INVITED ARTICLES

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THE INSTRUMENTS OF PLACE BRANDING: HOW IS IT DONE?

Abstract: Place branding is the idea of discovering or creating some uniqueness, which different-iates one place from others in order to gain a competitive brand value. This article is not about the concepts or justifications but about how it is actually done at the local level, especially as part of broader conventional place management policies. Three main local planning instruments are widely used throughout the world in various combination in diverse places, each of which is described and exemplified here. These are first, *personality association*, where places associate themselves with a named individual, from history, literature, the arts, politics, entertainment, sport or even mythology, in the hope that the necessarily unique qualities of the individual are transferred by association to the place. Secondly, the visual qualities of buildings and urban design is an instrument of place-branding available to local planners. This could include flagship building, *signature urban design* and even *signature districts*. Thirdly, *event hallmarking* is where places organise events, usually cultural or sporting, in order to obtain a wider recognition that they exist but also to establish specific brand associations. Lessons are drawn from practice about the importance of combining these instruments and integrating them into wider planning and management strategies.
Key words: place marketing, local development.

1. WHAT IS PLACE BRANDING?

Commercial producers have long seen the advantage of branding their products, that is making them appear distinctively different from those of their competitors even when physically similar. Branding contributes a competitive edge allowing higher prices to be charged for the brand than for the generic product. This is achieved by creating associations in the mind of the consumer between the

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named product and a wide range of other attributes so that the consumer purchases not just the physical product or service but also various other intangible symbolic merits (Simoes and Dibb, 2001; Hankinson and Cowking, 1993; Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998). Value has thus been added without changing the physical characteristics of the product itself. It is part of, but not a synonym for, the wider issues of product differentiation, product positioning within competitive situations or just the unique selling proposition of a product; all of which are well known and easily understood concepts.

As places have long adopted marketing as a form of planning and management, as argued at length elsewhere, it is not particularly surprising that they should also increasingly embrace the idea of place branding (Florian, 2002). The idea of discovering or creating some uniqueness, which would differentiate a place from others, is clearly attractive. This idea is hardly new and is probably as old as civic government itself. The acquisition and exercise of city rights has nearly always been accompanied by nomenclature, regalia, armorial trappings, distinguished public buildings and ceremonies, all designed to assert the existence and individuality of the place to outsiders and insiders alike. Governments at various scales, almost unselfconsciously attempt to shape a sense of place among the governed, if only to legitimate their jurisdiction. Branding seems to offer just an extension and refinement of this possibility and has been eagerly embraced by many place managers, in pursuit of various economic, political or socio-psychological objectives (Rainisto, 2003; Hankinson, 2001; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005; Trueman *et al*., 2001; Hauben *et al*., 2002).

The discussion here is not about the concepts or justifications of applying branding to places but about how it is done at the local level, especially as part of wider conventional place management policies.

2. INSTRUMENTS OF PLACE BRANDING

People make sense of places by constructing their own understandings of them in their minds through three main areas of contact. These encounters with places occur through first, perceptions and images obtained through the accumulated experiences of how they use specific places; secondly, through various forms of place representation whether films, novels, paintings, news reports and so on; and thirdly, through the impacts of deliberate policy interventions like planning and urban design. These received messages and impressions are mentally processed to allow understanding of and interaction with the environment. Devising and managing place brands is merely an attempt to influence these processes to a predetermined end.

Three main local planning instruments are widely used throughout the world in various combination in diverse places, each of which could be described and exemplified at length, namely, 'personality association', 'signature building and design' and 'event hallmarking'.

2.1. Personality Association

In the search for a unique identity, places associate themselves with a named individual in the hope that the necessarily unique qualities of the individual are transferred by association to the place. This technique could be called the 'Gaudi gambit' in recognition of the notably successful personality branding of Barcelona in the 1980s with an extremely distinctive and recognisable architect and designer of some 60 years earlier, such that the image of the city is now inseparable from the creative work of the artist. This was, however, neither the first nor the final occasion when this technique has been used. Indeed, the early and evident successes of this technique have prompted an almost universal application of it in the belief that it is a sure and relatively easy route to successful branding. However, this may not be the case.

