Place branding strategies and urban transformation in ‘emerging world class’ cities

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The MFS Scholarship Programme offers Swedish university students an opportunity to carry out two months' field work, usually the student's final degree project, in a country in Africa, Asia or Latin America. The results of the work are presented in an MFS report which is also the student's Master of Science Thesis. Minor Field Studies are primarily conducted within subject areas of importance from a development perspective and in a country where Swedish international cooperation is ongoing.

The main purpose of the MFS Programme is to enhance Swedish university students’ knowledge and understanding of these countries and their problems and opportunities. MFS should provide the student with initial experience of conditions in such a country. The overall goals are to widen the Swedish human resources cadre for engagement in international development cooperation as well as to promote scientific exchange between universities, research institutes and similar authorities as well as NGOs in developing countries and in Sweden.

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ABSTRACT

Countries in the Persian Gulf and Pacific Asia have in a short time transformed themselves into economic powerhouses. The urban environment in these countries has been highly impacted by a tremendous economic growth and an emphasis on megaprojects containing modernistic urban design as well as the hosting of prestigious events. This has evidently been a part of well-defined strategies in order to maintain growth and to secure future development. Although same or at least similar strategies are used by many ‘emerging world class’ cities, they act in very different environments and with different preconditions. These strategies are mainly thought to originate from theories about global competitiveness where cities act and compete in a global hierarchy.

One of the ‘emerging world class’ cities is Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. In the case study provided in this thesis, evidence of a very tight and defined strategy containing the usage of world-class urban projects as a facilitator of future growth is presented. This strategy is also a product of a powerful government with a highly motivated Prime minister with almost unrestricted possibilities. Not many other actors have played a significant role in the recent urban transformation of Kuala Lumpur. A different perspective is also investigated which seeks to explain the development using a more domestic approach rather than the global perspective which is emphasized through this study.

Keywords: Globalization, Place Branding, Emerging World Class Cities, Dominant-Emerging, World Class Development, Kuala Lumpur
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1. INTRODUCTION

We are living in the age of globalization. Global distances are shrinking fast. Economic growth and urbanization processes are rapidly transforming our planet. What was taken for granted a decade ago may no longer be valid. In order to understand what is going on, models and explanatory concepts are invented and discarded. Renowned authors look at cities rather than nations to understand and explain the forces behind the globalized world. This thesis seeks to understand the urban transformation that is happening in Asian cities located in formerly, at least with western eyes, rather insignificant locations of the world. There is of course different perspectives to understand this phenomenon and this study focus on the efforts of branding cities as a method to enhance their attractiveness. During the last decades a lot has changed and now we in the West are watching pictures of their tall, iconic buildings and their airlines are frequent visitors at our airports. We see prestigious events being held at locations we never heard about before. Undoubtedly all these things are happening right in front of our eyes and this thesis seeks to understand why this is happening. Is these just random events caused by a more liberal and connected world with more or less free trade policies in place or is it happening because of a few influential people with considerable resources and power at their disposal are trying to make their vision a reality? Maybe those two factors should not be put up against but rather be seen dependent of each other? In a global economy cities are evidently competing against each other for resources such as capital and talent. These resources, as many others in a global economy, are extremely volatile. In order to gather and increase their prevalence in a particular city, strategies are developed in order to attract them. These strategies are evidently modeled upon each other. The ones emphasized here are strategies such as “world class development” and “place branding” which are, in many ways, overlapping each other.

The cities this study is focusing on are all located in Asia and have a recent history of rapid change and progress. They are the ‘emerging world class’ cities!

1.1 Problem formulation and discussion

Rapid change has occurred in many cities in the world during recent decades. In Asia particular, a lot of “new” cities have entered and rapidly climbed rankings such as Gross Domestic product and Economic Creativity Index. Pictures from these cities visualize modernity and progress. The large cities are seen as the engines in their fast growing economies and they need to be studied in order to understand the processes that are occurring. The cities are all seeking global attention by image-making through iconic architecture, large scale events etc. There are many models of explanations why they want this attention. This study relies on one of the newer additions to a growing number of concepts; ‘dominant-emerging’ as well as other theories considering image-making and place branding.
The main underlying reason for the need of developing the concept of ‘dominant-emerging’ is that the authors that coined the term; Lefebvre & Roult (2011) clearly presents the concept as “explorative”. Furthermore, the authors main focus lies on these cities’ interest in hosting mega-events as the common denominator used in order to build image and raise attractiveness. The author behind this study sees additional similarities in strategy of image-making among these cities; they share a desire to build tall, iconic buildings and large, modern airports, often with a sizeable, initial overcapacity. Furthermore they are promoting their national airlines to serve large numbers of, often unprofitable, transcontinental routes (Lohmann et al, 2009).

Since there is a question of to what extent some of this development may have sprung organically, a closer look on a particular city would be of great interest for the study. Kuala Lumpur is one of the cities mentioned by Lefebvre & Roult (2011) as ‘dominant-emerging’. The city is hosting mega-events (Asian games, Formula 1), has a world famous flagship building (Petronas twin towers, the tallest building in the world 1998-2004) and has a national airline that expanded rapidly during the 90’s (Malaysian airlines). Furthermore, this thesis was awarded the MFS Scholarship by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, which is funding field studies in a limited number of countries. Malaysia was one of the few relevant countries for conducting a field study in this topic and also on the list of possible destinations for MFS scholarship.

1.2 Research questions

1. What is the concept ‘dominant-emerging’ and why is it useful in order to understand place branding through urban development?

2. To what extent can the urban development seen in Kuala Lumpur be traced to a specific strategy, how clear is it defined and which are the forces behind it?

1.3 Purpose

There are two major objectives with this report. The first objective is to compare and analyze a few of the ‘emerging world class’ cities in order to understand and develop the concept. The second objective is to present a case study of how Kuala Lumpur specifically seeks to market itself and determine whether the city fits into the models of explanation investigated in this study. Additionally, the purpose is to show how a branding strategy takes form and is implemented but also to determine to what degree the urban transformation seen in an ‘emerging world class’ city is a result of a specific strategy.

Thus the thesis shall:

- Further develop the concept ‘dominant-emerging’.
- Briefly compare methods used by different ‘emerging world class’ cities.
- Determine and evaluate the place branding strategy used by Kuala Lumpur.
1.4 Delimitations

This study may be seen as two parts. The first deals with theoretical issues and strategies that ‘emerging world class’ cities are using. Geographically the study is limited to the Persian Gulf and Asia Pacific. The second part is a case study of Kuala Lumpur and is geographically limited to the Kuala Lumpur metropolitan area, also known as Greater Kuala Lumpur or Klang Valley. Theoretical issues are not limited geographically and contain comparisons and references to other, mostly mature, global cities such as London and New York.

1.5 Structure

The thesis is structured into several sections. The first is providing a background and presents the purpose and research questions. The second section is dealing with methodological issues and how the case study work was carried out. Since this thesis is largely based on theoretical concepts the third section is presenting a theoretical framework and also the rationale of the theories studied. The fourth section is mostly a presentation and comparison of the ‘emerging world class’ cities studied by this thesis. The fifth section is a case study of Kuala Lumpur and seeks to put the case into the context already outlined. The sixth section provides the concluding discussion and serves also as a deeper analysis of the topic studied.
2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Qualitative research

This study is exclusively using methodologies from the qualitative spectra. Charkhchi et al (2011) are defining qualitative methods as research that has not been labeled as quantitative. Furthermore, their main purpose is to study social cultural phenomena.

- Qualitative research epistemologies which are non-oriented proof.
- Qualitative research strategies are to interpret and reveal concepts and meanings rather than generalizing accidental relationships.
- Qualitative research techniques cannot fall into numbers.

- Charkhchi et al (2011, p. 107)

To proceed with a project containing a heavy theoretical foundation like this study, a sufficient literature study was deemed important as a point of departure. Theories from different areas such as urban studies (‘global cities’ and ‘world class development’) and Place Branding (Marketing) have been chosen because of possibilities to complement each other in order to provide a foundation for a broader understanding. In hindsight, both theories are pretty similar although they take different departures. Also from the literature, the concepts of ‘dominant-emerging’ and ‘world class development’ have been chosen in order to provide an effort to further develop the way of studying these issues altogether.

The case study of Kuala Lumpur, which serves as an example of how an ‘emerging world class’ city implement a strategy and also tries to explain the reasons behind it, needs to be seen as a case study as in an in-dept study of a case rather than using a ‘case study methodology’. Case study methodology is something different and involves a vast set of parameters (Fidel, 1984). The case study is largely based on previously written material that is slightly conflicting in nature. Different models of explanation are offered on the topic of urban and economic transformation of Kuala Lumpur. Empirical data is therefore collected in order to further understand the topic.

2.2 Material selection, reliability and validity

Again, this study relies on many different sources gathered before and during the undertaking of the study. In many cases the selection has been led by the material at hand during the design stage of the study, by looking further into the sources of that particular material. This is also providing opportunity for some assertion of the validity of the material, by allowing cross checking. The sources consist of official documents, books and articles.
(some providing new research material and some built on previously conducted research (and further analyzing this)), interviews and publications with raw data.

