Visible Cities: The Role of Place Branding for a Sustainable Urban Development in European Cities at a Time of Crisis: A Case Study

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Visible Cities: The Role of Place Branding for a Sustainable Urban Development in European Cities at a Time of Crisis: A Case Study

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Abstract: With the current establishment of place branding as city marketing’s branch (Kavaratzis, 2012) all the promotional activities that happen in a city are embodied in its activities. Those activities that are based on the city’s identity are to be taken under consideration (Hospers, 2010). However, creating the impression of a prosperous and attractive urban environment requires more than a targeted marketing campaign; city branding has to take under consideration the historical and cultural background, the social and the economic development, the landscape and the natural surroundings, the infrastructures and the architectural statements of the city and their possible interaction and combination to actually create a place with an enhanced monetary value, a saleable place (Zhang, 2009). Following a theoretical basis provided structured on a literature review, this is a case-study of middle-sized European cities, namely Zoetermeer (The Netherlands) and Uppsala (Sweden). The aim of the study is to investigate the role of the stakeholders in the branding policies in a European level. It also questions if European cities work towards a more sustainable urban environment and if place branding is a tool to achieve a greener development. The study finds that the stakeholders’ role is of vital importance for the cities’ planning strategies and that sustainability is an integrated in the branding policies. It finally suggests that place branding can be a tool for a sustainable urban development but more radical steps towards this direction have to be taken in the future.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, city marketing, place branding, stakeholders, European cooperation, city networks

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Visible Cities: The Role of Place Branding for a Sustainable Urban Development in European Cities at a Time of Crisis: A Case Study

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Summary: Along with the reconsideration of the emerging financial system, cities around Europe have been following closely and have been actively participating to sustainability-related activities (Keiner and Kim, 2006). On top of that, building a strong image is one of the biggest contemporary pursuits that cities strive for. When it comes to the establishment of the city’s image, identity is a leading attribute (Riza et al., 2012) whereas place branding is the tool to achieve the economic, political and cultural expectations (Kemp, 2012). All places form their own unique and exclusive identities (Riza et al., 2012) and city or place branding is an essential part of the agenda for their promotion (Kavaratzis, 2007).

The study discusses the ways the multiple stakeholders of a city can affect its place branding activities and their complex and multi-disciplinary nature that establishes place branding as a more complicated concept than product and corporate branding (Kavaratzis, 2009). It aims to illustrate the level of commitment of middle-sized European cities towards sustainable urban development by examining the cases of Zoetermeer (The Netherlands) and Uppsala (Sweden). Urban planners and branding managers from both cities have been interviewed and have also been asked their opinion about place branding’s capacity to promote sustainable-orientated initiatives in the urban environment.

A theoretical framework escorts the study and discusses the concepts of a multi-stakeholder approach of the European urban landscapes in Europe.

The conclusions drawn from the study support that the multi-disciplinary and complex nature of the city’s stakeholders is apparent as well as their strong influence when designing urban planning or place branding policies. There is also an obvious consciousness about the importance of sustainability at the European level and a close cooperation between branding and environmental experts for certain projects. The study has also found that place branding is today a way to promote sustainable initiatives but its activities are orientated towards other themes. However, place branding has the potential to shape a leading tool for the occurrence of more sustainable cities in Europe provided that sustainability and green development will turn into cities’ main priorities.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, city marketing, place branding, stakeholders, European cooperation, city networks

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Abbreviations

CF      Cohesion Funds (provided by the EU)
CSF    Common Strategic Framework (Funds provided by the EU)
ENTP   European New Towns Platform
ERDF   European Regional Development Funds (provided by the EU)
EU     European Union
SD     Sustainable Development
UN     United Nations
Preface

“Its, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.”

Italo Calvino, author of Invisible Cities

In today’s globalized world, cities reflect our collective identity. At the same time, competition between nations for the financial and political predominance is constantly rising. Cities are the starting point for all human activities and therefore valuable networks that have created their own images and brands. Cities are the ambassadors of their countries and their essential goal is to be visible outside their borders. Visibility is a term that contains most of the contemporary cities’ expectations; Modern cities, irrespective of their geographical position, aim to attract financial investments, become popular tourist destinations, centers of culture and all in all preserve or improve their current status quo.

Among those quests, one can notice cities’ growing desire to promote and establish themselves as green capitals, or as supporters of green urbanism and of the disciplines of sustainable development. This constitutes a noticeable shift over the last decade, when focusing on the European continent. The ideology and the values of sustainability are gaining ground and are more sincerely supported by major actors such as the European Union (EU). The EU has clearly defined its Europe 2020 strategy that paves a path towards a smarter, inclusive and sustainable economy intending to meet specific objectives also for climate and energy issues.

Sustainability is more than ever at the center of discussions of public officials, large corporations and smaller enterprises, universities, politicians but is also turning into a tangible idea for European citizens. I have had the chance to live and work as a trainee for the European New Towns Platform (ENTP) based in Brussels. The experience of working with newly formed European towns was unique for the fact that I became familiar with a variety of problems, policies and projects of the 26 members all over Europe. The most troublesome issue for those towns concerns their recognition and the establishment of a strong identity.

This is even more complicated during our times that Europe faces a social and financial crisis. At one of the conferences during November 2012 in Paris, I participated to a debate among representatives of different municipalities around Europe, and most of the discussions were focused on issues concerning their cities’ visibility via place branding policies such as campaigns, cultural events and the construction of landmark buildings. This debate and the analysis of all the different strategies the local governments were presenting, has arised a question related to my work at ENTP and my studies in Sustainable Development at Uppsala University: Can city branding be a tool towards a more sustainable urban development and a greener environment for European cities and towns?

One big challenge comes with the involvement of multiple actors and stakeholders at each city’s affairs and the dense interactions and relationships between them. Each actor and each stakeholder represents certain interests and falls under one or even more categories. Each of them is involved in different activities. Place branding as the contemporary branch of city marketing is used by different players in a city, with a variety of ways and aims. Taking under consideration today’s complex societies, my research aims to look at a part of those stakeholders and actors in two middle-sized western European cities, Zoetermeer in the
Netherlands and Uppsala, Sweden. This research is a dive into the world of marketing cities and the modern pursuit of a greener urban environment. The reader should not perceive this paper as a holistic solution to the current place branding challenges and to our cities’ lack of sustainable planning but more as a novel approach between the relation of a greener ideology and place branding.

I would therefore like to mention that by looking at the perceptions and reactions of a certain group of stakeholders, means that the research becomes more narrowed and the analysis more in depth. Nevertheless, the risk of missing the importance of the whole picture is present. By examining the particular stakeholders I do not aim to show preference towards their specific interests and goals. The reason of doing so is due to the time limitation and the difficulty of presenting all the different actors and their behaviors within the cities, as it would be a rather hard task, requiring more time and further research. I do believe that cities have to be perceived as holistic systems, more or less as human organisms, that function thanks to the contribution of all the actors involved. When looking at place branding strategies it is possible to select different stakeholders and examine them separately. One can look at them the same way as we can examine the stakeholders of a corporation but without forgetting an essential difference: when focusing on a city the relationships between the actors and the stakeholders, they all turn around a single very important category: the city’s inhabitants. I have decided to analyze how managers and urban planners of the public authorities envisage their place branding plans thus if they are taking under consideration the creation of more sustainable communities. What is more, managers and urban planners are quite familiar with place branding issues thus they are involved directly to the city’s affairs. This means that they have to consider the citizens’ wellbeing whilst thinking of the financial benefits for the city when formulating their strategies. The fact that those stakeholders are directly involved to the city’s planning and they are also in touch with companies makes this category of a special interest.

The reader should therefore always bear in mind that the stakeholders examined by this research are not chosen because they are those deserving more attention, but they represent a sample and constitute an introduction to such a research that could be expanded to include more stakeholders and actors.

With my study, I aim to set the example and initiate the idea of place branding as a tool for sustainable development in Europe. The research on such a new topic is not an easy way to go but it is unquestionably an educative journey and I hope I will contribute to the way we think of our cities in the future.

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Uppsala, Sweden
1. Introduction

This chapter presents the background of sustainable development and its relation to contemporary urban city networks in Europe. It also relates briefly place branding literature with the concept of green urbanism. Finally, this chapter will summarize the aim and the delimitations of the research.

1.1 Problem Background

In 1987, the Brundtland report or “Our Common Future” of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development presented a first coherent approach to the meaning of sustainable development. In a very broad perspective, the strategy for a sustainable development “aims to promote harmony among human beings and between humanity and nature” (Brundtland, 1987). The philosophy that sustainable development is based on stands for a “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (ibid). To better understand the meaning of sustainability, the focus is on two key concepts: first, the importance to prioritize the fulfillment of the needs of the poor and secondly the limitations that the technological growth and the societal demands impose to the environment. Those limitations call into question the environment’s capacity to meet the needs of the present and the future generations.

Apart from defining the core values of sustainable development the report also stresses the urban challenges for the world’s developing and industrialized cities as were seen at that time. Large urbanized regions are heavily dependent on water, food, energy and commodities from the external environment (ibid). Those essential resource-consuming activities require the formulation of a more advanced sustainability planning in order to diminish air pollution, avoid the contamination of aquifers, prevent the stress caused by waste disposal systems, traffic congestions and tackle the rest of the huge variety of contemporary urban problems.

Today, 26 years after “Our Common Future” was published, our societies are still based on a globalized economy and lifestyle where large consumption patterns occur (European Commission, 2010). Nevertheless, in Europe a more environmentally friendly trend gains ground in post-industrial economies and for example it is to be noted that a shift towards initiatives like organic farming and local food production currently takes place (ibid). Along with the reconsideration of the emerging financial system, cities around Europe have been following closely and have been actively participating to sustainability-related activities (Keiner and Kim, 2006). In fact, since the 1990s cities have started forming networks for sustainable urban development, which have been constantly increasing. Networking activities among cities are seen as an efficient way to address environmental and social crises, enhance their managerial capacities, their urban governance and deliver services to inhabitants (ibid). Sustainability, cities and networks are ideas that function well together. Networks are platforms where knowledge, expertise and dissemination of good practices are shared thanks to their dynamic nature (ibid).

On top of the networking actions, the European Commission rewards successful initiatives with the “European Green Capital Award” since 2010. This prize is a way to support capital cities’ consistent environmental progresses and high standards, their commission towards a greener environment and to produce a role model for other European cities to follow such
good practices and get inspired (www, Europa, 2013). It is rather important to enhance the visibility of the progressive cities in Europe for sustainability to be established faster and become a prototype for urban centers’ evolution.

Strategies such as the cities’ partnership in networks and rewarding cities for their green policies, aim to bring them at the forefront. Those steps constitute a very positive contribution to sustainable development in regards to the European urban tissue. However, to understand the problem in a holistic way attention shall be given to the competitiveness that is raised within the modern globalized society. Cities are obliged to compete in the international market for their survival; they need to have a prosperous tourist sector, to be attractive workplaces and centers of culture (Riza et al., 2012). As an effect of globalization, cities cannot afford lagging behind and they have to come up with strategies to sell and drag attention and capital flows (Kavaratzis, 2005). Hence, building a strong image is one of the biggest contemporary pursuits that cities strive for. When it comes to the establishment of the city’s image, identity is a leading attribute (Riza et al., 2012) whereas place branding is the tool to achieve the economic, political and cultural expectations (Kemp, 2012). The identity is “the extent to which a person can recognize or recall a place as being distinct from other places” (Lynch 1960, cited in Riza et al. 2012, p.294) All places form their own unique and exclusive identities (Riza et al., 2012) and city or place branding is an essential part of the agenda for their promotion (Kavaratzis, 2007).