There is a need to be able to claim a special link between a person and a place and, if successful, fight off the competing claims upon the person of other places. Some personalities prove more suitable than others. Visual artists are easier to treat in this way than those producing a non-visual product. The more distinctive the creative work or the more notable and memorable the person and life, the easier such branding will become. A Gaudi in Barcelona, a Mackintosh in Glasgow, a Dali in Figueres, a Hundertwasser in Vienna or a Dudok in Hilversum are instantly recognisable and strongly if not exclusively linked to the particular place. Small identifiable groups of artists can also be effective as witness the 'St Ives, Norwich, Taos (New Mexico) or Groningen (*ploeg*) schools of artists'. Although visual artists are probably more suitable, nevertheless musicians as diverse as Mozart (Salzburg), Presley (Memphis), Wagner (Beyreuth) or Elgar (Hereford), or even groups of related musicians, such as 'The Mersey Sound' (Liverpool), 'Tamla Motown' (Detroit) and traditional Jazz in general (Memphis/New Orleans) can also be effectively linked to particular places. Writers are also fairly commonplace, especially if the writing is place bound in some way. Jane Austin's Bath, the Bronte's Yorkshire, Hardy's Wessex, and the like are all well known as not merely reflecting senses of place but contributing towards shaping them.

The mythological existence of a personality is no disqualification but does make competing claims easier to lodge. King Arthur's 'Camelot' is currently claimed by Winchester in Hampshire, Tintagel in Cornwall, Caerleon in Gwent,

and Cadbury Castle in Somerset. Santa Claus has numerous post boxes and visitable addresses from Fairbanks, Alaska to Joulupukin near Rovaniemi, Finland. The dispute over the rightful ownership of Robin Hood, for instance has long been waged passionately between Nottingham/Sherwood Forest in Central England and Wakefield/Barnsdale in Yorkshire, not least because of the large tourism revenues involved.

A distinctive and publicly recognisable personality is required but this distinctiveness and recognition may also be disadvantageous. The more idiosyncratic the designs the less they are likely to be sustainable in the consumer imagination over the longer term as popular artistic tastes change. It must also be remembered that the creation of place-personality associations is not a monopoly of official place marketing agencies but is also pursued by non-official organisations or may just emerge from the local popular imagination, whether or not such associations contribute to the official branding objectives. These place brand associations may not always contribute much to place marketing beyond the definition and recognition of the place and some background atmosphere except of course for the niche market of literary and cultural tourism. It must also be remembered that a strong place association with an artistic work is as likely to contribute undesirable as desirable attributes. McCourt's depiction of dismal wet Limerick ('Angela's Ashes', 1996) or the descriptions of living conditions in numerous 19th century industrial 'coketown' novels (Dickens, Gaskell, Zola etc.) have not been welcomed by the contemporary cities in which they were set. Indeed the place-branding problem has often been to escape from existing deleterious stereotypes and images conveyed by novelists and painters.

Some personality associations can be inappropriate or indeed completely undesirable. That the Hitler family came from Braunau, Austria, that Al Capone's criminal activities took place in Chicago or that Billy the Kid engaged in gun-fighting in Lincoln County, New Mexico, may not be viewed as advantages by the place management agencies concerned and place-personality disassociation is likely to prove very difficult for them to achieve.

The market valuation of the associations may also change over time. A link once seen as effective and beneficial may become less effective or less relevant as fashions change. Place-personality associations may long outlive their usefulness and yet prove difficult to alter or erase from consumer consciousness in the short term. The 16th century moralist churchman, John Knox, may have conveyed useful values of probity, diligence and sobriety to an Edinburgh in the industrial age but becomes a somewhat doubtful asset to a city transforming itself into a culture, entertainment and tourism centre.