In order to allow some sort of validity check of the information provided by the interviewees, their stories have been compared with (1) other interviews and (2) the written sources at my disposal, when possible.

Especially considering the case study of Kuala Lumpur, the reliability of the material raises concerns. This study uses leaked cables from the US embassy in Kuala Lumpur published by Wikileaks. The US have never confirmed nor denied the authenticity of this material. One may therefore keep in mind that there is a possibility that the material may be falsified. Other concerns is how influenced the previously written material is by political factors. Touching upon subjects such as party politics is always sensitive and can make the study biased. There have not been any indications that the material used in this study is subject to more bias than studies in social science in general.

2.3 Interviews

For the Interviews Kvale’s (1996) instructions have been used as a guideline. A semi-structured approach was chosen as the most appropriate way of conducting this study. Semi-structured interviews are structured in the way that they have a fixed set of questions that the interviewee needs to answer, but smaller diversions may occur. The difference is that diversions are thought to increase knowledge with a semi-structured interview technique (Morse & Richards 2002). In a structured interview situation diversions must be avoided. In this case the diversions were deliberately seen as a way to increase knowledge for the interviewer even though these diversions might not end up in the final report.

The question of bias is always central when performing qualitative research. However Kvale (1996) argues that just “letting the object speak” is an efficient way to reduce, albeit not eliminate, bias in an interview situation.

Four examples of sampling techniques put together by Morse & Richards (2002) used for qualitative research method is (1) theoretical sampling (those who go in line with the emerging theoretical scheme), (2) nominated sampling (recommended by other persons), (3) convenience sampling (those who are available) and (4) purposeful sampling (those who are deemed as having characteristics that possess rare knowledge). For this project a combination of (2) nominated sampling and (4) purposeful sampling has been used. The persons interviewed were recommended by Dr. Morshidi Sirat, Professor at Universiti Sains, Penang, Malaysia. Because of the rather specific purpose, it was deemed also for practical reasons that nominated sampling was the most suitable method. Therefore both practical and nominated sampling has been used. The number of interviewees was also chosen from a practical standpoint. There were difficulties in finding a large number of participants with
sufficient knowledge in these matters; therefore only five interviews were conducted. One may validly argue against the small sample size, but must bear in mind that the design of the questionnaire is very specific and addressed to professionals. This kind of professionals is not in abundance.
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3. 1 Globalization

This thesis will deal with a number of concepts and theories which in different ways are linked together. The parent topics for these issues are the process of globalization and the field of economic geography. This process is mostly an economical force that through liberal and/or neo-liberal political agendas have globally increased in significance since the 1970’s (Knox, 1998). Globalization is:

“the qualitative transformation of economic relationships across geographical space” and a “supercomplex series of multicentric, multiscalar, multitemporal, multiform and multicausal processes.” – Dicken, 2011, p. 7

Globalization is also a force that creates new economic and political dependencies on the international level. That is because international capital and commodity markets have melted together and through technological achievements (such as electronic communications and systems for transferring funds) are completely connected (Castells, 1996). Most authors on the subject do agree that the globalization process alone is responsible for much of the economic growth of the last four decades but is also responsible for the biggest recessions during this timeframe (Dicken, 2011). The process is rather stealthy and interdependent (Knox, 1998) and critics argue that when state power decreases with the neo-liberal tendencies which accompanies the global economy, large corporations and elites gain more political power (Moulaert et al, 2005). Transnational corporations can play countries against each other in order to gain more favorable conditions, for the benefit of only themselves (Greider, 1997). On the other hand one could argue that without liberal economic systems and with no connection to the world economy there is no feasible way of growing. Also globalization can be seen as a natural and irreversible process caused by the technological achievements (e.g. new means of transports and information technologies) (Dicken, 2011). Oatley (1998) does see the more recent tendencies of globalization as a reaction to the breakdown of Keynesian economic policy. In a post-Fordist economy flexible production is required and that does partly explain why neo-liberal globalist forces are in place. In order to be competitive, companies must relocate production to places that can offer the lowest costs (wages is a huge factor but other costs such as relocation costs, taxes, infrastructural situation and transport costs are considered) (Oatley, 1998).
With more countries joining the global economy, the scale of the economy itself is increasing. In this context new actors are realizing opportunities; the race to collect resources for tomorrow goes through putting oneself further up in the chain of supply today (Dicken, 2011; Douglass, 2002). Therefore the question of geography remains central. Where are the centers of control in this abstract process of the global economy?

3.1.1 Global cities

The Global city (or world city) concept was introduced by John Friedmann in 1986 and represented a way of understanding the globalization process by measuring the economic power of the most important cities. This means that the world cities form a hierarchal system and this hierarchy is dependent on the ideology of the free market (Friedmann, 2002). Other authors such as Manuel Castells and Saskia Sassen argue that globalization must be understood as an urban phenomenon (Oatley, 1998). In this urban context, cities act as nodes in the system of the global economy. There are different levels of abstraction in studies of this phenomenon. To measure which global cities that have most influence Sassen (2001) and others (such as Dicken, 2011; GaWC 2010) are using global service firms and their locations of establishment as a tool. Simply put, the larger number of top tier transnational service firms a city contains, the more globally connected the particular city is. The idea is that transnational service firms acts as facilitators of connectivity (Sassen, 2002). Others, such as Castells (1996), have developed a more abstract way of looking at the global economy as a “space of flows” where geographical location has little to no meaning. This must be seen in a context where information technology has transformed the world in a very short time that it might be considered a paradigm shift. A third perspective is to measure physical connection between global cities such as transport networks e.g. the prevalence of transcontinental air links. Although mapping transport is a less abstract phenomenon and
also highly useful, the hardships of gathering and comparing reliable data have been hampering this research so far (Derudder et al, 2007).

The arguments for studying urban centers are many. Sassen (2002) argues that these urban centers acts as nodes or command centers to the “global circuit”; the world economy. Also there is the central issue of power. The nodes do not only contain economical, but also political power as they hold: “Headquarter functions [...] top-level financial, legal, accounting, managerial, executive, and planning functions” – Sassen 2002, p. 8

Douglass (2002, p. 58-59) identifies problems with the situation where governments deliberately seek to attract FDI (Foreign Direct Investments) to one city / city region: “This putting of all eggs into one basket works against national economic resilience and fails to develop the full potential of people and the economy over national territory. The continuing spatial polarization of development throughout Pacific Asia, [...] reveals the outcomes of lopsided intercity competition over national space.”

![Figure 2. Three tiers of financial centers, “nodes” in the global economy ranked by their importance.](image)

3.1.2 World class cities

World class development is large scale urban projects such as iconic buildings, airports etc. They can be wholly or partly financed by national governments, local governments but also by private developers (King, 1996). In cases where national or local governments are
involved (in an Asian context) Olds (1995) argues that these extremely expensive projects serve to “hook” cities up to the world economy\(^1\).

The world class city is defined by its aspirations to join the upper tier of cities in the hierarchy mentioned above (Derudder & Witlox, 2008). Others (King, 1996) suggest that world class development is seen even in the top cities of London, New York and Tokyo\(^2\). However, the world class development seen in top tier cities is normally a result of demand rather than a deliberate policy or a branding strategy developed by that city. As an example, City of London / UK Government was not pushing for world class projects such as Swiss Re building or The Shard\(^3\). Those projects were a result of stakeholders acting independently in a demand-driven process triggered by high rents (explains the tallness) and corporate prestige (explains the iconic design) (Dinnie, 2011).

![Figure 3. Swiss Re building, London (left), The Shard, London (middle), Tour Eiffel, Paris (right).](image)

There are several rankings that are measuring the importance and attractiveness of the global cities. These rankings may be interpreted as a measure of success and there is much prestige involved. World class development is thought to help cities raise attractiveness in

\(^1\) Although the quote “hook up” is slightly open to interpretation, I argue that it is foremost a question of prestige. Top tier transnational service firms do not accept anything less than first class office space in a tall, shiny building; a “citadel” (Marcuse, 2008, p. 7). To “hook up”, a city must be able to offer these features.

\(^2\) King (1996) argues that world class development originates in America but is now spreading fast through Asia.

\(^3\) The Shard is also an interesting example of the increasing economic power of ‘emerging world class’ cities. When the finance crisis hit Europe in 2008 a consortium linked to the Qatar government stepped in and took over the project. The building is currently owned to 95% by the Qatar government (Green Prophet, 2012). This means that one of the most striking world class project in London actually is controlled by Doha, Qatar.
order to climb rankings. All this can be seen as a response to this “hyper-competition” among cities (Douglass, 2002). This competition is not only about gaining positions on a ranking system. This competition is also about attracting limited amount of capital (e.g. as foreign direct investments) and talent (in business, engineering, software etc.) as well as tourism (Douglass, 2002; Sassen, 2002).

“Across the Asia–Pacific region in the 1990s, “world class” urban investment was increasingly understood as a national means of “plugging in” to global political, economic, and social networks” – Bunnell et al, 2002, p. 361

World class development can also be understood and almost translated to another phenomenon – Urban mega projects. These projects are large scale urban investments with a purpose to

1. Solving a particular urban problem that have occurred (e.g. a new highway or urban rail project to solve traffic jams).
2. Act as a monument for a ruler or a government in order to create positive images and goodwill for both internal and external audiences.