More and more cities around Europe include place branding in their contemporary policy agendas (Boisen, et al. 2011) as a way to formulate the city’s image (Kavaratzis, 2004). Place branding is the most appropriate suggested implementation of city marketing since it is focused on creating uniqueness and authenticity and it is closely related to a promotion of the city similar to that of products as a tool for city marketing (Riza et al., 2011).

Place marketing is not a novelty, since it has been present over decades and it constitutes a respective academic field (Hospers, 2010). Place marketing concerns a holistic approach of places according to the different local stakeholders’ demands, whereas place branding is a more specific approach to the place, focusing on the hedonistic aspect whilst aiming to add value to that particular place (Boisen, et al. 2011). Thus, as Walker (2000) points out, city or place marketing is an essential step to bring together urban renewal plans and actions for local economic development.

Place branding as the current branch of city marketing (Kavaratzis, 2012) embodies all the promotional activities that happen in a city. Those activities that are based on the city’s identity are to be taken under consideration (Hospers, 2010). However, creating the impression of a prosperous and attractive urban environment requires more than a targeted marketing campaign; city branding has to take under consideration the historical and cultural background, the social and the economic development, the landscape and the natural surroundings, the infrastructures and the architectural statements of the city and their possible interaction and combination to actually create a place with an enhanced monetary value, a saleable place (Zhang, 2009).

1.2 Problem Formulation

Branding is recognized as a powerful tool for applying marketing strategies (Caldwell and Freire, 2004). The academic community along with policy makers have embraced city branding’s significance (Dinnie, 2010) and it is nowadays considered as an emergent research domain at an international level (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011). Nonetheless, place
branding is characterized by a very limited amount of empirical research (Caldwell and Freire, 2004) and is often approached by studies on a mono-disciplinary way despite its multi-dimensional nature (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011) that is structured by different perceptions, personal interpretations and beliefs of people that sometimes are harmonized and other times are diverge (Anholt, 2005). Place branding lies on a much broader field of research disciplines than other marketing domains, namely politics, history, geography, the national identity that comes across in every case and sociology (Maheshwari et al., 2011). Apart from its nature’s wide scope, experts fail to agree on a specific definition and terminology (Anholt, 2004 cited in Maheshwari et al., 2011, p.198) thus as Kavaratzis (2009) puts it, place branding lacks a common language that could progress the interaction towards building a more solid theoretical framework. The result is that place branding ends up with a confused identity since there is an apparent lack of consensus (Skinner, 2008).

The complexity of the place branding phenomenon is the most commonly acknowledged challenge within the academia (Hankinson, 2001, Lucarelli, 2012). Place branding can be illuminated by different ways but the majority of scholars approach it by the corporate branding perspective (Hansen, 2010). Consequently, nations and places are treated as synonymous of corporations. It is therefore of great interest to examine this broadly accepted theory to access issues related to place branding. The main characteristic of corporate branding that differs in comparison with place branding, is the fact that a corporation needs to communicate a common message to its stakeholders (Schultz and de Chernatony, 2002, 2005, Kavaratzis, 2009) whereas a national or city brand may have to communicate a variety of messages (Hansen, 2010). The reason is that city branding involves the interests of diverse target groups (Kavaratzis, 2009, Hansen, 2010) and multiple stakeholders. It also deals with a significant number of organizations that guide the brand which apparently have little control upon the products and the stakeholders (Kavaratzis, 2009). The occurrence of multiple stakeholders in place branding generates its complexity due to their different or even contradictory interests and aims. In addition, the multiple stakeholder groups interact with the city brand. The result of this procedure is the generation of multiple interpretations of the meaning of the brand (Merrilees et al., 2011). It is for those reasons that this research aims to address the complexity of place branding and the roles of multiple stakeholders with different aspirations.

It is of great importance to understand the relation between place branding and sustainable development. The current literature lacks a comprehensive analysis on how those two concepts can be combined. There has been little research and little attention given on place branding as a tool for sustainable development (Maheshwari et al., 2011). Maheshwari (ibid) underlines that scholars agree that place brands are multifaceted but they fail to clarify those facets and their impact to sustainable development in the urban environment.

This fundamental lack of a framework or model intensifies the need of such an approach of this issue. When looking at middle-sized European cities and the application of place branding, it is very interesting to make a step further and attempt to identify the role of place branding and if it is a tool for bringing sustainability in the center of contemporary urbanism. However, the first priority is to investigate if a greener urban environment and sustainability constitute a real trend and if there is a shift towards this ideology and if yes to what extent.
1.3 Aim and Delimitations

The aim of this research is to identify the role of place branding for a sustainable urban development in European cities. It also aims to present the role of a group of stakeholders and describe their involvement to branding the cities of the case studies.

The research questions that this study will focus on are:

- What is the role of stakeholders in place branding policies in Europe?
- Do middle-sized cities in Europe aim to create more sustainable urban environments?
- Is place branding a tool to achieve urban sustainable development?

The research will focus on two European cities as case studies. The two cities are Zoetermeer in the Netherlands and Uppsala in Sweden. Both of them are middle-sized cities representing two financially stable countries in Europe. The study will examine certain stakeholders in relation to place branding and sustainable development. The stakeholders are representatives of the public or private marketing sector and the public urban planning sector of the cities. The stakeholders are narrowed down and the study will not attempt to refer to all the actors and stakeholders involved in a city brand.

The study aims to the specific stakeholders because of the complexity of the city branding nature and since there is a time limitation for a master thesis to be delivered.

A mixed method of research will be used to conduct the study. The research will contain personal interviews of a semi-structured nature focused on gathering the opinions and ideas of stakeholders with a business-orientated point of view at the administrative level of the municipalities or the private sector (marketing managers and urban planners). It is therefore of great interest and value to have the interviewees’ opinion.

The theoretical framework is based on the Stakeholder Theory that has been described in detail by R. Edward Freeman in his Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach (Freeman, 2010). This is a theory related to the fields of organizational management and business ethics that mainly focuses on the stakeholders that affect or are affected by a corporation. Freeman analyzes the strategic management processes of a corporation by the stakeholder perspective and provides a methodology to enhance the business’s’ competitiveness and build the updated, contemporary image of the corporation’s internal and external relations. The reason for choosing this theory was the similarity between a corporation and a city in terms of branding. In fact, corporate branding and place branding both include multiple groups of stakeholders (Kavaratzis, 2009) that create a more complex environment comparing to product branding (Kavaratzis, 2009). Looking at place branding from the multiple stakeholders perspective is a quite suitable approach of the issue as it points out the real complexity of the topic and provides a holistic view of the city’s actors that influence the place branding policies in direct or indirect ways. Thus, there is a respected part of the academia supporting this approach (Jones, 2005, Polonsky and Scott, 2005, Merrilees et al., 2011).
1.4 Outline

This chapter provides an outline of the study and describes the content of the different subdivisions. To provide a better overview Fig. 1 is used below to present graphically the chapters.

The first chapter is an introduction to the research, providing a background for sustainable development and explaining the definition of place branding in the context of the contemporary European societies. It briefly introduces the complexities involved while studying this marketing branch. This chapter also presents the research problem, the aim of the study and clarifies the limitations of the research.

The second chapter presents the methodology selected and the argumentation that supports the decision to conduct semi-structured interviews along with a website analysis for both the cities involved in the case study analysis.

On the third chapter the reader has the opportunity to fully understand the conceptual framework of the study. It offers a broader image of the foundational concepts of the research. Hence this part explores in depth the idea of place branding. The reader will also become familiar with the theoretical framework on which the study is built. The chapter provides a thorough analysis of the literature and more precisely of Freeman’s Stakeholder Theory and elaborates on its application on place branding.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the results of the interviews and the website analysis. It presents the perception of place branding as seen by the place branding managers of the city of Zoetermeer and the city of Uppsala. The chapter also presents the results concerning place branding and the promotion of sustainable development at the urban level.

Chapter five focuses on the analysis of the interviews’ results. The stakeholder theory is applied and adapted to the needs of the research as a tool to cope with the complexity of the stakeholders’ and their diverse interests.

The next chapter, chapter 6, is a final conclusion of the research that sums up the processes followed and the study results.

The final chapter discusses some further suggestions for future studies on the subjects of sustainable development and place branding policies in European cities.
2. Methodology

This chapter describes the methods used to conduct the study. It also offers a justification behind the selection of the particular strategies and the decision of working with a multi-method approach.

2.1 The Choice of a Multi-method Approach

The study is based on qualitative methodology. The advantage is its ability of enhancing our understanding about the place branding strategies and the dynamics of the stakeholders’ relationships. Qualitative methods are suitable for marketing-orientated issues since they “enable a deeper understanding of behavior, rather than a shallow representation of behaviors” (Granot et al., 2012). A multi-method has been chosen for the research, combining a theoretical and empirical perspective. The theoretical background is important for a deeper understanding of the different variables that form the problem namely, the role of sustainable development at the municipal level and place branding as a means for achieving the first. An elaboration on the theory and an extensive literature review follow in chapters 3 and 4 respectively. The empirical part is based on a case-study research.

2.1.1 The Case Studies

The purpose of the case study is according to Gummesson (2001) “to arrive at specific or general conclusions about certain phenomena, recognizing the multitude of variables, complex interrelations and ambiguities of social life. Case study research provides the researcher with an input of real-world data from which concepts can be formed and propositions and extant theory can be tried”. A case study is valuable because of its holistic approach that tries to enlighten all the relationships formed in a network beyond the easily identified distinct cause and effect activities (ibid). As Eisenhardt (1989) puts it, a case study is a research strategy that allows us to understand the dynamics of a single situation.

In this particular study the analysis of the Dutch and the Swedish cities’ policies is useful for an in-depth understanding of the problem. Apart from this, Yin (1994) also argues that
the empirical approach that a case study leads us to is one that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when the boundaries of the phenomena are not clearly evident”. Therefore, the comparison between the trends of the two cases is one of great interest as they are not isolated and are seen as part of a network of relations within a city.

2.1.2 Data Collection

The method used for the data collection is interviews. Interviews were chosen due to their potential of providing detailed information about the local place branding policies that would otherwise be impossible to find or access. Thus interviewing different stakeholders offers a good understanding of the interests each of them has and an overview of the complexity of the issue. This method is quite useful for the data analysis as the reader will have the possibility to have the city municipality’s aspirations for the future and the goals set by the stakeholders.

Conducting interviews is a quite popular and suitable choice within the different qualitative methods amongst students and researchers (Hannabuss, 1996, Qu and Dumay, 2011). One of the reasons that interviewing is appropriate for this study is its capacity to gather information, opinions and the personal beliefs of the interviewees in a very handy, consistent and structured way. Its very strong advantage is the focus on the actor i.e. the interview aims on extracting a person’s views and is exclusively focused on the individual (ibid), in this case, the stakeholder. As Granot (et.al, 2012) stresses: “If, however, the researcher’s goal is to understand the meaning participants make of their personal and professional experience, then interviewing provides a more effective way of inquiry”. The style of the interviews is an open-ended, semi-structured form allowing predefined questions to lead the conversation but also giving the freedom to the interviewee to focus on aspects that he or she finds of great importance.