The converse situation where the renown of the personality fades before its usefulness to the place is also possible. This difficulty of change powered by fashion is even more evident in what has been called 'celebrity branding'.

Although all personality branding involves a famous individual, the current idea of 'celebrity' generally implies some living person enjoying a media induced fame, which by its nature is highly ephemeral. Nevertheless places do involve such local celebrities usually from sport or entertainment to endorse them in the hope that the fame of the celebrity will transfer to the place. Morgan *et al*. (2002, p. 24) envisage an inevitable, if not calibrated, progress through a 'brand fashion curve' with phases of fashionable, famous, familiar, faltering and forgotten, at which point presumably some new celebrities need to be recruited.

There is an assumption that personality branding is a straightforward and almost inevitably successful exercise in which local history and culture is ransacked in search of a well-known personality who is then adopted and promoted as a form of patron saint or place mascot. One case, typical of many, may serve to dispel such ideas. The city of Rotterdam in the Netherlands has a perceived identity problem, especially in competition with the other major Dutch cities. It successfully profiled itself in the period since the Second World War as a city of work, modernity and progress. Its self-identity and external image revolved around its harbour functions and associated industrial develop-ment, its practical blue-collar society and its modernist functionalist post-war rebuilding. By the end of the 20th century economic and social change had rendered this image unhelpful in competing inside and outside the Netherlands for service activities with cities cultivating a post-modern, culture and heritage rich, high environmental quality image. This long-term problem was exacerbated by the acquiring of a reputation after 2001 for working class xenophobic ethno-nationalism. The need for image change was evident and a new personality association was one instrument in this. The choice fell upon the internationally renowned humanist philosopher, Desiderius Erasmus (1466/9–1536) and the city is now being actively promoted as the 'city of Erasmus'. A number of problems are immediately evident. The man is not firmly attached to this particular city even in the imagination of its residents. He was probably born there but lived longer and produced more work in Cambridge, Venice, Freiburg im Breisgau and Paris, all of which could, if they wished, lodge a more convincing claim. The inhabitants of Rotterdam are largely unaware of the life or work of Erasmus, although this could of course be remedied by campaigns directed at locals. More fundamentally, philosophy is difficult to present in a visual way and it is uncertain how 16th century humanism can be expressed. The difficulty of commodifying such a philosopher reaches an apogee of absurdity in the production and marketing of a distinctive four-cornered black beret as a physical souvenir. However, the central question is whether it would be worthwhile associating what remains a modern port city and developing commercial office centre, notable for its experimental contemporary architecture and design with the attributes, at present undefined, of a 16th century philosopher.

2.1. Signature Building and Design

Local place planners have considerable control over the appearance of the local physical environment. The visual qualities of buildings, designs and even districts would seem an available instrument of place-branding.

2.1.1. Flagship Building

Flagship building is not a new idea: the Coliseum, Rome, Parthenon, Athens and Hanging Gardens of Babylon were all officially designed structures intended not only to house distinctive public functions but equally to convey, through their very presence, statements about the governments that erected them. They were flagships of much more general policies and ideas than the utilitarian functions they performed. The modern rediscovery of this phenomenon can be dated perhaps to the construction of the *Centre Pompidou (*1977) on the *Beaubourg*, Paris (Hamnett and Shoval, 2003). It was clearly intended not only to house a modern art collection but more significantly to proclaim the stance of the French government and indeed the French nation as cultured and progressive and the pretensions of Paris in particular within world city competitive league tables.