Normally both features are involved in these urban mega projects and they are often modeled upon each other (Carmona & Burgess, 2001; Morshidi & Pandian, 2007). This is where mega urban investments and place branding concepts such as flagship buildings and signature districts (which will be discussed in section 3.3.3) melt together.

Figure 4. Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai, late 1980’s (left) and 2011 (right) – from desert to a cluster of world class development in 30 years.

3.2 What are ‘dominant-emerging’ cities?

Dominant-emerging is an explorative concept outlined by Lefebvre & Roult (2011) and refers to urban territories with aspirations to become new global cities. The term is heavily linked to the academic field of city marketing and place promotion as well as studies of
globalization. The authors are specifically interested in these cities willingness to bid for mega-events such as Formula one and FIFA.

“The ‘dominant-emerging city’ refers to eastern millionaire metropolises that were partially generated during the oil and economic booms of the 1990s, established on growing liberal markets, and within which public and politic administration keep a central role. These metropolises are the knots of their regions’ economic system and aim to develop at an international level through financial incentives that are susceptible to attract multinationals which are mostly involved in high-level service industries (finance, insurance, property business, etc.) to their territories. In regards to events, these cities are interested in prestigious cultural and sporting events, the ‘jet set’ and corporations with a strong media visibility that are able to increase their public image. “ - Lefebvre & Roult (2011, p 3)

To get a clearer picture, the authors are mentioning Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai as ‘dominant-emerging’. The concept is however not limited to these cities. In order to further define the concept Lefebvre & Roult (2011) give several criteria:

- These urban territories aspire to become new global cities.
- They do not hesitate to use important public funds as means to support their ‘festive ambitions’.
- They use the new principles of urban development (urban marketing, city branding, flagship development, etc.).
- They put their stakes on the exclusive and ephemeral aspects of mega-events in order to compete with western metropolises.

The concept is also very much related to the term ‘world class city’ as cities are seen in a context where they compete for visibility (Derudder & Witlox, 2008). It has to be said that the concept ‘dominant-emerging’ is one of many terms to describe a similar phenomenon.

3.2.1 ‘World class’ and ‘dominant-emerging’ concepts

‘World class’ is the natural main concept for this study. It is a wider concept than ‘dominant-emerging’ and entails all the aspects of world class development such as city branding, flagship megaprojects, connectivity, hub- and node strategies etc. However, ‘world class development’ is something that is happening in the whole world and not just in the geographical context that this study is limited to (Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia). The advantage of the ‘dominant-emerging’ concept is, although its primary focus on city branding through hallmark events, that the authors have identified the locations where arguably the most world class development are occurring; the “new players” (Lefebvre & Roult 2011). The connection between ‘World class’, ‘dominant-emerging’ and Place branding can very roughly be summarized by Douglass (2002, p. 57) as “To lure FDI, public finance is
being shifted to mega-projects such as hub airports [...] and sports complexes to host global spectacles that are used to symbolize top-level international status”

Figure 5. Theoretical map visualizing the rationale of the concept ‘emerging world class’.

Since this study shall “further develop the concept ‘dominant-emerging’” (section 1.3), the concepts ‘dominant-emerging’ and ‘world class’ are merged into ‘emerging world class’. This concept contains the locations and the place branding strategies of the cities studied.

3.3 Place Branding and City Marketing

The studying of Place branding and City marketing is a more recent addition to the academic world. The literature in this field offers an interdisciplinary way of understanding the interaction between policy makers, stakeholders and urban development projects. There is much debate on how to characterize and distinguish Place branding and City marketing and even to specify what Place branding/marketing is and what significance it poses in a particular context (Berglund & Olsson, 2010). Roughly, most authors seem to consider Place branding as a field of its own somewhere between urban policy and traditional marketing (Dinnie, 2011). There is also a question on how to distinguish place/city -branding/marketing/promotion/selling. Smyth (2005) is clarifying these concepts by characterize the strategies as active or passive. For instance, to construct a flagship building in order to raise attractiveness is a passive approach and is a tool for city/place branding. However, if the said building would be used in an advertising campaign, that would be regarded as an active approach and thus is city/place promotion or selling (Smyth, 2005).

The rationale behind place branding is to view the global supply of talent, capital and tourism as assets which can, with the right methods, be attracted to a certain place (Dinnie, 2011). Therefore, adopting a brand strategy is thought to be essential in order to compete with other places over these assets. Brand strategy is adopted from the commercial world and more of a passive tool (Smyth, 2005). Smaller cities normally depart from something they are already known for (perhaps a food dish, a successful sports team etc.). Cities competing on the global level seem to all brand themselves as futuristic metropolis with
skyscrapers, signature districts and mega-events; urban mega projects (Marcuse, 2008; Berglund & Olsson, 2010)

3.3.1 Problems and Critique

Authors such as Friedmann (2002) argue that Place branding / City marketing is a zero-sum game and that cities generally suffer from competing with each other. Several documented cases indicate that the ones that are not among the rare number of winners (such as Bilbao, Spain) are just giving public funds away. This is happening in a situation where they use the funds which could create a better product (e.g. improve public transport) to efforts in creating a brand (e.g. building a new arena to brand the city as “a city of sports”) which in most cases would go unnoticed in a long-term perspective. From a global utilitarian perspective, the dangers of traditional marketing apply also to this field; a successful branding effort may actually sell a “bad” city. For instance, the case of Masdar city (See section 4.1) might brand Abu Dhabi / United Arab Emirates (UAE) as an eco-friendly city / country. The reality is that UAE have the biggest ecological footprint per capita (Footprint network, 2012); thus can be considered as the least eco-friendly county in the world.

Figure 6. Guggenheim museum in Bilbao, Spain. An example of a flagship building that have become almost synonymous with Bilbao, a successful branding effort, hence the concept “Bilbao-effect” (Fainstein, 2013).

3.3.2 Instruments for Place Branding

According to Ashworth (2009) there are three major instruments for cities to market themselves. These are:

1. Personality association. To connect the city with a well-known person; a celebrity, a famous person from history, sports, literature etc.
2. The visual attractiveness of signature urban design and flagship buildings, creating association with modernism and progress.

3. Event hallmarking. To arrange a prestigious event like the Olympics or a FIFA championship channels attention towards the host city. This effect is often temporary.

As understood by the instruments mentioned above, Place branding is much about finding and to develop features of uniqueness with a main purpose of convincing external populations of the comparative advantages of a certain place (Ashworth, 2009; Berglund & Olsson, 2010).

Since this study is focusing on the city marketing by using tools as urban development and urban policy, personality association is not further investigated. Furthermore, personality association is more used as an active approach e.g. advertising. Instead the thesis is investigating the place branding aspect of aviation. The aviation and transport perspective is supported by different authors than Ashworth and fits more into a model where emphasis is put on city branding and marketing through policy matters (Bowen, 2000; Lohmann et al, 2009; Baker & Freestone, 2011). As previously mentioned, urban mega projects are very much connected to the concept of flagship buildings and signature districts but also to mega-events. This is because mega-events often require an urban mega project such as a large multifunctional arena or a race circuit to bid for and to host a mega-event.

### 3.3.3 Flagship Buildings and Signature Districts

Flagship is a term from the naval world and is used as a metaphor to describe something very significant or cutting edge. The idea of flagship buildings can be traced several thousand years back. Buildings like the Parthenon and Coliseum were a strong manifestation of power and progress, largely the same motivators as today (Ashworth, 2009). A more recent example is Tour Eiffel in Paris which was erected in the late nineteenth century. This marked the start of a competition for height in addition to iconic design.

When merging height and iconic design with usefulness, a skyscraper would be the primary association. A skyscraper defines city form and indicates the connection to the world economy (Chen et al, 2006). For branding purposes, the building also has to be noticeable and needs to be talked about in order to have the desired effect (Ashworth, 2009). To build the world’s tallest building has traditionally almost been a guarantee to be seen in a global context. The effect is however transitory and has been passed from the Empire state building, New York through Sears tower (now Willis tower), Chicago to the more recent examples from Kuala Lumpur, Taipei and Dubai. Ashworth (2009, p. 14) is noting that the strategy of building the highest structure is today something that: “appeal particularly to newly emerging countries feeling the need to demonstrate their arrival amongst the leading economic players in the world”. The time on top of the charts has been decreasing due to a
faster race largely spurred by an increasing number of participants in this race (Griffiths, 1998). Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur was the world’s tallest building for only 6 years (1998-2004) until it got surpassed by Taipei 101 in Taipei. Taipei 101 was then surpassed by Burj Khalifa in Dubai after 5 years (2004-2009) (Ashworth, 2009). It is up for debate if those buildings ever got the desired effect and also how long Burj Khalifa will stay on top. Taipei 101 can also be regarded as a celebration for the successful transition into a service-based economy in Taiwan, thus indicating the strong connection between economy and politics in regards to flagship buildings (Chen et al, 2006).