The qualitative study gathers a purposeful sample, which is small and carefully selected to be thoroughly analyzed (Patton, 1990). It is a homogeneous sample which according to Patton (1990) is a category referring to a smaller group in contrast to maximum variation sampling that involves many, diverse groups. The author defines the goal of the sample as: “The purpose here is to describe some particular subgroup in depth”. The study focuses on two subgroups of a city’s stakeholders: the place branding managers and the urban planners.

2.1.3 The Interviews

The interviews were based on a questionnaire that was adapted to address in the most appropriate manner the two case studies. The questions were divided in two groups, those for the place branding managers and those for the urban planners.

2.1.3.1 Zoetermeer

In the case of Zoetermeer, the two professionals were working closely together partnering in many municipal projects. To avoid a biased result I have interviewed the professionals separately. The interviewees were encouraged throughout the whole process to give their personal view and opinion on the issue. Ensuring that the interviews cover all the topics related to the research is a hard process. I had to plan carefully the questions and this was a
challenge since the interviewees come from different backgrounds that I had not sufficient previous familiarity with.

The professionals from the Netherlands, are both employed by the municipality of Zoetermeer (Gemeente Zoetermeer) and I had the opportunity to reach them via the organization I was interning at Brussels (ENTP) since they are members of the Non Governmental Organization (NGO).

2.1.3.2 Uppsala

The participants from Sweden, are working in two different organizations. Karin Åkerblom, is currently employed as an urban planner for the municipality of Uppsala (Uppsala Kommun). Charlotte Skott and Anna Lindström are both employed by the private company, “Destination Uppsala AB”. Ms Skott works as a Director of the Brand Management and she collaborates with Ms Åkerblom in certain projects. The pleasant surprise was that Ms Skott invited Ms Lindström to join the discussions, due to the fact that she was more specialized on the company’s activities related to Sustainable Development.

2.1.3.3 The Structure of the Interviews

The conversations opened with a focus on the importance of sustainability for the current local marketing and urban planning projects. The next step was to discover which are the values that escort the interviewees and if a shift towards a more sustainable urban environment is one of their chief targets for the future.

After those introductory questions the participants were asked to describe some projects related to sustainable development and the role of the citizens in this process. The interviewees had to map out the stakeholders related to all their activities and to reflect on the possibility of a future environmental challenge that could force them change their current plans. Therefore another related question was their opinion about the contribution of the environmental department to their activities.

The respondents then had to express their opinion concerning the significance of place branding as a tool to promote the city in general and eventually lead to a more sustainable environment. Finally, the marketing managers formed a definition of what a city markets in concrete terms.

The interviews were all conducted in person. I had the chance to visit Zoetermeer and spend one day with the interviewees. The interviews varied between 30 minutes to 1 hour and were followed by a field trip around the center and the suburbs of the municipality. This trip was very enlightening because I could visit most of the current projects and facilities related to place branding in the city and therefore shape a better understanding of the marketing and urban planning strategies of the region. The interviews in Uppsala, where conducted in the offices of the municipality and the offices of “Destination Uppsala AB”. An advantage of interviewing all the participants vis a vis is the possibility of observing the non-verbal cues such as the person’s body language. Moreover, the respondents feel more comfortable since they participate in a conversation in a friendly and known environment (their office or a familiar public place). The detailed information about the participants are presented on Table 1.
Table 1. The Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Organization/Company</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jahn Kragt, Senior Advisor for City Marketing</td>
<td>Municipality of Zoetermeer (NL)</td>
<td>12/02/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcel Keijzer, Senior Urban Designer</td>
<td>Municipality of Zoetermeer (NL)</td>
<td>12/02/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karin Åkerblom, Process Manager for City Development</td>
<td>Uppsala Kommun</td>
<td>06/05/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Skott, Director of Brand Management</td>
<td>Destination Uppsala AB AB</td>
<td>13/05/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Lindström, Convention Bureau Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.4 Data Analysis

The data collected from interviews are quite rich in information that need to be carefully analyzed to avoid misinterpretations and guarantee that the results are objective. The most proper method for this process is theoretical studying (Kvæle & Brinkmann, 2009). According to this model, the analysis of the interviews is based on the researcher’s personal reflection on the topic concerning the main themes of the theoretical framework that are introduced by Fig. 2 and will be further analyzed in Chapter 3.

The results of the case studies are thoroughly analyzed and filtered through this procedure and then compared between one another. At a first level, the comparison is between the opinions and policies of the interviewees according to their professional field of expertise. After this comparison is completed, I will follow a holistic evaluation of the cities’ actions and policies.
3. The Conceptual Framework and the Theory

This chapter presents an overview of the ideas that shape the route of the study. It addresses the following concepts: sustainable urban development and city networks in Europe. The third chapter also builds up the theoretical basis for the analysis of the case studies, with a strong focus on the role of stakeholders.

3.1 Sustainable Urban Development

The United Nations’ (UN) Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform provides an enlightening view on the evolution of urban development. Taipele as a researcher on behalf of UN, describes the dominant model for urban development as one promoting competition amongst cities in the global level, driven by an economic system that aims to attract international investments in different sectors like manufacture, trade and exportations. On top of that, the benefits of the cities’ activities expansion include business initiatives on the development of the real estate market and the creation of a solid basis for the establishment of profitable services and consumer products for the middle class (Taipale, 2012). However, this vision for development has never been inclusive enough throughout the last decades; it solely focuses on the maximization of the economic profit and it does not suggest any policies for a shift towards environmentally responsible societies (*ibid*).

Today, cities all over the world are in a state of a remarkable *transition* due to the fact that the majority of the global population will move to urban centers, and only the developing
countries’ urbanization will reach 2.5 billion, which is the current total of the urbanized population as a whole (Ratcliffe, Krawczyk, 2011).

In this changeable environment, governments and municipalities acknowledge the importance of combating climate change and a vast majority has an official strategy on the theme of sustainable development. Furthermore, scholars, practitioners and policy makers insist on the crucial role cities are able to play to fight climate change by introducing energy-efficient policies and pressing stakeholders to lower down emissions (da Silva et al., 2012). Nevertheless, it is questionable up to which degree municipalities engage to coherent actions (Taipale, 2012) and how meaningful those actions are. It is therefore noticeable that on the global scale the level of engagement to sustainable urban development policies is unclear.

3.2 City Networks in Europe for a Sustainable Urban Development

Today, in Europe a strong player to enforce sustainable urban planning is the EU. The European Commission defines in its Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2011) the meaning of the Integrated Sustainable Urban Development for the EU members: “The various dimensions of urban life – environmental, economic, social and cultural – are interwoven and success in urban development can only be achieved through an integrated approach. Measures concerning physical urban renewal must be combined with measures promoting education, economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection. In addition, the development of strong partnerships between local citizens, civil society, the local economy and the various levels of government is a pre-requisite”.

The future challenges for European cities will include the demographic change amongst the population, an economic downturn and the impact of climate change. Consequently, European societies will have to reorganize and rethink their cities’ urban strategies. For those reasons and since 68% of the European population is placed in metropolitan regions (European Commission, 2011), the urban development in Europe has to be approached by a collaborative perspective. The EU, for example, will set an Urban Development Platform consisting of 300 cities to establish an interactive dialogue for policy generation between the cities and the Commission thus to strengthen the role of cities in creating cohesion policy (ibid). To support the cities involvement in the integrated strategies, the EU offers the possibility of combined actions either at the programming stage or the operational level financed by different EU sources (CSF funds, ERDF and CF, see abbreviations).

3.2.1 A Shift Towards Elevated EU Authority in Networks

The current European Commission’s inclination to enhance collaboration at the municipal level amongst cities for a sustainable urban environment is observable. Starting from this collaborative EU action and moving towards City Networks in Europe within the EU framework, brings this topic at the forefront of this study’s discussions. Due to the extended application of collaboration and inclusion as ways of addressing the urban challenges, it is worth presenting in more details about the role of city networks.

City networks in Europe are primarily encouraged and supported by the EU and more specifically the European Commission as a way to address the urban challenges mentioned
above (Leitner, Sheppard, 2002). The networks’ nature is quite similar; most of them are not bottom-up self-regulated organizations but stem from the EU initiatives or from its member states (ibid). Kern and Bulkeley (2009) underline the importance of the authority shift to the EU level: “Authority has not simply shifted upwards to European institutions, it has become dispersed across multiple territorial levels and among a variety of private and public actors”. This transfer of authority and responsibility happens also from the national to the sub-national level (Pierre and Peters, 2000, cited in Kern and Bulkeley, 2009, p.311) since many EU members have the tendency to turn into a decentralized governmental model with more competencies at the local level. The cooperation starts by forming public-private partnerships even beyond the national level. The scales can vary: from local to transnational, within the public and private sectors and amongst regions and cities (Leitner, Sheppard, 2002).

3.3 The Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective that escorts the study is based on the “Stakeholder Theory” that originates from the organizational management and the business ethics branches. Edward Freeman introduced a first approach of the Stakeholder Theory in 1984 in his seminal publication “Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach”. In the following subchapter, the reader will become familiar with the theoretical concept chosen. The Stakeholder Theory refers solely to corporations and businesses and the relation between the firm and its stakeholders. Starting from the corporation’s environment presented in this chapter, the theory will be used as a guide to envisage the city through the interests of its stakeholders. Therefore, a connection between Freeman’s model and the city context is of vital importance to understand the relation between this business-driven perspective and the city tissue. For this purpose the analysis will be accompanied with a map covering a city’s stakeholders categories.

3.3.1 A Brief Introduction to the Theory

E. Freeman starts building his theory from the relationship between the managers and those groups and individuals that is possible to be affected or affect organizational activities of a certain company i.e. the stakeholders. This definition of stakeholders is widely accepted amongst scholars, even after so many years of the book’s first publication (Polonsky, 1996, Polonsky and Scott, 2005). This approach sets new limits to managerial theory moving from a simplistic understanding of the shareholders related to a corporation, towards considering more stakeholders like employees or the other interest groups, like NGOs and business associates and more (Fiedler, Kirchgeorg, 2007). Freeman’s breakthrough on the perception of business, places the stakeholder at the center of the company’s strategic planning, thus converting the unit of analysis to a more relational way of doing business (Freeman, 2010). Bringing the stakeholders’ interests at the same table, gives the opportunity to reach an intersection within their desired goals. This is a prerequisite to achieve a long-term and sustainable stakeholder management. Freeman puts it well when he says that “The more we can begin to think in terms of how to better serve stakeholders, the more likely we will be to survive and prosper over time” (Freeman, 2010). The concept of time is also quite important since as the author argues, the interests of all the groups involved in a company’s activities can be satisfied in the long run without the need of prioritization.
Understanding companies through this point of view also creates the need for a conceptual change of how managers view their businesses (Freeman, 2010). Besides, in contemporary societies companies have to deal with constant changes of the internal and external environment and as it is also quoted by Freeman “Major strategic shifts in the business environment require conceptual shifts in the minds of managers” (ibid). Marketers that are able to follow properly the stakeholder theory will actually be able to develop a marketing strategy that encourages them to combine the considerations of all stakeholders. Through this process the marketers have to think differently, by including directly the stakeholders in their strategic programs and the firm’s budgetary planning. The first step is to identify who are the groups and individuals interacting with the firm (Freeman, 2010). Then the managers will have to analyze the relations between the stakeholders and the firm (Polonsky, 1996) thus to decide how to allocate the resources for those groups (Freeman, 2010). Therefore, by including those considerations managers can have a better view of the external environment revolving around their businesses and keep track of its changes to adapt in the best way possible.