Such flagship structures depend for their success on scoring highly in two respects. First, the architecture must be notable and noticeable, it matters little if it is aesthetically liked but matters much that it is seen and talked about. At its simplest it may just be a matter of being the tallest and there has long been a competition to build the world's tallest building with the Empire State, New York (1931–381 m) through Sears, Chicago (1974–442 m), CN tower Toronto (1975–553 m) all achieving a transitory fame in this respect. This strategy seems to appeal particularly to newly emerging countries feeling the need to demonstrate their arrival amongst the leading economic players in the world. The Petronas Towers (1998–452 m), Kuala Lumpur was a deliberate government sponsored statement about the position in the world aspired to by Malaysia, with height alone being the attention-seeking attribute. It has been outstripped almost immediately by Taipei Towers (2004–509 m), and Shanghai Financial Centre (2008–492 m) and soon by the Burj Dubai (2009–c.800 m). Bridges are a favourite structure for expressing what Koolhaas (1994) called, 'the propagandistic nature of architect-ture'. They are highly visible, usually central and capable of expressing both aesthetic and engineering skills. Again there is nothing recent about such a use of bridges. Examples abound of highly distinctive bridges, which become long term flagship icons of a city, from Budapest's 'Chain Bridge' (1849), London's Tower Bridge (1894), Sydney's 'Harbour Bridge' (1932), San Francisco's 'Golden Gate' Bridge (1937), Rotterdam's Erasmus Bridge (1996) to Millen-

nium Bridge London (2002). The acquiring of a popular 'nickname' (the London 'gherkin', Rotterdam 'paperclip' Berlin 'toothpick' Rome 'typewriter' etc.), as long as it is familiar rather than derogatory, can be regarded as a sure sign of a successful acceptance in the public imagination. A striking and preferably controversial modernity is generally preferred (Temelova, 2004) but restoration and also often re-functioning may also be effective. Boston's Faneuil Hall and Quincy Festival Marketplace of 1992 initiated a world-wide fashion for creatively adaptive reused buildings as centrepieces for area revitalisation. A refurbished art gallery in a power station (*Tate Modern*, London) or a railway station (as *Musee d'Orsay*, Paris) make statements through both form and function of the towns abandonment of one economic sector and embracing of another.

Secondly, the artistic creator of the building is almost as important as the building itself. The architect or designer should be as renowned and 'collectible' as the creation. A city with a genuine Niemeyer (University of Haifa), Rogers (*Centre Pompidou*, Paris), Libeskind (*Jewish Museum*, Berlin), Gehry (*Guggenheim*, Bilbao), Foster (*Reichstag*, Berlin), or Koolhaas (*Kunsthalle*, Rotterdam) has acquired notoriety and cultural status for the place by that possession alone. Its functional effectiveness and even its aesthetic quality are largely irrelevant.

The functions accommodated by flagship buildings are usually public, if only because it is governments that have both the resources and the perceived need for such branding. They are frequently used to house public showcase collections or cultural performances, including, museums, galleries and art podia. Government representative functions are also common as governments seek to acquire and legitimacy at home and abroad through brand associations. Although marketing is usually associated with free-market economies and commercial enterprises, it should be remembered that some of the most dramatic examples of branding through flagship buildings, were attempted not by liberal capitalist governments but by the Soviet Union that used architecture as both expression of a political ideology and also as an instrument for the shaping of the *homo sovieticus*. Megastructure architecture was used as a 'flagship' in the sense argued here (as witness Moscow's 'seven sisters' wedding cake skyscrapers, 1947–1953, housing three residences, two hotels, the university of Moscow and the foreign affairs ministry; Warsaw's 1955 'Palace of Culture' or Ceauşescu's 'Palace of the People', Bucharest, 1989). A more recent but equally dramatic case would be the renovated and reinstated Berlin *Reichstag* (Foster, 1999), which is fulfilling the same role for a different political ideology. However, non-governmental private functions are not uncommon, especially for housing head offices with representative functions (London's *Lloyds Building*, 1986 or Groningen's *Gasunie*, 1994).