The CBD and its clusters of skyscrapers can be seen from several perspectives. The primary perspective is the economical one; to build tall makes economic sense when the price of real estate is high. The secondary perspective, and the more important one for the purpose of this study, is the symbolic one. The origin is the images of wealth and power associated with Manhattan, New York (Marcuse, 2008). In other words, tall buildings are usually something that emerges when there is a high demand for apartments and offices. The abundance of tall and iconic buildings in some of the ‘emerging world class’ cities is indicating that the process is reversed. The tall and iconic buildings emerge in order to create demand through images. The rationale is that the images of wealth, modernity and progress will attract investors and tourists (Ashworth, 2009). Not only tall buildings are considered as flagship buildings. The earlier mentioned example from Bilbao, The Guggenheim museum, is a flagship building. Normally they are designed by starchitects4 which are able to create a “buzz” around the projects (Ashworth, 2009; Griffiths, 1998).

Not only flagship buildings are used as a physical tool for branding. Whole districts such as Docklands and Canary Wharf in London are examples on how cities strive to create images from whole districts (Ashworth, 2009; Olds, 1995). Other can be more of a cultural nature such as Chinatown and Little Italy in New York. Even bohemian lifestyle in certain districts is something some cities try to promote and exploit in order to obtain attention (Griffiths, 1998). An example of a signature district that will be further investigated in this study is the previously mentioned Masdar City near Abu Dhabi which is functioning as a tool to brand Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates as an eco-friendly city / country. That is a prime example of a signature district because of the close relationship between physical development and a branding effort.

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4 Starchitect literally means superstar architect and refers to famous contemporary architects such as Frank Gehry and Santiago Calatrava among many others. The concept relates to flagship development with a branding value (Fainstein, 2013).
3.3.4 Event hallmarking

For various reasons places are holding and sponsoring different kinds of events. This includes everything from smaller cultural events to high profile mega-events such as the Olympics and FIFA World Cup. This instrument of city branding contains a significant opportunity to establish the desired brand association (Ashworth, 2009). Cities with global aspirations tend to bid for and ultimately host mega-events like the Olympics because that guarantees that the city will be talked about, albeit in most cases only during a short period of time. Cities like Salt Lake City and Beijing seem to gain a lot more from hosting mega-events than already well-known cities like Paris or London (Ashworth, 2009). ‘Emerging world class’ cities are generally not traditionally that well-known and that is why mega-events are something that suits very well with the branding strategies.

“[...] ‘mega-events’ are key occasions that emerging metropolises are looking for in order to set up their economic and political domination at the local level and especially at the international level”. - Lefebvre & Roult (2011, p. 3)

Mega-events or “spectacles” as Griffiths (1998) call them come with numerous implications. He argues that the market for these events is saturated and that there is a considerable economic risk with this kind of events. Only a few of the mega-events meet the (often) overly optimistic calculations of positive outcomes (Griffiths, 1998).

3.3.5 Place branding through aviation strategies

It is observed that every ‘emerging world class’ city investigated in this thesis is deliberately establishing a hub for/and a large well-connected airline. In most cases the ruler/government is heavily involved in these companies, in some instances openly, but in others more secretly (Hazime, 2011). Also the airports are designed as urban mega projects and are heavily linked to place branding and fit well into the normative pictures of a global city. “[Airports] have become design, economic growth, and city branding hotspots” - Baker & Freestone, 2011, p. 263

In the literature of globalization “hubbing” normally refers to a more abstract form of hubbing; a center for economic activity. ‘Emerging world class’ cities also understand the need for physical hubbing; not only a regional center for land-based transport, but also to become a hub for transcontinental travel. The connection between city/nation branding and connectivity is also supported by numerous written publications (e.g Lohmann et al, 2009 and Hazime, 2011). Since the theoretical background of this thesis emphasizes the role of cities, the airliners are seen as a tool for the city where the main hub is located.

Not only is there an economic gain in transportation, but there is also one in having transiting passengers visiting the city spending a few nights thus spending foreign currency,
which appeals to local/national governments (Lohmann et al, 2009). There is also a value in having a large fleet flying all over the globe with the nation’s colors and name in large letters. There is prestige in flying large, preferably brand new aircrafts and a flagship airline can somewhat be compared with a flagship building. The idea is to create positive images by transmitting a message of prestige. Images of wealth and progress can be transmitted by connecting the particular city or nation with an airline widely known for high quality and service level. This logic is very much comparable to other forms of world class development with a small difference – an airline is a soft product while a flagship building is a hard product (Hazime, 2011).
4. THE ‘EMERGING WORLD CLASS’ CITIES

For this study six cities have been chosen. Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi are all located in Southeast Asia and Middle East respectively. Two of these cities are not specifically pointed out by Lefebvre & Roult (2011) as ‘dominant-emerging’. However Bangkok and Doha would be classified as such judging by the magnitude of recent world class development in these cities. These six cities can further be subdivided into two categories, most obviously due to geographical factors but also considering demographic and economic factors. That is justifying the subdivision into ‘emerging world class’ Gulf cities which obviously contains the Persian Gulf cities of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha. The second category would then be ‘emerging world class’ Pacific cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Bangkok which are all located in Southeast Asia - Pacific. There are probably more cities in these regions that would be considered as ‘emerging world class’. In the gulf Manama, Bahrain and Kuwait city, Kuwait is arguably ‘emerging as world class’ metropolises. In the Southeast Asia – Pacific Jakarta, Indonesia is probably in the early stages of adopting an ‘emerging world class’ strategy. It also depends where the geographical limits are drawn. ‘Emerging world class’ cities can probably be found in Vietnam and Philippines. Perhaps the small but economically powerful capital of Brunei, Bandar Seri Begawan would classify as an ‘emerging world class’ city. For this thesis, six cities have been chosen and these are arguably the ones that are showcasing the strategies of ‘emerging world class’ cities in a clear way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Metro population (millions)</th>
<th>GCCI Rank</th>
<th>GaWC level</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP/capita(US$)</th>
<th>ECI Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dubai</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Alpha+ (2)</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>49,011</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu Dhabi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Beta- (5)</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>49,011</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doha</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Gamma+ (6)</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>102,211</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Alpha (3)</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>16,922</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alpha+ (1)</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>60,409</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Alpha- (4)</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>10,125</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Demographic and economic conditions justifies the categorization and sub-division of these cities. Note that GDP / capita and ECI rank is for the country, not city.

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5 Global City Competitiveness Index rank 2012. Measuring the particular city’s capability to attract capital, visitors and talent (Citigroup, 2013).
6 GaWC ranking of world cities 2010. This ranking measures the connection to world economy for the particular city. It measures the representation of top-tier transnational service firms in different sectors. The number is the city’s ranking among these six cities (GaWC, 2010).
8 The ECI ranking is measuring the number of exported products and indicates how diverse a certain economy is. This is also an indicator of how knowledge-based the economy is and relies on the assumption; the more complex the economy is, the more knowledge is required (Hausmann & Hidalgo, 2011; The Observatory, 2013).
Figure 7. Persian Gulf and Pacific South East Asia. Note that only peninsular (Western) Malaysia is included in the map.

In short, the ‘emerging world class’ Gulf cities are much smaller, have less complex economy and are wealthier than the ‘emerging world class’ Pacific cities. Their wealth and whole economy is by large based on one single product; Petroleum. Since this resource will eventually run out, these cities are trying to diversify their economy in order to reduce the dependency on one single product (O’Connell, 2011). Hence the strong need of place branding / city marketing in order to shift into other sources of income such as trade and tourism. Still they are far behind in this regard, as table 1 indicates, their economies are not very complex and depend very heavily on one product. This is reflected in their low ECI ranking.
On the other hand, ‘emerging world class’ Pacific cities have large populations and diverse, but considerably smaller (per capita), economies. There is however a substantial difference between Singapore on the one hand and Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur on the other, which must be noted. Singapore is a city state very much based on a trading economy while the others are capitals dominating a vast hinterland. Singapore is widely considered as a great role model in economic respect which reflects in a relatively high GDP and a high ECI ranking. It is also ranked top among these cities in the other categories (GaWC and GCCI) as well, explaining why Singapore is considered a role model. It must also be noted that Singapore is very small and has no significant natural resources. Singapore’s main advantage is the history as a hub for trade and commerce which has enabled the city to capitalize on its favorable location (Raguraman, 1997). However, with success come new challenges. Other cities want to copy the recipe of success and volatile capital may escape to places with more favorable conditions. In order to keep its advantage Singapore must constantly re-invent itself and to match offers from its competitors. Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok are located in less wealthy surroundings and have managed to come a long way from their unfavorable starting positions. The cities have a lot of potential, mostly because of a large possibility to increase population but also because their economy is more diverse and more knowledge-based than the ‘emerging world class’ cities located on the shores of the Persian Gulf.

They do also have a valuable hinterland suitable for different kinds of agriculture and are located in a tropical environment where there is no shortage of fresh water. The cities in the Persian Gulf region are located in a desert with few means of supporting the cities when the

Figure 8. Exported products by Qatar 2010. Each colored box represents one export product and the color represents a product niche. Petroleum products (dark brown) products make up roughly 93% of the total export.
oil runs out (Hazime, 2011). Therefore one can understand the urgency of transforming their economies with Singapore as a model (becoming nodes in trade networks).

Figure 9. Exported products by Malaysia 2010. In comparison to Qatar, Malaysia relies on many different products for export, which according to Hausmann & Hidalgo (2011) is strengthening the knowledge-base of the Malaysian society.