To create a successful Mission for the corporation managers have to take under consideration the following: to support a company’s capability to create a stakeholder organizational framework a *stakeholder map* is a tool to deal with its complicated and variable internal and external relations. The main questions to be addressed while constructing the map are about the nature of the stakeholders, how the map has to be shaped and what are the difficulties and the problems of the process (Freeman, 2010). This policy will organize the information in a manner that will help the executives to judge which stakeholders affect or are affected by each business goal set. Then follows the identification of the stakeholders’ specific aims and concerns. Except from those steps, the managers will need to go into a deeper search of how the firm meets the stakeholders’ expectations and demands. Finally, the firm has to reconsider its strategic prioritizations, after the thorough stakeholder approach in multiple levels. Figure 3 bellow is a visual representation of the steps that a company has to set for its corporate mission concerning its strategic management by a stakeholder approach.
3.3.2 The Dimensions of the Stakeholders’ Impact on the Enterprise

Analyzing the different effects a stakeholder can have on a firm is crucial to shape a successful strategy and to realize how powerful their impact can be. It is indisputable that corporations can also impact the stakeholders. Nevertheless, for this study it is of great value to reflect specifically on the effects of stakeholders on the enterprise since the influence of stakeholders in the city context can be quite similar. This exposure to the possible effects is a way to familiarize the reader with the range of the stakeholders’ impacts through their activities. The five fields on which a stakeholder can intervene are the Economic, the Technological, the Political, the Social and the Managerial (Freeman, 2010).

On the economic level, a stakeholder can have a direct effect on the corporation in terms of profitability, on the monetary transactions and on the business liquidity. According to Freeman (2010) suppliers and customers have a direct impact on the firm, because their policies and reactions affect the company’s performance. For example, if customers are not satisfied with a product they will seek for other providers. Other stakeholders like governmental agencies can also have an effect on the business but in a more indirect way, through their regulations that favor the public interest.

Stakeholder groups may be responsible for providing access to a company for the usage of core technologies but also for standing in the firm’s way. They can limit a company’s chances to deliver a technological novelty to the market and even ban the firm’s plans to develop new technologies. Their role in this particular category seems to be rather vital for the company’s development and direction for the future as they are able to either help the company grow its technological potential or prohibit it (ibid).

Concerning the stakeholders and their influence to the relations of the society and the firm, some of them can change the firm’s public position, reputation and perception. Those
actions can have a positive or a negative connotation, such as broadening or limiting the company’s “socially accepted” actions. Stemming from the social effects the political impact is quite related to the stakeholders’ decisions since politicians are often the means to achieve a social goal (ibid).

The managerial effects from a stakeholder may lead the firm to change its management policies, and eventually its values. This can be argued to be a fundamental effect on the organization’s structure and it can also been perceived as the company’s capacity to figure out its relationships with each group thus to achieve a more inclusive strategy of those groups on a regular basis (ibid).

Freeman’s depiction of the possible impacts serves as a valid argument to explain that taking under consideration the stakeholders is an important strategy that the managers and the marketers should follow since the results from including them or not spread in a remarkable variety of activities.

3.3.3 Considerations in the Implementation

While applying stakeholder strategies there are some considerations that the parties concerned should think of and discuss. Those can be found here, as a short summary for a better understanding of the business activities around strategic programs.

3.3.3.1 Resource Allocation and Prioritization

Organizations follow standardized patterns for their budget policies, which divide the resources given to the different organizational units on a yearly basis. Freeman points out that however suitable and carefully designed those processes are, they have to properly address how the resources are allocated according to the stakeholder groups the organization shares activities with (Freeman, 2010). To do so, a classification according to each stakeholder’s importance for the company’s future prosperity has to take place and those of high value should be prioritized. Therefore, Freeman suggests that the relation between the resource allocation and the significance of the stakeholder has to be proportional. The prioritization is not identical for all businesses and it mostly depends on the values, the mission and the goals the managers set and shape their judgments.

3.3.3.2 Commitment through Participatory Initiatives

Except from the careful design of the budgetary planning, the firm has to also ensure that the organizational units and the managers will be loyal to the program. To achieve this goal, there is a need to arrange the resource distribution in a manner that permits the implementation of the project. A technique to face this challenge is to use the advantage that strategic management systems are able to provide; include participation in the generation and development of programs along with the stakeholders. It is necessary to follow participatory patterns while designing policies since otherwise the transactions with the groups involved will face a great possibility of failure (Freeman, 2010).

Finally, the definition of “what we stand for” can be the guideline for the whole procedure to allow the company to carry out the processes of budgeting and stakeholders’ commitment in a satisfactory manner.
3.4 Developing the Theory and the Stakeholder Strategy Matrix

Since 1984 when E. Freeman has introduced the stakeholder concept, other scholars have enriched and developed the theory in several directions. The theory has been approached by different business perspectives. Scholars have developed the theory in the fields of business ethics, corporate governance and corporate social responsibility (Friedman and Miles, 2002). In this subchapter, the goal is to gather opinions concerning its good application in the fields of management, marketing and corporate branding, all of which are closely related to place branding. The remarks and suggestions about the relationships amongst stakeholders and businesses active in those fields are valuable for a better understanding of how stakeholders related to city networks and the place branding industry should be approached.

3.4.1 The Stakeholder’s Influence: Management Beyond E. Freeman’s Analysis

Understanding that stakeholders have a high influence on the corporation is closely related to its reputation as a socially responsible firm (Savage et al., 1991). In the contemporary business world the managers’ liability is not only dependent on their excellence in augmenting the company’s profit within the economic, regulatory and legal boundaries of the market. It actually involves the company’s socially responsible actions and profile. To satisfy a variety of societal concerns managers have to find the means to address their key stakeholders and ensure that they will not act against the corporation. The stability that stems from this policy helps the organization secure its financial prosperity and avoid risk (ibid). Savage et al. (1991) provide a profound study that supports their argumentation. The scholars support that “Issue specificity suggests that stakeholder diagnosis is an ongoing activity. Executives constantly need to assess stakeholders’ interests, capabilities, and needs. Without an appropriate framework, managers are likely to respond in the traditional ad hoc manner to stakeholders-greasing the squeaky wheel”. Therefore, managers are called to get involved with two crucial subjects: They need to map out the stakeholders’ potential to threaten the organization and their ability to cooperate. The power of the stakeholder shapes the relationship between the stakeholder and the firm, meaning that the more reliant the firm is on the stakeholder the more power the stakeholder has on the firm (ibid).

Friedman and Miles (2002) suggest the reasons why some stakeholders are more powerful and influential that others over the corporation. An important aspect is the structure of the firm and the relationship built with the stakeholder, the contradictory forms amongst the two parties and the already existing institutional assistance. It is overall dependent on the nature of the affiliation developed amongst the parties. As Savage et al. (1991) stress to access the eagerness of the stakeholder to actively cooperate or threat the organization, one has to examine the quality and the durability of the relationship they have formed.

Often managers tend to focus on the stakeholders’ potential to threat the corporation and ignore the potential of cooperation, which is actually a way to go one step further from applying protecting strategies. By working on projects about possible opportunities, the firm can be more open on collaborating and uniting assets with other stakeholders that is the key for a lucrative business environment (Savage et al., 1991). All in all, the corporation’s ability for strategic stakeholder management is preferred rather than a narrow approach of one stakeholder on a specific matter (ibid). Sharing Freeman’s values and philosophy, the scholars underscore that the firm should set up goals for the relationships with current and
prospect stakeholders within a long-term framework. The targets should involve the possible impact and influence of the stakeholders on the business unit plans (ibid).

In a nutshell, Savage et al. (1991) use the following words to foresee the future of the managers’ considerations: “Now managers will have to listen to-and learn from other groups who are demanding a voice in the running of the corporation. Today, organizational strategists must consider how to manage the stakeholder”.

3.4.2 Stakeholder Management as a Tool for Strategic Marketing

The marketing theory is less familiar with the stakeholder management strategy as a part of strategic planning even if it is clearly stated that the concerns of multiple stakeholders have to be included in the marketing policies (Polonsky, 1996). The challenging part of launching such an inclusive strategy, is the fact that marketers are consumer-orientated and they prioritize consumers in such an excessive level that their requests are above those of the owners (ibid). Therefore there is limited literature in this field and this is why any recommended theory that can assist the marketers in identifying and integrating the multiple stakeholders’ interests in the actual business plan can be valuable according to Polonsky (1996). The Stakeholder theory is recommended by the author as a good way to address this complex issue in marketing. Again, as for other disciplines since it is rather impossible to include all the stakeholders, the marketer has to be proactive and chose those groups that can have a bigger impact, good or bad, to the corporation.

The potential indirect influence deriving from the stakeholders, i.e. by their influence on other parties to take action, has also to be included in the strategy matrix which becomes more methodical and extended that way. This revised version will support marketers in generating a holistic view of all the possible means a group can affect the strategic results and planning policies. Thus, this broader observation of the business environment is an attempt to also look for all the trends, changes and gaps in the market (Polonsky, 1996). The proactive nature that this observation offers, remarks that the manager’s job is to work on understanding the stakeholders and the dynamic environment revolving around the business to supply the firm with a refined and targeted strategic formulation (ibid). This realization shows the shift from the transactional methodology to a relationship approach due to the recent centralization of the stakeholders in marketing theory.

3.4.3 Corporate Branding and Multiple Stakeholders

Corporate branding has a very similar nature with product branding in the sense that it aims to generate distinction and preference but its scope is wider. Corporate branding is not simply about establishing a good collaboration and relationship between the consumer groups and the product it furthermore seeks to establish the main value on which the brand stands on. This value is the basis for the rest of the fundamental visions related either to the firm as a whole or to its products (Roper and Davies, 2007). The progress the company makes to create values internally that later communicates to external groups, is the reassurance that the quality of the corporation is of high standards and that the environment is safe (ibid). It is of high importance to emphasize here that the brand’s responsibility is dependent on the whole firm and not just on the marketing activities. To build the image and the values that escort the brand is also a long process that is not related to the isolated advertising campaigns (ibid). Corporate brands need to build their image based on their heritage and on their future aspirations. Building the image the brand communicates by
sharing values amongst stakeholders leads to a more unite and empowered brand (ibid). After all, the two irreplaceable ingredients for a successful corporate brand are a clear philosophy and mission behind it, both shaped also by the stakeholders involved.

Corporate branding is the management of the firm’s brand and it is a procedure built on different strategic ideas like setting specific targets, managing the firm’s activities and coordinating (Fiedler and Kirchgeorg, 2007). Fiedler and Kirchgeorg (2007) add another focal point that differentiates corporate branding with product branding which is the inclusion of all the relevant stakeholders around the firm.

The same study provides the interesting information that the role concept is important, which means that the different stakeholder groups are distinguishable in corporate branding. Some stakeholders belonging to certain target groups, like employees, customers and others carry special attributes that are better addressed through general branding and all embracing marketing whereas for others one has to reach them via specific targeting and positioning policies (Fiedler and Kirchgeorg, 2007). Consequently, managers’ efforts are intense in order to satisfy those groups by designing specific policies to ensure favorable positioning towards the corporation and protect the stakeholders’ good opinion about the corporation. Managers working on those specialized positions are advised to proceed to cognitive marketing approaches, for example advertisement activities to promote strategies for the creation of knowledge.