The process of using a flagship building to stimulate wider cultural and economic development is sometimes known as 'Guggenheiming' after the penchant of this museum to house itself in distinctive and challenging modern buildings,

as in New York (Frank Lloyd Wright, 1959), Las Vegas (Koolhaas, 1980) and Bilbao (Gehry, 1996). There is some danger of the creation of 'Cathedrals in the desert', that is buildings that are successful in being noticed but which do not translate this attention into benefits for other aspects of the place. They can become objectives in themselves rather than just instruments for the attainment of broader local policies. They are unlikely to be automatically successful merely by being built and being noticed. The 'Guggenheim effect' (named after the Bilbao case) may be no more than an illusion generated by wishful thinking. Global notoriety has increased short stay cultural tourism but may do little to stimulate local cultural activities, let alone reverse the structural economic decline that was the original objective. As with other instruments of branding, flagship building is not enough: it must be embedded in a wider set of policies. Also in recent years there is an added disadvantage that cannot be ignored in that their very distinctive and renowned character renders such structures attractive terrorist targets because of their acquired symbolic importance and thus publicity value.

A problem of flagship buildings is that they often outlive the policies for which they are the flagship. Places may so successful in linking themselves with a structure in the popular imagination that switching flagships once established may prove difficult.

The Harbour Bridge in Sydney, Australia was since 1932 the city's internationally recognised flagship representing modernist engineering. The switch to the Opera House in 1973 asserted the dimensions of postmodernism and culture. There are other cases which have been partially successful notably Paris, from the industrial Eiffel Tower (1889) to the Arch of the office district of La Defense (1982–1990), and on a provincial scale Groningen, from the late medieval Martinitoren to the post-modern (1994) Groningen Museum (Ennen, 1997).

2.1.2. Signature Design

An extension of flagship building is the wider signature design, in which the attempt is made to introduce pervasive design elements into the publicly accessible built environment. Signature design may be conveyed through an assortment of related buildings, spaces and streetscape elements, such as signage, paving, and street furniture which taken together make statements about the place. The objective, as with flagship structures, is not just a coherent unity in itself but differentiation and recognition. The place is seen as uniquely different from other places and readily identified by insiders and outsiders alike. The public spaces in themselves are making a statement of singular identity so that the user or viewer knows almost unconsciousnessly which place this is. If it also conveys some other desirable attribute through the form itself, such as a progressive modernity, innovative enterprise or heritage nostalgia, then this is

an added benefit. The city of Groningen constructed a number of public buildings, associated public spaces and streetscape designs in its central area in the period 1995–2000 all by Italian architects and in 'Italianate' styles to the extent that there was talk of the 'Bolognaisation' of a Dutch city (Ashworth, 2005). The purpose was to move away from images of commercial efficiency and rationality associated with modernist international style architecture and to move instead towards an image of culture, enjoyment, and hedonistic life-style associated with Italian architectural styles.

One major danger is a discernable tendency towards what could be called design cataloguing. Places set out to create individuality through signature design but the process of creation makes use of development companies, designers, ideas, all of which operate on a global scale. Being original involves risk and risk can be minimised by importing existing successes from elsewhere. The result is that the attempts at unique expression become replicated thus defeating the original objective. This trend is especially evident in the design of heritage districts where the same features of street furniture, surfacing, public notices and texts are replicated world-wide.

2.1.3. Signature Districts

An extension of the idea of signature design is the creation of a specific district within a city that acts as a signature function for the city as a whole. The place attempts to acquire an image and association through the shaping of a single distinctive district within it. This is most evident with the public consumption of culture. Again this is not a recent phenomenon. In the course of the 19th century many European cities grouped state-sponsored cultural amenities, most usually museums, galleries, libraries, exhibition halls, theatres, concert halls and opera houses, not because of any functional advantages of spatial clustering but for the promotional impact and clear 'district branding'. London's South Kensington Museum complex, the Rijksmuseum complex, Amsterdam and the Brussels Kunstberg museum and gallery complex, all date from much the same period, and are assertions of the city, and indeed national government, wish to being seen as committed to a form of cultural production. The perceived need for and use of such cultural signature districts may recur through time as cities brand and re-brand themselves. South Bank, London for example was the centrepiece of the 1951 Festival of Britain and location for a number of public national cultural facilities, as the city attempted to demonstrate post-war recovery and reorientation. 50 years later the same district was refashioned to express a post-modern millennial culture with the 'London Eye', Tate Modern, Millennial Bridge and renovated 'County Hall'.