4.1 ‘Emerging world class’ strategies in practice

To better understand the ‘emerging world class’ cities and their strategies one must take a closer look on them. A few different projects will showcase some of the world class development in these cities. These serve just as examples and projects from all examples of place branding; flagship buildings, signature districts and event hallmarking will be represented. Airline strategies will be examined later.
Figure 10. Promotional material of Masdar city.

The master plan for Masdar city designed by the British “starchitects” Foster & Partners. It will be a new planned city, close to Abu Dhabi, relying only on renewable energy sources and have a zero waste policy. Perhaps the most revolutionary idea is the complete ban on cars. This is indeed a megaproject with a combined figure of residents and day-time workers as high as 110,000. The cost is expected to be close to 20 billion US dollars (Archdaily, 2009; Masdar City, 2010).
Burj Khalifa, originally known as Burj Dubai, is a 829 meter skyscraper which is currently the tallest building in the world. It is designed by starchitects Skidmore, Owings and Merrill of Chicago with design elements made by the Italian fashion house Armani. The project is developed and financed by Emaar properties with close links to the Dubai government. The total cost of the project is estimated to be approximately 1,5 billion US dollars (Skyscraperpage, 2011).
FIFA 2022 is the world Championship of football. This is the first time a country in Middle East is hosting this prestigious event. To let Qatar host this event was a controversial choice and criticized by human rights groups. There is also a question on how suitable it is to let such a small country host an event like this. Qatar cannot utilize all of the 9 new and 3 expanded arenas that will be used during the tournament when it is over, thus can be considered a big waste of resources. The cost of hosting the event is estimated to be a stunning 220 billion US dollars. This is 60 times what South Africa spent on hosting the 2010 world cup (Doha news, 2011). The poor conditions for the (foreign) construction workers is another issue and has been called a “modern slavery” after it was revealed that dozens of Nepalese workers have died from unsafe working environment (The Guardian, 2013).
The Marina Bay is originally a land reclamation project that started in the 1970’s with a purpose to create new land for development. Since then the CBD has been extended and is now partly on the Marina Bay. The signature of the project is definitely the world class development such as numerous tall office towers in modernistic design that have been built around the bay. The lavish Marina Bay Sands hotel and mall is probably the most striking project here so far. The project is also marketed as a “vibrant cultural hub”. Enough land has been reclaimed for decades of continued development (Marina Bay, 2012).
The construction of Suvarnabhumi airport started in 2002 and the airport was inaugurated in 2006. So far only the initial phase has been completed and the next phase is due to be completed 2016. The capacity is currently 76 arrivals and departures combined per hour and 46 million passengers per year (Suvarnabhumi airport, 2013). The estimated cost of the whole project is 3.8 billion US dollars (Suvarnabhumi airport, 2013).
The master plan of the urban mega project Kuala Lumpur City Centre included the 452 meters tall Petronas Twin Towers; the tallest skyscraper(s) on earth until it got surpassed in 2004 by Taipei 101 (Griffiths, 1998). The towers were designed by the Argentinean starchitect Cesar Pelli and contain design features supposed to combine modernist elements as well as traditional Islamic design elements (Morshidi & Suriati, 1999). The construction cost was approximately 1.8 billion US dollars (Griffiths, 1998).

4.2 Aviation strategies

As a point of departure, the airport of a city is of tremendous importance. A world class airport signals wealth and progress (Greider, 1997). All these cities have or are constructing (Dubai, Doha) world class airports. In order to “hook up” to the world economy physical connectivity must remain on a high level. Therefore all ‘emerging world class’ cities studied here have their “own” airline to serve their main hub. According to Bowen (2000) hub cities have two major advantages: (1) the concentration of large passenger and cargo flows and (2) the high degree of connectivity with other points in domestic and international airline networks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hub City</th>
<th>Airport ranking</th>
<th>Total Passengers 2008</th>
<th>Total passengers 2010</th>
<th>Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dubai</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>37 441 440</td>
<td>47 180 628</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu Dhabi</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doha</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>12 272 505</td>
<td>15 724 027</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>*****</td>
<td>27 529 355</td>
<td>34 087 636</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>*****</td>
<td>37 694 824</td>
<td>42 038 777</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>38 603 490</td>
<td>42 784 967</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Airport rankings and their passenger numbers.

Also here the ‘emerging world class’ Pacific cities were early in understanding the potentials of a well-maintained national carrier. They were early to capitalize on competitive advantages on their local markets. Compared with the cities located in the Gulf, they do also have regional markets of considerable size. It has to be said; every one of the ‘emerging world class’ cities have a favorable location as hub placement on the busy Europe – Australia route. Singapore early understood the business potential in transporting these passengers. Although the ‘emerging world class’ Gulf carriers started late, they have managed to grow considerably in the last decade.
Figure 16. Typical routes Europe (London Heathrow) – Australia (Sydney). The shortest way is to transit through Bangkok (BKK) with 17091 km. The longest route goes through Doha (DOH) with 17620 km although the other gulf routes, Abu Dhabi (AUH) and Dubai (DXB) are roughly the same distance.

Table 3 visualizes how recent the ‘emerging world class’ Gulf carriers entered market and started their fast growth. Their massive expansion during the recent years has eaten into the margins of the airlines based in the ‘emerging world class’ Pacific cities as well as European legacy carriers (Jäger & Schaal, 2012). All of the ‘emerging world class’ Gulf carriers do also have a huge amount of aircraft on order which indicates a continued large-scale expansion (Jäger & Schaal, 2012; O’Connell, 2011). Figure 17 is visualizing the future growth in capacity of the three ‘emerging world class’ Gulf carriers by measuring orders of widebody planes specifically. Widebody planes are typically used on medium- and long haul routes.

The strategy of constantly adding capacity has been important for the development of global travel patterns and have fundamentally led to lower prices for customers (Jäger & Schaal, 2012). This is mostly due to a situation where the supply of available seats outweighs the demand.

There is some indication that some ‘emerging world class’ Gulf airlines such as Emirates and Qatar are dumping prices in order to starve (mostly) European legacy airlines such as British Airways, Air France – KLM and Lufthansa (Jäger & Schaal, 2012). Thus the gulf carriers are challenging other carriers located both to the east and west of their hubs. Their rapid expansion is made possible by several advantages; no or low corporate taxes, low labor costs and cheaper as well as tax-free fuel (O’Connell, 2011).
Figure 17. Left: Emirates advertisement. Right: Widebody aircrafts on order 2008 (shown as seats). Note that the ‘emerging world class’ Gulf carriers will add nearly twice as much capacity as the European carriers combined. Also note that the local market for the three Gulf carriers is less than 6 million people combined.

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emirates</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>27 454 000</td>
<td>31 422 000</td>
<td>14,5%</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>33,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etihad</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>6 276 000</td>
<td>7 100 000</td>
<td>13,1%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>67,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>*****</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>10 212 000</td>
<td>12 392 000</td>
<td>21,3%</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>48,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>*****</td>
<td>1947,10</td>
<td>11 947 000</td>
<td>13 112 000</td>
<td>9,8%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>*****</td>
<td>1947,10</td>
<td>16 480 000</td>
<td>16 647 000</td>
<td>1,0%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>18 477 000</td>
<td>18 165 000</td>
<td>-1,7%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Quality and size of the carriers studied.

In all ‘emerging world class’ cities the governments have large interests in their airlines, which is understandable due to their political and economic significance. All the governments are more or less involved in these airlines but with varying visibility. In the case of Emirates the government of Dubai is not hiding its full ownership (O’Connell, 2011). Singapore and Malaysian airlines are partly privatized although their governments maintain a deliberately less visible control through “golden shares” (US Embassy Kuala Lumpur, 2006; Lohmann et al, 2009). Even so, the air-travel markets of the ‘emerging world class’ Pacific cities are more liberated than their Gulf counterparts. The airlines based in the Pacific cities have to compete with an increasing number of low-cost carriers such as Tiger Airways, AirAsia, Virgin etc. which is not the case in the Gulf cities.

Also in the field of physical connectivity (Aviation in this case) the ‘emerging world class’ Gulf cities realized the potential generally 20-30 years later than the ‘emerging world class’ Pacific cities. They are compensating that with incredible growth made possible by allocating public funds. Especially Emirates have been growing very fast and are now the biggest carrier of all the airlines studied here. It seems like the other Gulf carriers are using Emirates as a

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9 Quality is measured by Skytrax rankings of service level as well as other indicators to measure quality.
10 Both Malaysian airlines and Singapore airline was founded as Malayan airlines and split up in 1972 (Raguraman, 1997).
model for their own expansion although some differences in strategy is evident. Emirates seek to develop strategic partnership with different airlines regardless of alliance, Qatar is joining a global alliance (Oneworld) and Etihad is buying stakes in a vast number of European and Asian airlines (Jäger & Schaal, 2012). The Gulf carriers have been extremely active in branding efforts, especially in sports and mega-events (O’Connell, 2011).

It is not possible to explain the recent changes in the aviation business with one single factor. The airliners based in the ‘emerging world class’ cities do not only serve a purpose of marketing their home cities and countries, if well-managed they can also provide good business. However, when too many actors want to compete in this market a state of overcompetition might occur. Although officially profitable, governments do help their airlines with capital injections and generous sell- and lease back offers that can easily be hidden with “creative” accounting (O’Connell, 2011).