Finally, as Kavaratzis (2009) puts it “a corporate brand is the visual, verbal and behavioral expression of an organization’s unique business model, which takes place through the company’s mission, core values, beliefs, communication, culture and overall design”.

3.5 From Corporate to Place Branding: The Complexity of Multiple Stakeholders

After introducing and analyzing the Stakeholder Theory and its development in different business branches, it is of great significance for this study to relate the theory with the concept of place branding. The reason for referring to other disciplines and the theory’s application is to equip the reader with a better understanding of the importance of multiple stakeholders in a large variety of activities in businesses. Hence, corporate branding has been correlated to place branding in recent literature. Cities are nowadays branded in a similar manner as corporate brands (Kavaratzis, 2009) and an interesting issue is that stakeholders and consequently the Stakeholder Theory are in the center of those processes.

Accordingly, this subchapter includes an argumentation about the lessons taught from corporate branding in the new field of place branding and the necessity and complexity of the presence of multiple stakeholders. Stakeholders comprising the city tissue, sometimes have perplexing roles and relations between one another. This idea is elaborated here, along with a generic stakeholder map of a city to illustrate the troublesome nature of the process of addressing the stakeholders and all their interests and concerns, such as demands concerning important environmental and sustainability issues for the city. The analysis provided here according to scholars’ opinions and researches is the foundation for the evaluation and discussion of the results of the case studies.
3.5.1 Cities as Brands and their Multiple Stakeholders

City brands and corporate brands share some common characteristics that should be mentioned before proceeding to a deeper analysis. Kavaratzis (2009) presents clearly those resemblances: Both types of branding have a complicated and multi-stakeholder nature; the involvements of different interest groups that revolve around a corporation and, in a possibly larger scale, around a city are responsible for those consequences. Thus both rely on cooperation either internally in a firm or around the city web (*ibid*). Corporate marketing is the most relevant tool to apply place branding in a successful way to meet the city’s expectations (*ibid*). The common attributes of those two forms of branding are well acknowledged by the academia (Hankinson, 2007, Kavaratzis, 2009) where in a way the place can be understood as a corporate brand in general terms. Kavaratzis supports that both “have multidisciplinary roots, both address multiple groups of stakeholders, both have a high level of intangibility and complexity, both need to take into account social responsibility, both deal with multiple identities, both need a long-term development”.

It is clearly observed today that places increase their interest towards branding practices, which are based on methods of corporate and even product branding that they import in their respectable fields (Kavaratzis, 2009). As for corporate branding it is essential to produce long-term, holistic strategies the same applies to place brands. It is a common misunderstanding that branding activities in a city are limited to visual novelties, such as logos and catchphrases and advertisements about them. At the same time, communicating the same message and embracing a unite identity and image at the city level can be proven much more demanding (*ibid*). Branding for a certain place is not created by some remote actions and ideas, it has to be perceived as a concept that is part of the other marketing plans that take place in the city. An example of place branding’s complexity is that it requires linking the city with “stories” (Kavaratzis, 2004).

Hankinson (2007) describes some ingredients for competent destination branding that he draws from corporate branding: the city brands require a leadership with a robust vision, one that encourages a brand-orientated strategy, that launches a coherent and indistinguishable communication with its stakeholders and works on aligning the different departments and creates good partnerships.

As a result, those valid techniques can lead to the conclusion that place branding professionals as long as cities as a whole, can base their strategies on the corporate branding theory but that it is also necessary to create more specific branding frameworks for cities (Kavaratzis, 2006). The advantage is that place branding as a relatively new concept can be inspired and assisted by the corporate branding theory and the multiple stakeholders concept. While a few frameworks are suggested, this study will not attempt to choose one particular framework since it aims to focus more on the complexity of the city’s stakeholders. Nevertheless, all those attempts to build a particular strategy agree on one fact: that actually place branding has a multi-dimensional quality. This is an even stronger indication that all activities, and all the events that a city produces all the things that are communicated do concern the brand (*ibid*), same as for the corporation.

It has been previously analyzed that a signifying aspect of corporate branding is the presence of multiple stakeholders and scholars have also pointed out that place branding is characterized by the same fashion (Merrilees *et al.*, 2012). Apart from this, the current bibliography states that different stakeholders perceive the city in different ways and they consequently express their definition of the brand, through those interpretations. The suggested theory is the Stakeholder Theory, as recent studies have brought the two together.
(ibid). It is argued and supported here that since the stakeholders matter and their correct understanding is valuable for the city’s communications this theory is suitable. In the city context all those groups related to it, like the tourists, citizens, the investors, the businesses and the defenders of the environment create the perfect conditions for studying multiple stakeholders (ibid). Figure 4 presents an example of the cities’ stakeholders.

*Figure 4: An Example of a City’s Stakeholders*
4. Results

This section presents the results of the interviews of the cities of Zoetermeer (the Netherlands) and Uppsala (Sweden). The results are discussed under different categories. On a first level, they are divided according to the professions the interviewees are working with i.e. urban planning and place branding marketing/management. At a second level the responses are categorized based on the kind of themes the questions belong to.

4.1 The Questions’ Themes

The questions towards the urban planning professionals address the following issues: the nature of the city’s urban planning, the interviewees’ personal beliefs, sustainability and collaboration. Accordingly the questions to the city’s branding marketers/managers were similar: the depiction of the place branding projects, the interviewees’ personal beliefs, sustainability and collaboration.

4.2 Zoetermeer and Sustainability: An Urban Planner’s Opinion

The most important parts of the discussion with Zoetermeer’s Senior Urban Planner Mr. Keijzer are thoroughly presented bellow.

4.2.1 Personal Beliefs

The first question concerns the perception of the city in the planner’s personal opinion. The interviewee believes that three things are important: the city is an efficient machine, with districts that all have their own schools, medical centers and shopping centers, and parks. There is also an internal infrastructure system, which prevents traffic congestions. The second thing is that the city is ideally located in its green surroundings. The expert mentions that it does not fully exploit these qualities. Nevertheless, it is without a doubt a city that is rather compact, positioned really close to the great outdoors. The citizens have the possibility to be close to the nature if they desire it but the main drawback according to Mr. Keijzer is that the city was not designed for this purpose from the beginning. He once again says that Zoetermeer was just a link between cities and its own citizens were not in the center of attention. The development to a mature and self-supporting city was a gradual process that has helped Zoetermeer become more independent.

During the 1970s and 1980s many companies started moving to Zoetermeer from The Hague since the later was already crowded. Of course, this has caused some frictions between The Hague and Zoetermeer for some years in the past. Zoetermeer was competitive price-wise, new and there were efficient operators of civil systems to assist the newcomers. Nowadays, the relations between the two cities have improved. The third issue is that New Towns tend to be a place where people have a problem to bond, because they are new, without a history, with a fragmented urban layout, they are not growing in a natural pace, and everything is done in a large scale which leads to the conclusion that every mistake made is also in a large scale. It is also noticeable that the aging of the different districts affect a large amount of population of that district (10.000 inhabitants). Thus, the offer of the housing stock is also limited and there is a shortage of housing availability for people
with special needs that require larger space. The expert then argues that “those are the limitations and you have to work on that and expand your palette of possible clients”.

The goals the expert has are the achievement of a strengthened city in fields like education, research facilities, and innovation. Mr. Keijzer underlines the absence of a university in the area that could be an incentive for young people to stay in the city. There are some university faculties for ICT development and gaming that is nonetheless a good progress. He sums it up by stating: “you have to keep your young people in the city”. Another issue that came up during the discussions is the attempt to make the city more complete and add more services for a young city like Zoetermeer. The creation of people’s pride to come from Zoetermeer is a long and difficult process that the city planners would like to help to achieve. To replace the absence of history the expert proposes that Zoetermeer should have iconic buildings, special services, leisure facilities and events. Mr. Keijzer thinks that the Dutch mentality, which is related to a modest style of architecture, can be sometimes an obstacle in the creation of iconic buildings. The planner has proposed the creation of a small local museum designed to be an iconic building for culture.

4.2.2 Zoetermeer and the Urban City Planning

Mr. Keijzer was firstly asked to describe shortly the urban plan of the city of Zoetermeer. He started by describing the city as a traditional example of a newly built town in the remaining and existing foundations of a village. The city was planned in the early 60’s for a new town close to The Hague. At that time, sustainability was not on the table as an important issue and urban sprawl was the main trend. The expert illustrated that trend by giving the example of the city’s population back in the 1950s, where The Hague hosted 500,000 inhabitants and today’s combined population of The Hague and Zoetermeer is the same, meaning that the expansion of the city was not necessary population-wise. Nevertheless, the planner pointed out that if this expansion has not happened at that time the city would suffer from a very high urban density and this move helped The Hague implement its urban renewal program. The conversation continued by an analysis of the current plan where Mr. Keijzer pointed that “we are almost at the limits of our municipal boundaries, so we have done more than the original structure plan from the 1960s”. He stresses that the city has grown considerably since then which has caused the need of making adaptations in the public transportation system. The city never stops changing and growing according to Mr. Keijzer who believes that the transportation system of Zoetermeer is satisfying and underlines that the city’s plan was totally orientated towards assisting The Hague and not to communicate with other cities.

Today, the city of Zoetermeer is growing more like a normal city, establishing communications with other Dutch cities like Rotterdam and Gouda. Consequently, this changes the demands of the transportations infrastructure network, which was originally supposed to link the North, the West, the East and the South by roads and not with a railway system. This plan is very time-consuming according to the expert and many of the goals set were never actually realized, especially for the connections amongst the North and the South.

The interviewee was then called to describe namely some of the running urban planning projects of the city. One of the major projects is the renovation of the older district. The planning department is going to demolish about 800 high-rise buildings and replace them with a mixture of small-scale apartments and family housing to improve the surroundings. Thus, 110 houses will be built from scratch, which will require the collaboration with the
Housing Corporations who own a lot of those apartments. This project has just been launched but the project will continue for 8-10 years.

Another project is about reforming the city center, which used to have a character of a shopping center. Today the planning agency would like to transform it into an actual city center, with more services, more cultural events, bars and restaurants and places with a special atmosphere. This goal aims to create a mixed character of the city center that will attract different groups of visitors even though it is already quite satisfying. The city center is fortunately not completely deserted after the end of a working day. The target is therefore to have more apartments and houses at the city center to achieve densification and attract young people such as university students because the average age of the population living downtown is 55+ years old. This target group will provide liveliness. Young people have a difficult time to find affordable apartments and a specific place to meet, leading them to leave the city and go to neighboring cities like The Hague in their spare time.

He then argues that the city center needs in general a renovation to improve its ambience and modernize it in order to fit with its surroundings. The connection to the rest of the communities is a really demanding task according to the expert that has to be achieved. Unfortunately, the surrounding districts and the city center have limited connection with each other with green spaces in between them. The goal then is to create a continuity of the urban tissue.

The last theme was supposed to be a description of the stages a project has to pass through to be implemented but due to the time limitation and the complex of the issue the question was changed into if it is relatively simple to launch a project in Zoetermeer. The expert replied that in Zoetermeer it is quite easy to start with an idea and he stresses “we grab any opportunity we see; because we think it’s important when there is a nice idea that you react quickly”.