Public cultural functions although popular for these purposes have no monopoly on the uses of such districts. Commercial office functions may also be used. The London 'Docklands' (1981–1998) became the flagship district for not just London but the whole economic policy and political philosophy of the Thatcher government in Britain. *Canary Wharf* (1988–1990) has come to symbolise an era. However entertainment, night-life, gastronomy and the like often in conjunction with cultural activities are the currently most favoured functions for signature districts. London's Covent Garden is perhaps the archetype but the case of Dublin, Temple Bar was the more unexpected, rapid and centrally induced development. A rather dull, mundane and conservative city felt the need to refashion its brand image to better express the rapidly changing nature of Irish society and quite self-consciously developed the few blocks on the right bank of the river Liffey as a cultural, entertainment, tourism district through pedestrianisation, signature design features, building conservation and permissive zoning (Clohessy, 1994; Stabler, 1996). Since then the idea of deliberately shaping, or at least encouraging the spontaneous emergence of, what have been called 'gritty' creative places has gained a fashionable credence amongst local planners and politicians. A certain 'Bohemianisation' of the western city has been replicated in the wake of popular polemicists such as Florida (2002). The relevance of this topic here is simply that a small part of the place, often no more than a few streets, serves the function of adding a distinctive component to the image of the place as a whole. The all these cases, the district is being used to brand or re-brand the city as a whole.

2.2. Event Hallmarking

Places organise and sponsor temporary events in order at its simplest to obtain a wider recognition that they exist but also to establish specific brand associations (Hall, 1989). These associations are partly with the content of the event and partly with its organisation. It is both identifying with the activity and demonstrating its capacity to host it. Clearly the larger, more global and high profile the event the greater the possible gains of success or indeed the greater the possible losses of reputation associated with failure. These events may be permanently recurring or one-off spectaculars. The former are typified by long standing cultural festivals from Edinburgh to Oberammergau; these contribute not just some economic spin-offs but more generally to the ambiance and character of the place which becomes a 'city of culture'. The latter are typified by such fiercely contested honorific designations as for example 'European City of Culture'.

Cultural events are favoured largely because of there visibility and wide acceptability of cultural products as merit goods adding value and desirable brand attributes to a place but there are numerous other possibilities such as sporting events, commercial fairs, even political rallies and international 'summit' meetings. Again, as with personalities, not all events convey desirable attributes: cities such as Nuremberg, Yalta or more recently Maastricht have an enduring world-wide recognition from events that occurred there that convey little benefit to the well-known place.

An aspect of the globalisation of communications and entertainment has been the emergence of the 'mega-event' (Andranovich, 2001) of which the Olympic summer, and to a lesser extent winter, games is perhaps the best known and, given the global media attention and public interest, potentially most effective. Clearly the impact is greatest in places with not only the greatest need for global recognition but also the, as yet untested, capacity to stage such events. Thus a London or a Paris gains less than an untried Beijing or a Salt Lake City.

Events branding is often most effective if combined with personality branding and there are some dramatic success stories, where places have successfully used events. Two towns in Ontario, Canada illustrate how personality association became the basis for events branding that changed the strategic direction of development. In both a faltering local economy and unhelpful existing image necessitated strategic change and cultural events branding offered a possible reorientation. Niagara on the Lake, a small town with a seasonal and economically capricious excursion tourism function, selected the playwright, G. B. Shaw, with whom it had no previous association, as the subject for a now internationally renowned annual festival which successfully extended both the tourism season and the tourist stay. On a larger scale, Stratford whose economy was dominated by railway engineering used only its slender name association to launch an annual Shakespeare festival and strategically re-brand itself from city of engineering with a 'blue-collar' ethos to a city of culture on a continental scale.