4.3 Efforts, success and scale

To shift from the state of emerging world class city into becoming a mature world class city various requirements needs to be fulfilled. Some would consider Singapore a fully mature world class city. This is up for debate but for the sake of this study it is still considered an ‘emerging world class’ city. Economically Singapore has definitely been doing well during a long time and is a well-developed city. The city has however not been constructing world class projects (like urban mega projects and flagship buildings) on a scale comparable to Dubai. Perhaps prestige has been deemed as less important than other factors, such as low taxes and physical connectivity. Take note that there is nothing normative in classifying the city as emerging world class or mature world class city. A world class city does not necessarily equal a good city and vice versa. That means that being successful in this regard is not value-laden.
Figure 18. The preconditions and methods required to reach maturity. 1. Represents conditions outlined by Lefebvre & Roult (2011) as common drivers for ‘dominant emerging’ cities. 2. Represents further conditions that this study argues are crucial in order to establish a mature ‘world class’ city. A. Indicates methods used by ‘emerging world class’ cities.

Important social factors in order to become a mature world class city are political stability and public safety. Economically, a maintained long-term growth and liberal policies need to be in place. Relatively, all the six cities studied here are safe, somewhat stable and fast growing at the same time as they are well connected to the global economy. The cities and countries in question are all emphasizing place branding efforts as part of their strategies on a local, regional as well as national level.
5. KUALA LUMPUR CASE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia is located in Southeast Asia and is, like many other city-regions in this part of the world, undergoing a rapid expansion. Kuala Lumpur has apparently chosen a strategic path similar to other ‘emerging world class’ cities. The city may be seen as a pioneer in this regard because of the early adoption (early 1980s) of this strategy and could be considered to have a first- or second mover advantage. Kuala Lumpur is connected (to the global city network) and is approaching the highly desired ‘world class city’ status (Morshidi, 2006). This is due to real economic growth and to a number of world class features. In this chapter the city will be presented and scrutinized in order to determine how the city differs from other ‘emerging world class’ cities.

Kuala Lumpur was founded in the second half of the 19th century, and developed from a small mining camp to a center of colonial power for the British colony of Malaya and was declared capital in 1895.

During the following years trading became more important than the mining activities. In 1957 the city was chosen as capital in the newly independent federal state of Malaysia (Morshidi, 2006). It must be noted that Kuala Lumpur’s significance was relatively limited for many years and it was very much overshadowed by Singapore as the main center in the region (Bunnell et al, 2002). Singapore is still ahead of Kuala Lumpur in many aspects but its edge is slowly diminishing. Kuala Lumpur is since 1974 declared federal territory within the state of Selangor. Kuala Lumpur and its metropolitan area have seen a huge growth in population but also economically during the last decades. This growth has naturally created a massive change of the urban landscape. Unlike many other developing countries, the federal government has been heavily involved in the urban transformation process from the strategic level down to details (Bunnell et al, 2002 and Interviews)

MALAYSIA

Total area: 329,847 sq km
Population: 29,6 millions
Ethnic groups: Malay 50.4%, Chinese 23.7%, indigenous 11%, Indian 7.1%, others 7.8%
GDP (PPP): 494.7 billion USD (30)
GDP capita (PPP): 16,800 billion USD (78)

KUALA LUMPUR

Population metro: 6,6 millions
Population city proper: 1,6 millions

Figure 19. Some basic information about Malaysia and Kuala Lumpur (Cia world factbook, 2013) and real GDP growth in four Asian countries (USD).
5.2 The vision 2020 and Dr. Mahathir

Vision 2020 (or Wawasan 2020) is the Malaysian government’s plan to become a fully developed nation in the year 2020. This means a fully industrialized nation with a GDP growth of no less than 7% a year (Greider, 1997). The vision sums up the goals and desires of the Dr. Mahathir government (1981-2003).

In order to understand the plan and its implications it is important to consider the Malaysian structure of power and especially Dr. Mathathir and his significance during the last decades. Every respondent asked during the field study ranked Dr. Mahathir as the most important figure in the urban transformation of Kuala Lumpur (Interviews). It is remarkable that a head of state is the most important actor in an issue that relates to urban planning. In short Dr. Mahathir was a liberal nationalist who promoted traditionalist Muslim values at the same time as he understood the benefits as well as the dangers that comes with a more globalized world. After he became Prime Minister in 1981 the Malaysian politics were rapidly changed. A more liberalized economic policy was introduced and in order to “hook up” to the world economy, in accordance with a liberal globalist agenda, the need of a “hub” became apparent (Morshidi & Pandian, 2007). Logically the capital was chosen as hub and from this point Kuala Lumpur’s significance as a tool to transform and modernize Malaysia increased due to the efforts by Dr. Mahathir and the Malaysian government. The Wawasan 2020 must be viewed in this light.
Henceforth Dr. Mahathir and his Government became heavily involved in the urban transformation of Kuala Lumpur and highly emphasized the need for projects like the KLCC (Kuala Lumpur City Centre – a complete remake of downtown Kuala Lumpur) which he promoted as a project that would channel attention towards Kuala Lumpur (Morshidi & Pandian, 2007). In order to understand the government’s interest and involvement in urban planning issues, one must understand the Malaysian power structure. Malaysia is very centralized (although the mentioned Putrajaya megaproject paradoxically is effectively decentralizing Malaysia) and the government has a very strong position and maintains strong interests in fields normally handled by local authorities (e.g. urban planning) but also “private” corporate entities (e.g. car manufacturing, transport business). In cables published by Wikileaks, the US Embassy is expressing their dissatisfaction with the “entangled web” being Malaysian corporate life. According to US Embassy Cable (2006) the government is exercising an “invisible” control over large Malaysian companies such as Petronas and Malaysian airlines. This is however a very sensitive issue and this is by no means the official explanation of how these companies are run. This does indicate how strong the government’s position really is. When it comes to the urban planning issues the involvement of the government seems more obvious but also less sensitive. The power structure enables the Prime Minister to plan and construct mega projects while maintaining full control: “Kuala Lumpur has the power structure and vision (ie, the Prime Minister’s vision) that makes such an effort less difficult compared to other cities in the same global tier within the Asia Pacific region.” - Morshidi & Suriati, 1999, p. 83

5.3 KLCC and the Petronas Twin Towers

KLCC is a project conducted during the 90’s and was aimed to create a natural center in an emerging central business district but also to become an icon that raises the attractiveness of the city. The area is a 40 hectare former racecourse which as early as 1982 was chosen as the site of development for the new city center. It did however take until 1991 until the final master plan was submitted from the California firm Klages Carter Vail & Partners, which had won the competition to make the master plan proposal (Morshidi & Suriati, 1999). The master plan included the Petronas Twin Towers which were planned to be, and indeed became, the world’s tallest skyscrapers with their 450 meters (Griffiths, 1998). The towers were designed by the Argentinean architect Cesar Pelli and contain design features supposed to combine modernist elements as well as traditional Islamic design elements (Morshidi & Suriati, 1999).

5.4 Putrajaya, Cyberjaya and the Multimedia Super Corridor

Putrajaya with its adjacent sister city Cyberjaya is a megaproject planned and mostly constructed in the 90’s. The project is still not finished and was hampered much by the Asian
economic crisis in the late 90’s. The plan was to create a new administrative capital for Malaysia. This has indeed been carried out and since 2001 the government is located in Putrajaya. The rationale behind the moving of the capital city was to decongest the downtown Kuala Lumpur (Bunnell, 2004). There has also been said that the future spatial requirements of the government could impossible be met in central Kuala Lumpur. One can therefore conclude that administration has been replaced by business in downtown Kuala Lumpur. Deliberately, a proper business district has been constructed and is concentrated around the KLCC area due to the exodus of the government (Morshidi & Suriati, 1999).

![Figure 21. View south (left) and north (right) along the central boulevard in Putrajaya. The large building on the right photo is the Prime minister’s residence.](image)

Putrajaya can be regarded as a signature district and is branded as an “intelligent garden city” (Bunnell et al, 2002, p. 363). The city is constructed along a north south axis with a boulevard in the middle. Along this boulevard several governmental buildings are located. Many patches of land along the boulevard are still undeveloped and the building of the monorail system came to halt just after one station was built (Bunnell, 2004). The more western part of Putrajaya is focused on residential development. Between the two parts a man-made lake has been created for esthetic and climate reasons. Not only along the boulevard but all over Putrajaya many patches of land are still not utilized and the planned light-rail network has yet to be constructed.

The vision behind Cyberjaya is to attract companies involved in information technology and thus to create cluster advantages combined with the other nodes along the corridor between downtown Kuala Lumpur in the north and the airport in the south. The city is apparently planned as a “technopole”11 with intention of becoming a center for research and development. The cluster advantages were intended to emerge from having a brand new Multimedia university and information technology companies located in the same area (Bunnell, 2004).

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11 Bunnell et al, 2002, p. 363 is referring to Castells & Hall’s (1994) definition of a “technopole” as an effort “intended to generate the “creativity” and “innovation” considered necessary for success in an information economy”.