### 4.2.3 Sustainability

The expert responds to the question on if the future urban planning policies will be more aligned to the sustainable development philosophy that there are two realities. One the one hand, there is an ambitious sustainability plan aiming to create a CO2 emissions neutral city and on the other hand is the reality. The available funds limit the municipality’s efforts but on a smaller scale the new museum will have low energy consumption. When the agency tries to persuade market parties to enhance their efforts their policy is to follow the national sustainability plan but without working on a newer, more demanding level than that. The other element of sustainability is about the city itself. The city is compact, the citizens’ majority is using bike in the city and public transportation to cover longer distances. He underlines that there are a lot of green spaces in the city and that there is a new three-policy document to preserve green structures, green areas and ecology of Zoetermeer. This new step also reflects an economic benefit since the housing areas placed close to green spaces have an added value.

The future environmental changes are not an issue that is troublesome for the expert since he hopes that stricter policies will be generated on a national and local level. When asked about the future problem of the rise of sea level in the Netherlands he is positive that this issue will not affect Zoetermeer.

A last vital question was if city marketing could be a tool to create a more sustainable environment. Mr. Keijzer responded that he is not sure if that is the case. He does believe
that it is extremely important to promote the city; He continues by saying that the attraction of new ideas for the creation of a more sustainable municipality could be possible but he does not believe that city marketing’s main goal is this for the moment in Zoetermeer. The link with sustainable development is missing and the city will have to make a shift to use a sustainability policy to be incorporated to connect it with the marketing. He does support that in the future this should happen and that marketing should play this role in order to promote a greener development.

4.2.4 Collaboration

On the question about collaboration among the urban planning department and the city marketing team Mr. Keijzer believes that the marketing department has sometimes very enthusiastic plans since their goal is to sell the city as well both to the inhabitants, the board of mayors and the visitors. Most of the time their policies are synchronized to boost the city’s image but in an honest way towards the public and the different target groups.

The citizens’ role is described as very important. The citizens have a very strong saying and presence when a project does not comply with their criteria. The expert characteristically mentions, “People contact the political parties and try to influence them and they are very good at it”. The problem with this process is that most of the time is that the voices of those disagreeing are sometimes not heard as much. He then offers an example to show that inhabitants are involved in the project processes. For example, for the city center project the planning agency has created a document with a whole participation process including meetings, events, promotion via facebook and interviews, which created a huge, valuable input for the urban planning department.

The following issue covered considered a description of the future challenges Zoetermeer will have to face. The expert thinks that the main challenge is the transition from a traditional large-scale planning to a tailor-made, acupuncture point. This is a different attitude that requires new skills. Dealing with the nature of the current style is an issue that the planners have and will have to slowly approach in the next decades to design a more personalized city.

The final theme of this part of the discussions concerned the stakeholders involved when designing planning policies and if there is a priority of interests. Mr. Keijzer values as essential the Housing Corporations of the city since roughly 50% of the city belongs to those companies. Then he speaks about the citizens, the employees and he stresses that the two groups i.e. the inhabitants and the real estate agencies are both to be considered. He also believes that the surrounding municipalities are important external stakeholders as well as the national level of interests. For the planner is hard to prioritize the different interest groups but he believes that: companies, citizens and real estate and especially housing corporations are important thus universities, research institutes and hospitals in order to create a cluster.

The four focal points of the municipality are described as: the education, the leisure sector that is already very developed, the innovation (ICT, Innovation based companies, big complex for startup companies) and the green spaces.
4.3 Zoetermeer and Sustainability: A City Branding Manager’s Opinion

The interview with Mr. Kragt, Zoetermeer’s Senior Advisor for City Marketing can be found in this section. The questions follow a similar theme pattern as for the rest of the interviewees.

4.3.1 Personal Beliefs

The marketer presented his perception of city marketing and the main goals he sets for his job. The main areas of focus are Leisure and Innovation where there is a lot of work right now for the future to build more initiatives in the town to promote the city as such.

The next question concerned Mr. Kragt’s opinion of the city and if for him the city is a product. The city is not a product like the ones you can buy in a shop, because “city marketing is much more complicated than a product”. He continues by stating, “Companies are involved, inhabitants are involved, politicians are involved. Every stakeholder in a town can tell you something about the product of that city”. The expert believes in a strong collaboration between the stakeholders and also in gaining trust and keeping track with the politicians because all their planning changes every 4 years.

4.3.2 Zoetermeer and Branding Projects

Some of the main city’s branding projects have been presented during the field trip with Mr. Kragt and Mr. Keijzer the same day as the interview and this is why they are not extensively analyzed during the interview. Zoetermeer’s strong focus is on Leisure/Sport activities such as the indoor skiing center, the indoor rafting facilities and more that attract many tourists from the Netherlands and abroad. The skiing center has approximately 1.000.000 visitors per year. In the future, the marketing department would like to grow the leisure facilities and improve the innovation sector by collaborating with the business sector and companies so as to create innovation and give companies a chance to show their projects in a large audience.

Mr. Kragt was then called to describe some successful and some unsuccessful projects throughout his career. One of the cheapest and most successful projects he says was the one called “Second Life” which was a virtual world in 2007, which was booming and one could talk to each other through an avatar. Zoetermeer was the first municipality to launch it, it was publicized and then there was a press release inside the virtual world. All kinds of people came in and a funny incident that happened, brought the city in the spotlight of the national newspaper and created a new word of mouth about the city as the ICT City, which was the marketers actual goal at that point.

An unsuccessful moment for Mr. Kragt’s career was when he personally tried to bring the Formula 1 race in the city. The deal was really close to happen and the race would be hosted in the middle of the city. He aimed to have a sustainable project by including electric racecars to compete with normal racecars. The politicians also agreed to that plan but just before its realization the financial crisis has reached Europe and the main sponsor refused to participate.

Mr. Kragt presented the future changes that he could have in his planning projects. The municipality has just organized meetings with companies to find out how they could help each other. The branding department will focus more in Innovation and work closer with big
companies to sell the city better. The municipality has had the most focus on Leisure and less in Innovation but today this is about to change and the shift will favor the later one.

4.3.3 Sustainability

The expert was asked to describe the sustainability plan of Zoetermeer briefly. Mr. Kragt has responded that Zoetermeer has a long-term project. The Master Plan of Zoetermeer has some certain fields that the city focuses on and sustainability part of all of them. For example, the renovation of the city’s swimming pool will be done in a sustainable way. He mentions that this is one of the reasons why they are in communication with the ENTP organization in Brussels to gain knowledge and expertise in order to apply sustainable solutions.

The next question concerned the role of a greener, more sustainable development for Zoetermeer and if it is a core value for the city’s future development. He believes that sustainability is not any longer an exception but it is now a commodity. Mr. Kragt stresses that “you need to be sustainable because everyone is expecting you to be so”. It is also cost efficient for the market because the city can be better promoted and marketed if the housing available as an example is greener.

To end the discussion about sustainability, the interviewee responded to an essential question for this study that is if city marketing is a way to promote the city, attract investments and tourists and lead to the creation of a more sustainable development. His opinion is positive in the sense that place branding can help promoting sustainability initiatives which are today essential for a cost-efficient strategy. Nonetheless, he does not support that city branding is a direct way to achieve sustainability. Nowadays, sustainability is not an extraordinary value for Holland and it has to be promoted but this application of sustainability will not attract more groups of people. The sustainability projects applied by Zoetermeer are not unique today but their absence could categorize the city as an exception between other Dutch cities. When asked specifically about the attraction of financial initiatives to support projects via their presentation as sustainable he is positive that this is the case. Mr. Kragt believes that when one project is considered as innovative and sustainable at the same time it can be a double chance to attract people to work on this idea. The idea of sustainability is a tool to favor a project but it is sometimes hard to be proven. “If we do big sustainable implementations (...) then you have such a big, massive project then you can say that the town is sustainable”. A large-scaled project for sustainability can attract attention but it has to be ambitious and have a big impact to the city to cause a successful advertisement of the city.

Mr. Kragt concludes that city marketing can be a way to enhance sustainability activities in a city if this is the goal and the city aims for example in working with sustainable businesses. Today, Zoetermeer focuses on Innovation projects where sustainability is drawing a lot of attention. The city’s main strategy is to launch big projects and the motto followed is “make sure that you are what you claim and then let it be confirmed by others”. In that case, the city has to be involved in big projects, for sustainability as an example, and prove that they are applied and as Mr. Kragt underlines make sure that the whole city has solar cells in the roofs and then actually sponsor this initiative. He finishes the discussion by stating that lying to the target groups is the worst marketing strategy one can use.
4.3.4 Collaboration

The interviewee is called to name the main stakeholders involved in a city’s branding project. He believes that they are: the Promotion Organization of Zoetermeer, which is subsidized by the municipality and is assigned work on the city’s projects and collaborate with the marketing department to expand the cities chances and possibilities for the promotional activities, companies like the business clubs and organizations of the shop keepers.

The citizens’ involvement and role in the creation of the city’s branding strategies was the next topic of the discussions. He describes the citizens as one of the most important stakeholders of the city. The marketing department has a warm marketing approach meaning that the professionals are trying to make the inhabitants promote their own city. He would like to enhance the inhabitants’ promotional activities, so they will actually advertise their positive experience of living in Zoetermeer. The expert says that Zoetermeer’s researches have shown that the citizens are satisfied in a very high level with their living conditions but the problem is that they are not speaking freely and enthusiastically about this. The following step is to help the citizens to express their appreciation of the city environment.

The last question concerns the collaboration with the environmental department and if the two departments work close enough together to design policies and new plans and consultation. Mr. Kragt mentions that the two departments collaborate, especially since his colleague to many projects Mr. Keijzer is partly related to the environmental division. There are many projects that the environmental department can help with to provide a high level of results with its experts’ advice.

4.4 Uppsala and Sustainability: The Urban Planner’s Approach

The following description of the interview with Kari Åkerblom is as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter presented in four different themes: 1) Personal Beliefs, 2) Questions about City’s Urban Planning, 3) Questions about Sustainability and lastly 4) Questions concerning Collaboration.

4.4.1 Personal Beliefs

The definition of some personal values, views and priorities that the urban planner carries can be a valuable contribution for a deeper understanding of her work. The interviewee clarifies the meaning of the city as a space that has to be flexible concerning its open spaces. The city represents an arena for each event, it has to be adjustable and the Municipality should be able to dress them up and then dress them down, every time adapting to the season. She believes that Uppsala should have a rustic base that one can add things on. The key is to avoid a very specific design but rather support a multiuse space. Ms Åkerblom, points out some principles and values and her goals she sets in her job. Her principle is as she quotes that: “Best places are supposed to be for everyone”. She offers the example of the wooden decks place by Fyrisån that many restaurant and cafeteria owners would like to rent for their private interest in the spring and summer season but that she strongly believes that all citizens should have access to sit by the water, for free. She continues by describing her goal as achieving to acquire more public space for the residents of Uppsala and
minimize the use of cars usage and parking in places like St: Erikstorget, a famous piazza of the city.

4.4.2 Uppsala and Urban City Planning

The questions about the urban planning policies the Uppsala Municipality follows concern the structure of the urban planning strategy itself, a brief presentation of some of the current projects being run in Uppsala and finally the stages a project has to go through to be implemented.

