

PART I

PLACE MARKETING

Guest editor: Pieter H. Pellenberg

INTRODUCTION

Contrary to what will be a first impression of many outsiders, place promotion is not a modern phenomenon, but has a rather long history. Already in the age of colonial expansion, both west European and east coast American newspapers were full of advertisements aiming at potential migrants. In the last decades of the 19th century seaside resorts and historic towns in the US and the UK ran promotional campaigns to lure tourists. Developers of the late 19th and early 20th century suburbs in the UK used promotional strategies. And for over a 100 years now all cities in Europe and other continents that rivalled for the nomination to host the Olympics have been seeking the prestige associated with staging this mega event (Gold and Ward, 1994; Gold and Gold, 2007).

From the 1980s onwards however, place promotion reached new and higher levels of activity and is now a permanent feature in urban development policies. Its rise is definitely connected to the economic recession of the early 1980s, which made urban governors more conscious of being involved in a virtual 'place war' with other towns and cities, competing for inhabitants, students, visitors, and maybe most important: firms that bring employment and income to the urban dwellers. Cities have to be 'sold' to these 'clients'. Of course the parallel between product marketing and place marketing is not perfect. What makes them different is the complexity of the place products, their non-exclusive use, and the non-profit character of the selling party (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990). But there is sufficient consonance between them to make city marketers realise that mere promotion is not enough to successfully sell a place product. Hence the password 'place promotion' is exchanged for 'city marketing', which according to Ashworth and Voogd's pioneering theoretical work refers to a comprehensive process of internal and external auditing, strategy choice, implementation of measures of a promotional, spatial and organisational nature, and finally evaluation and feedback, in order to reformulate goals and targets. In the period that follows, gradually a body of knowledge concerning city market-

ing develops, along with a growing mass of professional writers and consultants, some of whom reach a modern guru status (e.g. Kotler *et al.*, 1993; Anholt, 2007, to name but a few of the most well-known).

In the past decade, the ideas about place marketing (and the jargon that goes with it) change again. Parallel to developments in modern consumer marketing, modern place marketing adopts a strategy of 'branding'. In his recent PhD thesis Kavaratzis describes this as a new (third) episode in the application of city marketing, and characterises the goal of city branding as 'creating and managing emotional and psychological associations with the city'. City branding strategies can be recognised by their tendency to focus on visual elements such as new slogans and new logos and the design of advertising campaigns around these visual elements (Kavaratzis, 2008). Typical examples of the new branding strategy are the campaigns of Berlin ('Das Neue Berlin'), Edinburgh ('Inspiring Capital'), London ('Totally London') and Amsterdam ('I Amsterdam').

This issue of *European Spatial Research and Policy* aims to inform its readers of some new angles and examples of modern place marketing and its possible effects. First of all, Gregory Ashworth delves in the new branding strategy, asking for the main local planning instruments that can and are being used. He highlights the three main instruments of city branding, which he identifies as 'personality association' (e.g. Barcelona with Gaudi), 'signature building and design' (e.g. London with the Tower Bridge or Canary Wharf) and 'event hallmarking' (like being 'Cultural capital' or 'Olympic city'). Then we have two articles serving as illustrative case studies of place marketing experience, both from Western Europe where it has a longer history, and from Eastern Europe, where it is a much more recent phenomenon. The East European experience from Hungary (Debrecen) is described in Gábor Kozma's contribution to the issue, and again comes to the fore in Mihalis Kavaratzis' article, which investigates marketing and branding practices of two European cities in East and West (Budapest and Amsterdam). From the branding practice in these cities Kavaratzis tries to extract lessons that will support the further theoretical development of city marketing and city branding.

Finally, the article by Pellenbarg and Meester about the Groningen marketing campaign is associated with not the least important aspect of place marketing, i.e. its effectiveness. Of course this is intrinsically difficult to measure, because it is virtually impossible to prove a causal relationship between a positive firm migration balance, or growing numbers of visitors and inhabitants, and the existence of a place branding campaign. Still it is odd to see that there is generally not much attention in the place marketing literature for the effect (output) side at all. The attention in articles, reports and books is mostly devoted to what one might call the input side: the structure of the marketing processes, the actors involved, and the instruments used. In case of Olympic cities writers of course tend to pay attention to newly built infrastructures and buildings, and

the tourist streams evoked by the event. But references to remarkable changes in city or regional images as being measured during the length of a marketing campaign are quite rare. The Groningen campaign, which has been monitored at regular intervals for almost two decades, stands out as an exception here. An alternative approach could be the monitoring of city inhabitant's (or tourist's, or entrepreneurial) satisfaction levels. Again, it will be difficult to prove a relationship with marketing efforts. On the other hand, this user's satisfaction might be considered as the ultimate goal of marketing.

Pieter H. PELLENBARG*

REFERENCES

- ANHOLT, S. (2007), *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- ASHWORTH, G. J. and VOOGD, H. (1990), *Selling the City. Marketing Approaches in Public Sector Urban Planning*, London: Belhaven Press.
- GOLD, J. R. and GOLD, M. M. (2007), *Olympic Cities*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- GOLD, J. R. and WARD, S. V. (eds) (1994), *Place Promotion. The Use of Publicity and Marketing to Sell Towns and Regions*, Chichester: Wiley and Sons.
- KAVARATZIS, M. (2008), *From City Marketing to City Branding*, Groningen: Faculty of Spatial Sciences (PhD thesis).
- KOTLER, P., HAIDER, H. and REIN, I. (1993), *Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry and Tourism to Cities, States and Nations*, New York: The Free Press.

* Pieter H. PELLENBARG, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen, P.O. Box 800, 9700 AV Groningen, The Netherlands, e-mail: p.h.pellenbarg@rug.nl