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In order to link these new cities together with central Kuala Lumpur the **Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC)** was built to facilitate the infrastructural needs (a motorway and a railway was built and high-speed optical fiber cables were laid down along the corridor). It was marketed with the rather bold statement "[MSC is] one of the global cradles of the new Information Age" (Bowen, 2000, p. 26). The corridor is linking the airport in the south with central Kuala Lumpur and passes by the new cities of Putrajaya and Cyberjaya (Bunnell, 2004). Cyberjaya and the MSC is an effort to “Siliconize” Kuala Lumpur, with Bay area, California as a model (Bunnell, 2002). **Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA)** is located at the southern end of the MSC and is a project that probably can be traced to a response to demand, or at least more so than the other projects. In previous chapter the importance of having a world class airline and airport has been explained thus answering the question of why KLIA was perhaps the most logical megaprojects of them all. Even though there was considerable demand, the airport does qualify into the category of status projects. KLIA was built with a large overcapacity intended to be able to accommodate a huge growth that has just partly become reality (Douglass, 2002).
Figure 22. The Multimedia Super Corridor is roughly on the same line as the Express Rail Link and the Dedicated Highway.
5.5 Mega-events in Kuala Lumpur

One of the largest events ever held in Kuala Lumpur is probably the 1998 edition of the commonwealth games “KL 98”. Black & Peacock (2011, p. 2283) writes: “the Malaysian hosts sought to use the Games to signal their emerging, ‘world-class’ modernity and sophistication”. Apparently, this goes very much in line with the theory on place branding; even a second tier event like the Commonwealth Games got a “lavish treatment” in order to market Kuala Lumpur (Black & Peacock, 2011). Since 1999 Kuala Lumpur hosts the annual Malaysian Grand Prix at their dedicated venue “Sepang Circuit” close to the airport. This is indeed a mega-event that turns the international spotlight towards Kuala Lumpur every year. Both events are not surprisingly characterized by heavy public government involvement. Other than these mega-events there are smaller events in mostly golf and swimming hosted sporadically (Zook, 2010).

5.6 The issue of nation building

Through the literature but also the interviews, the issue of nation-building has become more apparent. A model where global hierarchies and place branding play a ubiquitous role to explain the urban transformation is not sufficient. Tim Bunnell (2004) offers a different explanation with the post-colonial context of Malaysia as a point of departure. In this model the plural nature of the Malaysian society, the distribution of wealth and the relation with the Western world is analyzed. Simply put, this model considers the issues of creating a nation-state of a dispersed and fragmented country (relatively) recently formed. This model of explanation has also partly been confirmed by the empirical findings from the field study (explained further in section 5.7).

In short, images of progress such as Petronas Twin Towers are not only explained as images for external audiences but rather as a national monument. The purpose is to create unity and bridge differences through domestic religious, cultural and ethnic borders (Bunnell, 2004). Even the MSC project is what Bunnell (2002) calls a manifestation of “high-tech nationalism” in the sense that every project along the MSC contains design features with national cultural preferences. What should be noted here is that the government and ultimately Dr. Mahathir’s image of national and cultural preference highly mimic his own Islamic-Malay socio-cultural background (Bunnell, 2004). In other words, the nation building project has been performed from a normative Malay (with less or no influence of Chinese and Indian minority cultures) standpoint.

Regardless of which cultural preference has been chosen for Malaysia in particular, the process of nation building is occurring throughout the world, especially in post-colonial contexts where there might be a problematic relation to the old colonial master. In Malaysia many parts of society (such as legislative and education models) are modeled on British customs and values from times before the independence of Malaysia (Bunnell, 2004). Dr.
Mahathir did see long before his emergence as a Prime Minister the need to build a Malay identity which he formulated in his book “The Malay Dilemma” (Morshidi & Pandian, 2007). After he became Prime Minister it is evident that he laid more emphasis on economic issues rather than cultural. The cultural matters became less important possibly due to the generally pragmatic nature of Asian politics (Bunnell, 2004).

5.7 Empirical results from field study

One major point of interest with this study was to capture the perceptions of persons involved in the urban transformation of Kuala Lumpur. Therefore they were asked where the greatest respectively least amount of progress have been obtained on the topic of urban progress in Kuala Lumpur. The responses varied a lot but in an attempt to summarize the areas and projects which have been successful would be: Putrajaya, providing low-income housing, economic growth. Areas where the least amount of progress has been obtained were: traffic situation (jams etc.), waste management, low development in rural kampungs (villages). The traffic situation is an interesting topic: the city-region of Kuala Lumpur does have a network of high quality roads comparable to major European cities (Bunnell, 2004). However, since car ownership and petrol are subsidized, a large percentage of the inhabitants are commuting with car and therefore traffic jams are frequently occurring. The road network of the city proper cannot support the large increase in daytime population; i.e. the commuters.

The interviewees all agreed that the development of Kuala Lumpur is very top driven. On the question whether many or only a few stakeholders are / have been involved in the transformation process very different answers have been obtained. Some interviewees suggested that only Dr. Mahathir and the close circle of officials and businessmen (such as T. Ananda Krishnan) are solely responsible for the strategic planning and the following urban transformation. Others claim that Dr. Mahathir was more of a figure that “kick-started” this process with his “Wawasan 2020” plan. Some of the respondents are of the belief that his significance diminished during the 90’s and the significance of local planners (or perhaps politicians such as Mayor Tan Sri Dato' Elyas Omar (in office 1983-1992)) as well as businessmen and other developers increased. With a large economic growth, the impetus for developers increased thus diversifying the spectrum of stakeholders in this process.

When asked about the causes of the development most of the interviewees were of the opinion that the development is a result of a clearly defined strategy rather than something that has occurred organically. Several of the interviewees were stressing that liberalism and globalization were the forces behind the development and although it was started as a clearly defined strategy, “organic” elements (e.g. non-transnational real-estate developers) have been more involved with time. External centers like Putra (with its World Trade Center)
is an initiative not pushed through by any central or local government. Same could be said about the development of Petaling Jaya.

As anticipated, the interviewees (except for one) emphasized the political and marketing aspects of the mega projects rather than the demand aspect. By a slight margin the interviewees favored the position that the world class development is a tool for branding Kuala Lumpur for an external, foreign audience. However some respondents also stressed the nation building aspects of megaprojects, primarily the KLCC project with the Petronas Twin Towers as something to invoke national pride in the Malaysian public. Also for the domestic audience comes the purpose of a symbol for the government with the rationale: “we are making progress, vote for us!”. Some of the literature (as Olds, 1995) on the subject of demand for world class office space also suggests that among cities such as Kuala Lumpur there were no demand for a project such as KLCC at that time. On the subject of national pride, which closely relates to the issue of nation-building, several interviewees mentioned the old slogan “Malaysia Boleh!” – translated as “Malaysia can do it!”. Malaysia has been using several national imperatives. The current imperative “1 Malaysia” (one Malaysia) is highly emphasizing ethnical unity.

An important finding from the study is that the planners in Kuala Lumpur, according to the interviewees, are well aware of concepts from academia written upon issues like globalization and world class urban planning. These findings correspond very well with both personal observations as well as previous written material on the subject. Planners (Dr. Mahathir is here considered a planner along with the others of this profession) are familiar with concepts such as Manuel Castells “space of flows” and “technopole” and have adapted the planning after the theories by some of these professionals. This can be seen in the projects from 1981 and forward such as KLCC and Putrajaya/Cyberjaya. That planners and authorities are aware of these concepts furthermore support the established idea that the urban transformation is, by large, a response to globalization.

5.8 Situation in Kuala Lumpur 2013

Although some projects have not gone according to plan, such as the underutilized Putrajaya project, Kuala Lumpur has seen a great deal of progress during the last decades. It needs to be understood that underutilization is a current state; it could also be seen as an advantage containing the benefit of future space for growth. Kuala Lumpur has been climbing rankings over global cities (GaWC, 2010). To measure exactly what can be attributed to place branding and image making efforts is not easy to measure. To judge from planners perceptions, captured during the field study, the policy makers can at least be satisfied of the progress. Kuala Lumpur is safe, politically stable and has had, despite some recessions, a considerable economic growth during the latest decades. The city has implemented a fair share of place branding features; most notably Petronas Twin Towers and Malaysian GP. To
become a mature world class city is definitely within reach, but many obstacles still remains. Most important obstacles are probably environmental issues and pollution combined with an abysmal transportation situation. Kuala Lumpur has established the connection between itself and the Petronas Twin Towers. This is a successful branding effort and the path to becoming a mature world class city lies open. The images are there, now emphasis must shift towards solving everyday problems.
6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

A concept such as ‘dominant-emerging’ and/or ‘world class’ is supposed to help construct generalizations and to categorize cities and their strategies. It is also supposed to detect patterns in a world of complex abstract interaction. This study shows that concepts can prove useful and that categorizations are possible, guided by concepts. Obviously many similarities exist among the ‘emerging world class’ cities both within and outside their subgroups (Gulf and Pacific). However, there is much evidence pointing in the direction that there also are big differences; not so much in strategy but when considering scale and underlying reasons for implementing such a strategy.