The interviewee describes the urban planning plan of Uppsala as a big, long-term plan, which is set for a 20-year span. This plan constitutes an important document describing the general directions the Municipality should follow, meaning that is designed in a broader scale. The current plan has been accepted in 2010 following the Swedish legislation that requires that every municipality should develop one. According to Ms Åkerblom the urban space is of high importance since it contributes to an urban life of better quality with attractive urban spaces for people to meet. Hence, it also gives the city core a character, especially in Uppsala that is a historic place. The urban planner further stresses that the general idea is that cities should have a living center to compete the shopping centers that are build in the outskirts, so that the city will stay vivid. This can be achieved by the enforcement of the center as an appealing sales place. Historically, the city has been the trade spot and Karin Åkerblom aims on boosting the shopping market on Saturdays and has mentioned the importance on events the same day. The interviewee also said that there is a more intense demand for the use of public space for events than the last 10 years. Also, restaurant owners desire public spaces for their businesses and through all those activities Uppsala creates its character, especially in summer time.

Concerning the presentation of an ongoing project the interviewee focused on the Dragarbrunngatan project, which has been launched in 2006. This project concerns the transformation of the a 1960s traffic street into a less busy road due to the reform of the train station and the rearrangement of the busses street which used to be on the Dragarbrunngatan. This was a political decision and the trouble caused to the property owners that saw the street losing its meaningfulness resulted a collaboration of the two parties, namely the Uppsala Municipality and the property owners. The interviewee then mentioned the big efforts and their financial contribution of this group of citizens, which along with the Municipality’s efforts have created a shared space that favors the bikes and the pedestrians by limiting the car speed.

Another project that was presented was the change of the lightening on the Vaksalagatan up to Carolina Rediviva, the Uppsala University library. This project is on the planning level and the aim is to create a nicer street, add banners in the street that can be decorated with flowers in the springtime and with a more warm design in winter, for example small fires. Those banners will be available for rent for advertisement purposes so that the city can itself show to the citizens and the tourists what are the current news and events.

Finally, the interviewee talked about the Fyristorget, a place that has to be rethought but there is a need to first decide on the political level about parking principles in the area and then before December 2013 this decision will be made and the project will be launched.

As for the stages behind the implementation of a project, the planner argues that when one has the idea of a project, the planners or other interest groups have to assist the politicians. This means that they have to propose how the project can be achieved and where it fits.
Politicians also ask for help from the Municipality and the political decision is always taken after a thorough description of the project and when the project is afterwards on track, politicians need to be briefed by the Municipality experts and get informed about possible choices for its progress.

4.4.3 Sustainability

The discussions about the sustainable development of Uppsala started from the question about if the urban planning policies will become more aligned with the values of sustainable development in the future. Ms Åkerblom expressed her belief that in a way it is true that a more common subject of discussions is “Livable Cities”, and the fact that Uppsala will be denser and that if the current generation would like to be honest to the younger population and future generations, Uppsala needs to have a place for them. Thus, the interviewee stated, “We have to involve children and young adults to think what they will need in the future”.

The second question concerned the hypothetical scenario on which future environmental issues could affect the city’s planning. The planner is more worried for the financial capacities of the city, which will have to allocate resources maybe in other projects and give up on public spaces by selling them to companies in order to safeguard capital for schools and the hospitals for the elderly.

Concerning the importance of city branding for the promotion of the city, for investments and the creation of sustainability the reply was positive since the external promotion and proud citizens attract more friends and family and create a good reputation.

4.4.4 Collaboration

When it comes to collaboration between the city marketing and the urban planning department the expert states that she has a mixed opinion about how the philosophy and ideas from the two authorities are combined. She believes that from the urban planning perspective the planners have to think of the everyday life of the city and not only the highlights and the events. This is why she stresses the value of small, free places, which are not flashy, but that keep citizens satisfied that eventually adds a promotional value to the city. The interviewee shows concern about preserving the public space and creating a balance between her beliefs and the attractive offers investors offer for pieces of land. She stresses that this sustainability, to keep the spaces public and increase their value from the events that can be organized.

On the issue of citizens’ participation in planning and designing processes, Ms Åkerblom said that “in the paper yes, in reality no”. Both politicians and planners want to involve people but it is hard in a strategic planning level. People want to have the results happen fast and they get disappointed easily. It is totally necessary to involve people who are proud of the city but one has to find good ways of doing this. For example, people had an open space to talk about how they dreamt a city square. Furthermore, another way to train people is by showing quick sketches to make them think of their city better. This is a support for them so that they will not lose faith in involvement while waiting for the project to be launched. Show some ideas so they can argue and start the discussion.

The interviewee is worried that in the future the city will be quite dense which can be interpreted as a reason for which public spaces will be in danger. Diplomatic skills now and
in the future are needed to preserve some valuable spaces and the financial benefits are always prioritized.

To the question about the multiple stakeholders the interviewee responded that the Municipality of Uppsala values the stakeholders quite equally. It depends on the project level, although politicians decide in the end, the financial aspect is always present and the stakeholder that can invest has the chance to be treated in a special way and held back at the same time. Firstly, at the communal level the experts have to evaluate what they prioritize without involving the external stakeholders. Then the rest of the stakeholders can be invited. The Municipality has to: “set the limits on how those stakeholders can affect the city. The space has to be seen in a holistic manner and knowing the needs and the space before the rest of the stakeholders are invited is the way to see what the city needs”.

4.5 Uppsala and Sustainability: Branding Experts’ Approach

The discussion with Charlotte Skott and Anna Lindström followed a similar pattern and themes as the one with Karin Åkerblom. The results are presented in this section.

4.5.1 Personal Beliefs

The main goals Ms Skott sets for her work is to see Uppsala becoming a competitive city for visitors and companies. The strategic points she sets to her plan are knowledge, sports and culture. Attracting meetings’ organization is very important as well as promoting the city as a package and “showing everything in the city”. Ms Skott stresses this parameter due to the fact that she recalls that the branding of Uppsala has been too tight focused only on the university knowledge the city can offer. Today, and for about 10 years now the branding policies have shifted to a wider perspective. The interviewee also underlined that she collaborates with Karin Åkerblom for different projects and to set goals together. Both the interviewees view the city as an experience. They do believe that the city can be seen as a product on behalf of a company as it can provide services but there is also a division between target groups. Their focus is to make Uppsala be seen as an experience.

4.5.2 Uppsala and Branding Projects

As mentioned above, the branding projects aim to all target groups. Destination Uppsala AB focuses on the creation of qualitative good culture projects that should be equally well promoted during the whole year. They also adopt the same line concerning the sports sector. Once again, one of the company’s plans is to organize meetings for different target groups for energy, climate issues and life sciences. The packages come throughout the whole year. As an example, Ms Skott refers to the dedication of May to the famous Swedish botanist Carl Linnæus, with the creation of visits to the city’s botanical garden aiming to attract the target group of visitors from the UK that are interested in his work. The aim is to also advertise the city as a city that someone can visit for a short period of vacation like a weekend or a week. Therefore, the branding agency develops a year plan, with yearly events. Ms Skott argues that the perspective of Uppsala’s image is a long-term one, with the brand showing that an event takes place every day in the city and to actually show that Uppsala is one of the four leading cities of Sweden as Ms Lindström adds.
The next question referred to the successful and unsuccessful moments the two experts have experienced while working for Destination Uppsala AB. A successful project has been the bandy finals that were hosted in Uppsala for about 20 years as Ms Skott describes. From 2012 the city of Stockholm is the official host for the finals but until then the manager describes the organization of this event as very profitable for the city since there were a lot of products promoted around it. The big, green events in the national and international level and the related conferences are also considered as a success story of the city. Also, the fact that the city can be shown in new arenas with happenings in the streets that approaches the visitors is a big deal for the agency. On top of all though, the two colleagues name as a big success the way they work together, their collaboration in achieving projects together and the more and bigger things they achieve every year.

On the other hand, both experts state that they would be happier if more companies had more interest to their projects. More people around the company could enhance the company’s power within the networks. The issue they underline as a worrying fact is that “the city grows faster than the company”. After all, they mention, when a project is successful the reward is for the entire city, because 20 people are working for the city but their projects concern 200,000 citizens.

When asked about which things could possibly be improved in the company’s strategies, the interviewees mention that 2013 is the last year of a strategy that has lasted for 10 years. The company is on the process of an evaluation to decide about the future policies. Place branding has been developing really fast; the experts are in an ongoing process to discover what they will do because they are not certain yet. The strategy will most likely remain in the same lines but some things have to be reconsidered.

4.5.3 Sustainability

The experts have both agreed that Sustainability is a priority for “Destination Uppsala AB”. Therefore, the plan is to provide information towards hotel organizers since the business requires more sustainable destinations. The company works closely with the climate strategists and the environmental strategists. The plan they promote is to achieve a good starting point for the industry by firstly ameliorating at the local level and secondly taking under consideration the Scandinavian analysis of cities and comparing them in terms of efforts in achieving more sustainable policies. Sustainability is a main concern for the touristic sector for certain target groups of visitors and also for the citizens of Uppsala. The company works together with the urban planners but when it comes to tourists for leisure, sustainability is a secondary issue. Nevertheless, tourists appreciate, according to Ms Lindström hotels that are rewarded a relevant, eco-certification. A green city is according to the experts a positive marketing point.

One of the projects related to SD as Ms Lindström mentions is related to the energy-climate conferences taking place in the city. Ms Skott adds that the agency has achieved to sign an agreement with big companies in order to help the city. The goal is to have even more companies supporting them, they both stress. Ms Lindström also points out that in a socially sustainable perspective, they support a network for social care thus Destination Uppsala AB desires to be part of big activities in issues concerning social care. She underlines as well, that there is an illusion in some parts of the Swedish society that social help is not needed because the high taxes paid by the citizens are enough. She continues by saying that it is necessary to find a way to support charity functions and hospitals. As an example, it could be recommended to encourage and provoke local companies to make a
difference. Inhabitants should support local food production and local charity projects like initiatives for children’s’ hospitals.

Both the interviewees mention that the tricky part for sustainability its definition’s very different interpretation amongst people. Ms Skott concludes that in terms of economic sustainability the organization tries to design it’s progress for the next 5-10 years and will also try to enhance meetings about sustainability and meetings about climate issues.

4.5.4 Collaboration

The main stakeholders involved during a marketing project for the city involve those at the local level since Destination Uppsala AB is deeply concerned of making the citizens proud of their city and to inspire them to enjoy the everyday life in Uppsala, as Ms Skott states. The goal is to attract more tourists and visitors but as she clarifies this is not the only target group included in their strategies: visitors, citizens and companies are all included.