Much has been written upon the impact of events whether recurring or temporary upon local economies (Ritchie, 1984), however the relevance here is the impact upon how others see the place and the place sees itself. Although it is the major world cities that host the largest cultural festivals and reap the largest economic benefits, a number of more modestly sized towns have achieved notable successes. It is not an exaggeration to claim that there are well-documented cases of such events triggering a drastic reinvention of the place and it does seem that such events are most significant at the level of strategic reorientation. The widely cited cases of Barcelona (Summer Olympics 1992) or more recently Beijing (Summer Olympics 2008), triggered or at least signalled a change in direction.

However, there are two main caveats, which dampen any belief that event hallmarking is a simple path to successful place branding. First, despite the beguiling and well-publicised spectacular successes, hallmark events alone are unlikely to have much impact upon a place brand. Most events are relatively small and have little lasting promotional impact. Hallmark events are most effective as instruments in a strategic policy, often as demonstrations that a change in direction has already occurred and will be maintained through other policy instruments. The successful instances usually all exhibit existing pre-conditions for success. These include a clear economic imperative, a surplus capacity especially of land, labour and supporting services and a broad consensus of active local support. In addition, there is nearly always a certain fortuitousness in timing, which owes more to good fortune than good foresight. Secondly, there have been a number of cases where events have resulted in increasing brand recognition but of an inadequate place product. For example, in some of the European Cities of Culture, cases which for obvious reasons receive little publicity, the consequences of the designation was merely to demonstrate to a wider market the short-comings of the city in a public manifestation of existing deficiencies and local shortcomings. In marketing terms, an inferior product is better improved than promoted: in branding terms brand recognition alone, regardless of the attributes acquired, is worse than useless; it is counterproductive.

3. THE PLACE OF PLACE BRANDING IN PLACE MANAGEMENT

Place branding as an instrument of place management recognises that place products remain places with the distinct attributes that accrue to places, such as spatial scale, spatial hierarchies, resulting scale shadowing, the inherent multiplicity and vagueness of goals, product-user combinations and consumer utilities. All these and more (as outlined in Ashworth and Voogd, 1990) make places distinctive products and thus place branding a distinctive form of product branding. However, all this is much easier to articulate than to operationalise in management. Both traditional commercial products and place products exist within brand hierarchies but product brand hierarchies are not the same as place brand ones (Gilmore, 2002). All brands require continuous management but the many and diverse place actors in place management render place brands much less manageable by any single organisation.

The three sets of instruments described above can and usually are exemplified by many success stories. However, the even larger number of failures remains unpublicised. Many expensive spectacular buildings are more 'white elephants' than 'flagships', many promoted personalities remain unappreciated

and countless festivals are held with minimal impacts upon local, let alone outside, consciousness. If there is a lesson to be drawn from the historical successes where new brands have been established or old ones dramatically altered, then it is that there is no single simple path to success. One solitary instrument acting alone is rarely successful and even a mix of the above instruments needs implementation and support through many more conventional place planning and management measures. In Dublin the three factors of the European city of culture designation, the decision to renovate rather than demolish the Temple Bar district and the economic and cultural changes in Irish society interacted in a way that makes it all but impossible to separate cause from effect. Often success seems to be attributable to little more than particular local conditions at a moment in time, which prompted individuals to seize upon an often unlikely and unpredictable set of fortuitous circumstances. Signature buildings, personality associations and hallmark events then become the catalysts triggering existing latent processes and making manifest trends and conditions that already at least potentially existed. If these caveats can be recognised and incorporated into the process then place branding becomes a valid, necessary and highly effective form of place management.

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