The development seen in Kuala Lumpur during the latest decades does however fit nicely into the models of explanation used by the influential authors on topics of globalization and economic geography. Many of the concepts invented (such as World class development, starchitects etc) can evidently be found when studying the development of Kuala Lumpur. Together with the other material (such as empirical result from field study, other literature etc.) the evidence is definitely pointing in the direction that the large-scale development is by no means a result of organic, uncontrolled or random forces but a well-planned strategy by Dr. Mahathir and his successors and well as his and his successors governments. Some evidence indicates that during the latest years other stakeholders have been gaining in importance but still on a rather small scale. We can also conclude that the strategy has worked. Economic growth, a decent climb through the tiers of global cities, a sustainable increase in population is what Kuala Lumpur originally was aiming for. Environmental problems and traffic jams typical for Asian cities are negative side effects of this development. These problems need to be addressed in order to maintain and increase Kuala Lumpur’s importance as a node in the global economy.

The case study of Kuala Lumpur presented here is visualizing how hard, if not impossible, it is to determine exactly what underlying reasons have played the key role behind the urban transformation. Even though the process of urban transformation is rather easy to follow, the question of why it happens still remains. As anticipated, much evidence emphasize the significance of “put[ting] Kuala Lumpur on the world map” (as Dr. Mahathir himself puts it (Morshidi & Suriati, 1999, p. 45)) which has been believed to contribute to a number of benefits. It could also be argued that Malaysia has seen a lot of progress due to the strategic path chosen. Just formulating a national imperative like “Wawasan 2020” (Vision 2020) might have been an overlooked method even in a Western context. As Greider (1997, p. 166) rhetorically asks himself: “Americans might ask, What was the American wawasan?”
6.1 Different perspectives

On the other hand, as may not have been much anticipated from the start of this study, the specific post-colonial historic context Malaysia finds itself in offers a different explanation and a somewhat unique situation. Therefore, a definite answer to the question of why this development has occurred may never be answered as it mostly is a matter of perspectives; the place branding perspective versus the nation-building perspective.

A theory could be, from understanding Dr. Mahathirs persona and background (which, to name one source, Morshidi & Pandian, 2007 implies), that efforts of culturally building Malaysia the “Mahathir Malay way” were made through a process camouflaged as place branding. In this model of explanation the resulting urban transformation is a result of a deliberate silent process of “Malayization”. This is supported by Dr. Mahathirs early interest for cultural issues but later emphasis on globalist economic issues. Perhaps he was of the opinion that building a new cultural identity goes through a globalist agenda. This is only a speculative model of explanation that, one could argue, warrants future research. Other ‘emerging world class’ cities seem to be eager to use this almost paradoxical nationalistic-globalist method of building cultural identity. In Qatar, the arenas planned to be constructed to host the global mega-event Fifa world cup 2022 (see figure 12) are ‘world class’ development with clear local and/or regional architectural features. One can view them as monuments signaling “Qatar is progressing (...in a Qatari way!)” to both domestic and international audiences. To construct a mental connection for the citizens of Qatar between this development and the ruling class is also of utmost importance to stay in charge. In this model, both the place branding perspective and the nation-building perspectives cooperate with each other to solve several short-term issues; economic progress is secured, the public will be kept satisfied which means that the rulers can continue benefit from the trust of the public. In a long term perspective the cultural aspect comes in. If enough number of people will support the “Mahathir Malay way” governance might be secured for the current rulers (as in persons and/or party) in a long term perspective.

Authors such as Bowen (2000, p. 27) are concluding that the urban mega projects in the Pacific rim “are aimed at a global audience”. How can they be so sure that they are only aimed at a global audience? From evidence put forward in this study there are obviously more reasons why cities in this region favor large-scale projects, built to receive attention.

Eventually the evidence points in the direction that projects such as Petronas Twin Towers serve a split purpose: for Malaysians it serves as a monument for Dr. Mahathir and his ruling party. For outsiders it serves as a monument and a feature to represent the modern Malaysia as a place to visit and invest in, much in line with the current theoretical consensus on global economy and networks.
6.2 Conclusions

The ‘emerging world class’ cities do have similarities and differences. In this study they have been categorized along with geographical and economical features. However, there is plenty of ‘emerging world class’ cities in the world and they may be generalized along similar lines. A closer look on each one of them might also conclude that they are all unique to some extent. Kuala Lumpur turned out to have many unique features in economic, political and historical regard, although it deserves its spot in the category of ‘emerging world class’ Pacific cities because of the many similarities with other cities in this region. The ‘emerging world class’ concept is one of many concepts to explain a phenomenon and may not be sufficient to explain all processes that are occurring in rapidly growing cities around the globe. It must rather be seen as a part of a larger explanation. Together with understanding of globalization forces and place branding efforts along with in-dept studies of particular cities it is possible to grasp a pattern. The pattern may be similar but the underlying reasons differ vastly:

Cities along the coast of the Persian Gulf are preparing for a situation where their current means of survival is no longer there. Singapore is constantly threatened by new trading points. If they cannot offer what the market desires (convenient connections, low taxes, access to markets etc.) the business will move elsewhere. Among the cities studied here, all evidence point in the direction that Singapore is the most mature ‘world class’ city and is hardly “emerging” anymore. The Gulf cities does all have the economic conditions to become mature in the near future even though they lack in many areas (see table 1). Bangkok is, due to weak economy and few number of physical ‘world class’ features, a long way from becoming a mature ‘world class’ city. In Bangkok people starting to demand higher salaries and a lifestyle comparable to other global cities. Although practicing liberal trade rules for a long time people have not seen significant improvements. This is just a quick glimpse and valid ideas of why these cities are using these kinds of strategies. The previous (single) idea of why Kuala Lumpur is using this strategy; for continued growth, turned out to be just one of, at least two, forms of explanations. The other explanation is the nation-building efforts.

From the case study and the literature several conclusions can be drawn: The most visual transformation of Kuala Lumpur into a modern metropolis is a result of deliberate efforts by a centralized and powerful government. The transformation has been made possible by allocating resources from a rapidly growing economy. Although seemingly interested in controlling all parts of urban transformation, smaller projects have been planned and built by independent developers almost without notice by the authorities. This goes much in line with the theoretical concepts and models of explanation where the governments interests foremost lies in constructing mega-projects with monumental and branding value.

Even though we can conclude that the reasons might differ, we also see that the strategies basically are the same. All the cities studied in this thesis are seeing features like urban mega
projects and mega-events as a path to a brighter future. Even if uniqueness was mentioned earlier, when looking at the bigger picture, it is hard to see much uniqueness in these cities. The connection between the global city network and place branding seems to work two ways:

1. The cities traditionally on top of the global city hierarchy (the *substance*\(^{12}\)) (such as New York and London) already have prestigious features such as mega-events and flagship buildings (the *surface* or “image”).

2. Others (‘emerging world class’ cities) with less or no history as cities on top of the hierarchy try to mimic the *surface* of the successful cities in order to look like cities on top of the hierarchy (the ones with *substance*) by allocating enormous resources to obtain similar prestigious features. One would assume that this reversed way of becoming successful has numerous implications. The result remains to be seen; is there a demand for this high number of city-state trading points; nodes in the global economy? Will there be in the future?

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\(^{12}\) By *substance* I refer to cities measurable significance (e.g. the presence of global service firms in, for instance, Sassen, 2001) in the global economy. How much the measured connection to the world economy can be deemed as substance is however debatable.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Interviews

1. Professor Abdul Samad. UKM 14/3, 2013
2. Senior Research fellow Datin Paduka Dr. Halimaton Saadiah Hashim. UKM 14/3, 2013
3. Professor Jamilah Mohammad. Universiti of Malaya, Dep of Geography 21/3, 2013

Appendix B: Interview guide

1. What is your involvement in the urban planning process in Greater KL / please describe your position.

2. What is your opinion on VISION 2020 in regards to KL specifically?

3. If taken the last 20 years in consideration, in what aspect have Greater KL seen the greatest respectively the least progress?

4. To what extent are the megaprojects (MSC, KLCC, KLIA etc.) a result of a multitude of different stakeholders? In other words: Is there a lot of different people behind the urban transformation strategy or is the development seen a result of a few but very influential people? Speaking of percentage; how big role has the federal government played in the urban transformation process of the last 20 years

5. Do you see the megaprojects mentioned foremost as:
   a. A natural response to demand (e.g. a new airport due to high demand in air traffic).
   b. A tool for nation building (to enhance unity, increase national pride).
   c. A tool for city branding / city marketing that mostly caters an external (foreign, overseas) audience (To attract investors, creative minds, tourists etc.).

6. Are mid-level planners in KL generally aware of the concepts of “place branding”, “world cities” and/or “the space of flows”? Are their supervisors aware?

7. Can you mention and rank the 5 most important decision makers / stakeholders in the urban transformation process of KL in the last 20 years.
8. To what extent is, according to you, the latest 20 years of development of KL a result of well thought-through strategy? Or is the development seen more a result of “independent, uncontrolled forces”; an “organic” development?

9. Material is showing that the Malaysian government originally had a great interest in Malaysian airlines and put in a lot of effort and capital for a rapid expansion in the 90s. Do you see that as a part of the branding effort along with other megaprojects?