Nevertheless, the importance the presence of many companies seemed as a high priority for the agency due to the capital flow in the system. In the process of attracting all kinds of interest groups the word of mouth is very important. The next question concerned citizens’ role and level of participation. Ms Skott’s response is that there are networks where the company actually involves citizens thus when a project requires it communication meetings take place, co-organized by Ms Skott’s team and Karin Åkerblom. On the other hand, concerning the marketing stage of the process there is an absence of communication with the citizens. In this stage the communication includes only local companies, and afterwards the inhabitants can participate in the developing part of the process. The final question is about collaboration strategies and if the agency works closely with the environmental department of the community to implement marketing strategies. Hence, the interviewees were asked to reply if the environmental department offers special consultation to the marketing department. Ms Skott stated that the environmental department is not highly involved but there is a possibility for cooperation if desired by the two parties. Even if an intense co-strategy is absent the brand manager mentions the good dialogue that happens in some specific projects.
5. Analysis and Discussion

This chapter approaches and evaluates the research questions originally introduced in the first chapter of the study. The approach is based on the theoretical perspective i.e. the Stakeholder Theory, which provides explanatory arguments concerning the stakeholders involved in branding the case studies. It is also formulated by the results stemming from the interviews of the empirical study. The research questions of chapter 1 are:

- What is the role of stakeholders in place branding policies in Europe?
- Do middle-sized cities in Europe aim to create more sustainable urban environments?
- Is place branding a tool to achieve urban sustainable development?

Those questions constitute a guide of the analysis and of the discussion of the results.

5.1 Stakeholders and the Application of Place Branding Policies

The following subchapter processes shortly the results related to the first research question and verifies the Theory’s applicability.

Relating the Urban Stakeholders with the City’s Priorities

The Theoretical Framework discussed in Chapter 3 has assisted the empirical study in quite a satisfactory level. The illustration of the Stakeholder Theory introduced by E. Freeman and the Theory’s development has been helpful to interpret and reflect on the results of the interviews with the urban planners and the branding managers.

The connection between corporate branding and city branding (see Hankinson, 2007, Kavaratzis, 2009, Chapter 3) and the focus on the city’s nature as one including multiple stakeholders with different interests and perceptions of the city has played a vital role for the interviews. It can be argued here that the first issue that this study aimed to address was well approached. More precisely, according to the results of the empirical study all the professionals value the role of multiple stakeholders as a necessary aspect of their projects (see also Savage et al., 1991, Chapter 3). Hence, the stakeholders’ nature is multi-dimensional and concerns all the activities communicated by the city (see Kavaratzis, 2009, Chapter 3).

There is also a clear prioritization of the stakeholders’ significance as it has also been suggested by the Theory (see Polonsky, 1996, Chapter 3). According to the findings, the prioritization differs amongst the experts even amongst those representing the same city. There is nevertheless, a common tendency to prioritize the following two categories: Companies and the Business sector in general and the Citizens. Apart from this common inclination, it is firstly sometimes hard for the interviewees to chose which interest groups are more essential for the city even if they do succeed to present the main categories and secondly, their selection depends on their departments’ priorities and strategy line. The experts’ hesitation to select the most important of the stakeholders thus their differentiation
in their replies verifies the elevated complexity of the stakeholders’ involvement in city branding.

5.2 European Cities and Sustainable Urban Environments

This subchapter addresses the second research question. The reader can find here the arguments supporting that the middle-sized European cities reviewed as a sample here do take under consideration the issue of sustainable development. The representatives of Zoetermeer and Uppsala present different perceptions of the definition of sustainable development in the urban tissue. Also, their level of commitment and their preventive actions are differentiated reflecting the local departmental policies and the general policies of the municipalities.

Reviewing the Case-Studies Green Policies

In this stage it is rather necessary to reflect on the experts’ responses concerning the sustainability policies designed currently by their departments and the future expectation and hopes they presented during the interviews.

The results from Zoetermeer are rich in information about the city’s progress. Both the experts mentioned the existence of a long-term and ambitious sustainability plan. The results show nevertheless that the luck of funding resources and the luck of collaboration with the market parties limit the city’s pro-sustainability actions. It is also mentioned by the marketing department that sustainability is today a commodity and cities have to be part of it otherwise they will be an exception, which will make them less competitive. A realistic plan is the creation of a cultural museum based on low energy consumption. Some of the cities’ are:

- Compact urban environment
- Biking is a popular means of transportation
- Public transportation is preferred for longer distances
- Green spaces
- Policy document to preserve green structures, green areas and ecology
- Close collaboration between the marketing and environmental department for project consultation

The interviewees do not worry for future environmental challenges and hope for the application of stricter policies on the local and national level. It can be argued, however, that the city’s sustainability plan seems not to be proactive enough even after taking under consideration the experts’ honest intentions to improve the urban environment. The plan has more of a passive nature meaning that the city exploits the benefits its green environment already has and takes less significant steps towards a comprehensive strategic plan for sustainability. There is also luck of pressure towards big interests and the market dynamics such as businesses on that particular aspect. Finally, what can be criticized and is already seen by the city representatives is the emergence of many financially successful but environmentally damaging projects like the indoors-skiing facilities and the water rafting facilities.

The interviewees from Uppsala express their belief of sustainable development as a fundamental issue for the urban environment today and in the future. They stress the
importance of sustainability as a priority in the marketing planning and the protection of the future generations’ rights to a pleasant urban environment (urban planning department) as valuable aspects of their policy-making. The experts underline the good image a green urban environment can provide to the city and its attractive capacities. Same as in Zoetermeer, the professionals show little concern about the future environmental challenges the city will be called to address hence they do stress the financial aspect as an alarming indicator for the city’s future allocation of resources. The city seems to be taking *more proactive steps* comparing to the results presented by the Dutch representatives. This is mostly due to the following initiatives:

- The organization of energy and climate conferences
- The big agreement with the strong companies to collaborate for the city
- The hotels’ eco-certification
- The *Destination Uppsala AB* focus on social care strategies
- The collaboration with climate and environmental strategists
- The touristic sector’s priority on sustainability actions (for certain sectors) and the general tourists’ appreciation of the eco-labeling policy

Even though municipality is already surrounded by green spaces and its inhabitants are biking the city moves one step further and tries to safeguard the urban environment and apply some targeted policies. Zoetermeer is a city more focused on Innovation and Leisure activities for the moment, trying to create a strong identity. Uppsala, being already a center for university education and hosting a great variety of events works on some further projects around sustainability. Nonetheless, the financial limitations are present for both cities and are worrying for all. All the interviewees clearly hope for a more sustainable urban zone for the future generations but are today processing their municipal planning.

### 5.3 Urban Planning to Support Sustainable Development

This final subchapter presents an evaluation of the experts’ opinion concerning the hypothesis that place branding can be a tool to sustain the progress of sustainable urban development.

*Views and Opinions on Place Branding’s Contribution to Sustainable Development*

The opinions on this fundamental question for the study varied but an obvious trend that was observed in all the replies was that if not a leading indicator, place branding can in the future shape an assisting policy for the promotion of sustainable cities (see Chapter 4).

The experts’ views on the topic were thoroughly discussed to ensure that there would not be a misinterpretation of the results. In general city branding is viewed as a very efficient and powerful tool to attract tourists, financial investments, new tourist groups, create a satisfying living environment for the citizens and make them proud of their city. On the other hand, the urban planner expert from Zoetermeer expressed his doubts about city branding’s capacity to enhance the sustainable aspect of the urban environment because at the moment this is not the municipality’s main goal. The precious input from Mr. Keijzer was his belief that in the future place branding should make a shift and start promoting a greener development. His colleague Mr. Kragt opinion is that since sustainability is a
commodity in European cities only massive projects that could make the city stand out of the crowd could actually help for marketing purposes. Otherwise he stresses that sustainability is not a choice and that a major issue today is to have consistency with what the city states and what it actually applies. The outcome of this part of the discussions can be described as positive. Place branding has a potential to promote greener urban environments but it requires a strong green-orientated municipal planning and radical changes with innovative projects. The hypothesis that place branding is a tool for sustainable development is therefore not rejected but will need a more supportive attitude in the European framework to grow.

6. Conclusions

This chapter addresses the research questions from chapter one and elaborates on the conclusions that can be drawn from the results, the analysis and the discussion parts as a final review of the study’s findings.

These are the research questions described in the first chapter of this thesis:

- What is the role of stakeholders in place branding policies in Europe?
- Do middle-sized cities in Europe aim to create more sustainable urban environments?
- Is place branding a tool to achieve urban sustainable development?

This study has found that the role of the stakeholders is vital for the design of middle-sized European cities and that the complexity, the multi-disciplinarily nature, the prioritization of specific groups and interests are placing city branding as a concept which is surely more demanding and complicated than those product or corporate branding. The selection of the stakeholders affects directly the urban planning policies and the branding strategies of the city.

The results have shown that the cities examined do consider in a high level the importance of sustainable development in the creation of the strategic planning policies. It is remarkable that this trend is also very apparent in the personal beliefs of the interviewees. However, many proactive and drastic measures should be taken in the future to enhance the sustainability policies, which are directly affected by the city’s financial capacities and the commitment of big companies and other market players. Sustainability is commonly accepted both from the planning and the branding departments as fundamental for the creation of a healthy living environment that could indirectly attract more tourists. The interviewees have mentioned other priorities such as sports facilities, leisure, the attraction of companies and big investments, innovation and more.

Finally, place branding has the possibility to be a tool for a greener environment and the establishment of new projects and city design policies but some of the expert express their concern since the believe that there are many steps to be done until this is actually the reality. The positive message the interviews have shown is that both the cities embrace collaborative activities and share knowledge in an advanced degree and the planning departments look forward to the environmental experts’ advice in a majority of projects.
7. Suggestions for Future Research

As a recommendation for further research can be proposed the study of more cities in the European level, which could indicate the trend also in major, capital cities. This study is seen as an opening dialogue on the issues of sustainable development and urban planning which are two concepts brought together only recently. Another issue for further research could concern novel suggestions on how to encourage the initiation of branding activities on the place branding theme for European cities taking under consideration the parameter that seems to be the most worrisome for the future cities’ organization: the limited and shortened financial capacity.
Bibliography


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Appendix I

1. Interview Guide

1.1 Questions to the Branding Managers:

- How would you describe the sustainability plan of Zoetermeer/Uppsala in short?
- Is a greener development/sustainable development a core value for your city’s future planning and if yes why or why not?
- How do you perceive city branding/marketing? Which are the main goals you set?
- Do you perceive the city as a product?
- Could you please name some of the current running projects?
- Which were the most successful projects so far? Which were not so successful?
- What would you change in your future marketing strategies comparing to the current ones?
- Do you have some projects related to SD? Could you name some examples?
- Which are the main stakeholders involved while proceeding to a marketing project for the city?
- What is the citizens’ role? Do they have a high level of involvement in promoting the city of Zoetermeer/Uppsala?
- Is the environmental department highly involved while implementing marketing strategies? Does this department offer some special of consultation to the marketing department?

1.2 Questions to the Urban Planners:

- How would you describe the urban planning plan for the city of Zoetermeer/Uppsala?
- How do you perceive the city?
- Could you present shortly some running projects?
- Which are the main principles/values you prioritize?
- Which are the main goals?
- Do you see the future urban planning policies becoming more aligned with the values of a sustainable development?
- Do you face difficulties collaborating with the city marketing department or do your ideas share the same philosophy most of the time?
- What is the citizens’ role? Do they have a high level of involvement in the planning and designing processes of the city of Zoetermeer/Uppsala?
- Which are the expected challenges the city will have to face in the future?
- Are you worried that in the future environmental issues may force you to change your planning policies?
- Do you value the stakeholders equally or do some of them share a larger part of the pie in your urban planning projects?
- Could you describe the stages one project has to go through to be implemented?
- Do you perceive city marketing as an essential tool to promote the city, attract investments, tourists and lead to the creation of a more sustainable environment?