research, since it relied on cases for theory-building, even though these were not treated as case studies. The discussed statements concerned the forces favouring and challenging the network brand emergence and evolution, together with the likely phases of the process.

From a within-case perspective, Chapter Three tackled the organizational dimension of collaborative branding process and, by referring to a tailored theoretical framework, it adopted a deductive approach to research. The chapter, in fact, attempted to a theory-testing so that a model guided the interpretation of the process characterising the selected case. As a matter of fact, the case study is increasingly considered as an appropriate strategy to investigate a pattern of timing and sequences of facts in order to describe and reach insight into the temporal aspects of social processes (Bennett and Elman 2006).

Chapter Four is based on a mix of inductive and deductive approaches. There is an initial engagement with theory in order to translate theoretical constructs of place branding into research variables according to the relational paradigm. These constructs are used as means to reach an understanding of the nature of network brands, inductively emerging from the empirical research. The research process follows the pattern suggested by Bonoma (1985) consisting in a 'revision cycle' of theory/data/theory, such that the research pattern pumps the empirical findings into the theoretical constructs, thus ending up suggesting routes for theory-building.

Finally, the conclusive chapter is linked to Chapter Two. A mixed approach is adopted since inductively it attempts to confirm, disconfirm or, more generally, enrich the statements outlined in Chapter Two. The conclusive chapter has discussed cross-case patterns involving the cases analysed in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, in order to complete the theory-building process started in Chapter Two. In Chapter Two the 'built theory' concerned the nature of inter-territorial branding, while the Conclusion chapter utilizes the two case studies in order to add evidence furthering and supporting the discussion. As a result, this research project has provided a description and explanation of the likely mechanisms leading to the emergence, formation and evolution of network brands.
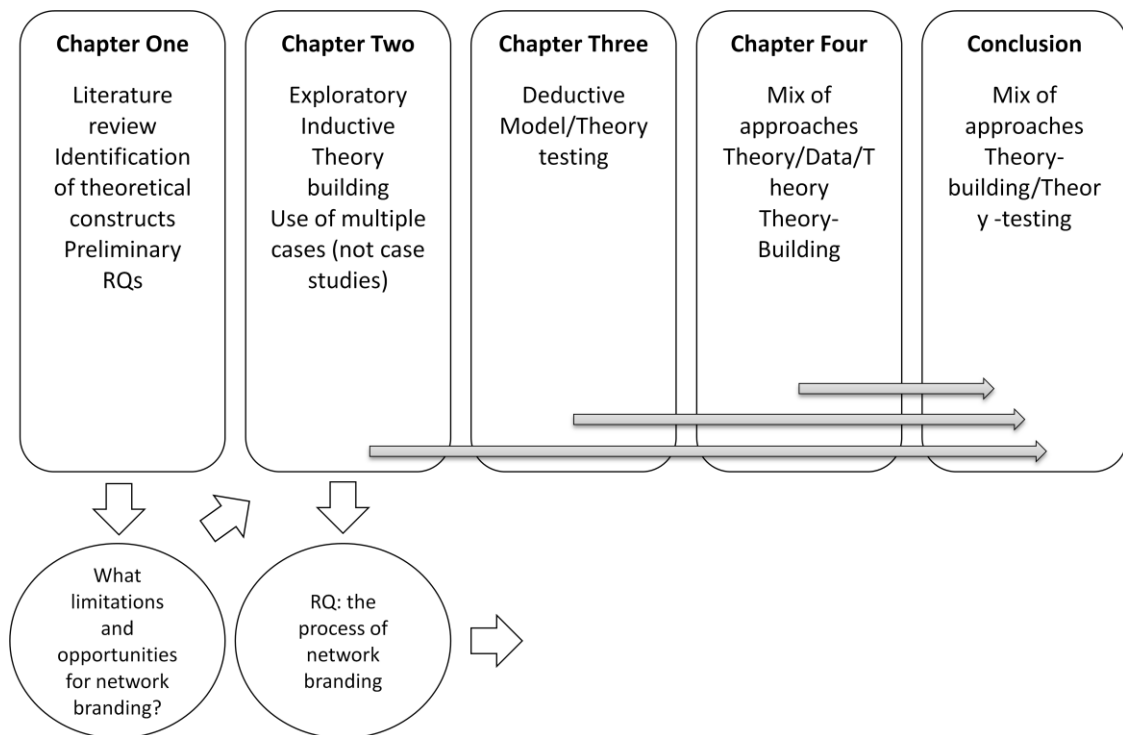

Figure 2.5. The research project: Design and Methodology
Source: the author's elaboration

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148

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