

Introduction: setting the scene

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CITIES IN THE WORLD

The purpose of this introductory chapter – as the title says – is to set the scene for the coming chapters: providing definitions of some of the more central concepts, and a description of the overall structure of the book and how the different chapters relate to each other. However, we would like to start the chapter with some general comments on the role and importance of cities in the world today.

The Importance of Cities

Today, more than half of the world's population live in cities. These city residents are generating more than 80 per cent of global GDP (Economist Intelligence Unit Report, 2012). The economic impact of cities is also expected to increase in the future, particularly in Africa and Asia, where the urban population is expected to double between 2000 and 2030 (UN-Habitat, 2011). By 2030, the towns and cities of the developing world will make up 81 per cent of urban humanity (UNFPA, 2007).

There are many reasons for the competitive edge of cities when it comes to economic growth and development, ranging from the fact that cities provide big efficiency benefits to the fact that they serve as generators of knowledge, innovation and creativity. The importance of cities is not limited though to their economic role in the world, but is also connected to their roles as poverty reduction mechanisms, creators of best practices for environment and climate control, and as social, cultural and political change agents. Hence, it is fair to say that the current, accelerating urbanization can be seen as one of the most powerful and irreversible economic forces in the world of all time.

Another important force is that of globalization, defined by the IMF (2000) as an increase in worldwide exchanges of national and cultural resources, based on four basic aspects: trade and transactions; capital and investment movements; migration; and the dissemination of knowledge.

For cities, the processes of global transformation are also seen to operate in a multi-layered way, covering economics, politics, culture and environment (Held et al., 1999; Newman and Thornley, 2000). A general assumption today is that not only are cities, and particularly large cities, the winners in this rapid globalization, but they are very actively involved in promoting it – sometimes against the interests of the nations in which they are located. Or, as Acuto and Khanna (2013) express it, ‘Nations are no longer driving globalization – cities are’.

Very Large Cities

The rise of very large cities has developed in parallel with the globalization of industry, finance and society as well as accelerating urbanization (King, 2007; Kraas, 2007; Vogel et al., 2010). Over the next 10 to 20 years, the number of mega-cities is expected to double, and Asia is predicted to see the biggest growth (The Guardian, 2012). By 2015, it is anticipated that 12 of the world’s largest cities will be in this part of the world (Yuen and Ooi, 2009).

The large cities around the world are ranked, classified and labelled according to different criteria and by different organizations. One of the most respected ranking organizations is the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) Research Network at Loughborough University. They classify cities as alpha, beta, gamma and delta cities, depending on the political and economic power of the cities as well as their international connectivity. There are also other ways to describe the characteristics of large cities. One of the oldest labels of the largest cities in the world is ‘world cities’, defined by the role they play in global economic, financial, cultural, transportation and political affairs. Geddes coined the idea of world cities in 1915, defining them as cities where an extensive proportion of the world’s business is carried out (Doel and Hubbard, 2002). According to Hall’s definition (1966), world cities also have multiple roles, as centres of national and international political power, national and international trade, financial services and advanced professional activity, etc. Moreover, world cities have been described as political power centres, and as centres for the most powerful national and international bodies (Yulong and Hamnett, 2002).

Another concept comes from Saskia Sassen, who introduced the concept of the ‘global city’ in 1991, in order to describe cities with a long history as centres for international trade and banking. Global cities are also depicted as important ‘command points’ in the world economy system – significant sites for finance and service firms, locations of production and innovation, and platforms where the global flow of money,

ideas and people move and collide in constantly changing ways (Sassen, 2001). King (2007) similarly describes global cities as characterized by the multiplicity of flows of people, goods, services, ideas and images. Being a global city has also turned into a primary goal among the majority of the major cities in the contemporary developing and transitional worlds (Wei et al., 2006). Attracting global capital investment, such as corporate headquarters, production facilities and downtown skyscrapers, as well as circulating capital, such as culture, events and tourism, with the help of an international city identity, has almost become a universal development strategy (Wu and Ma, 2006). Cities all over the world today claim the label(s) of international, world-class and/or global (Paul, 2004). In addition, the global has become an icon, or spatial metaphor, with substantial political power (Yeoh, 2005).

In addition to world cities and global cities, the concept of 'mega-cities' is also increasingly used to describe large and important cities around the world (Kraas, 2007). Mega-cities are often defined as cities with more than 10 million inhabitants (it should be noted though that definitions of mega-cities do vary, from cities with over 5 million to cities with more than 20 million inhabitants). Mega-cities have certain characteristics caused by their size, the impacts they have on citizens, and the vast problems and challenges mega-cities imply for city management (Fuchs, 1994). What also characterizes mega-cities (particularly in China) is that they often consist of two or more metropolitan areas that converge, thus creating an agglomeration of cities of different sizes under a common regime. Other variables used to define mega-cities are the city's position in the world, its financial resources, the industrial and commercial structure, the city's educational facilities, and its scientific personnel and service functions (Davezies and Prud'homme, 1994; Bugliaretto, 1994).

Mega-cities are often seen as difficult to manage and govern due to the concentration of people, resources, information, capital and goods (Chiao, 2011). Perlman (1990) has claimed that what is experienced in a mega-city is not necessarily exclusive to mega-cities, but often appears in a more exaggerated form in these cities: 'If an innovation works in a mega-city (given the problems of scale, complexity, diversity, bureaucracy and conflict) it is likely to work in smaller cities' (*ibid.*, p. 8). This of course makes mega-cities particularly interesting to study, as lessons learnt from how they organize and manage themselves can be transferred to other large cities.

The literature about global cities, world cities and mega-cities has hitherto mainly been focused on cities in Western economies, resulting in the dominance of a perspective centred on the developed world (Wei et al., 2006; Wu and Ma, 2006; Yulong and Hamnett, 2002). This is changing

rapidly however, especially with the emergence of mega-cities in Asia and developing countries, and the on-going shift of political and economic power to Asia that is taking place today.

Chinese Mega-Cities

In this book – with its focus on city branding – we do not use the concept of mega-cities as a rigid and absolute classification of a category of city with certain characteristics. Instead, we focus on the way in which the term mega-city is used in popular language, i.e., as a common description of cities that are perceived as very large, important and extraordinary examples of their kind. There are three reasons for this. The first is that as our focus is on city brands, it is the image and perception of cities that is important, not their factual size, extension, or other absolute properties. Secondly, the empirical basis for this book is mainly Chinese cities, and the fast-growing large cities in China are often labelled as mega-cities, regardless of whether or not they meet the objective criteria in terms of the size of their population. Finally, as the reader will find out, the majority of the contributions to this book use data and examples from one or more of the five existing mega-cities in China, i.e., Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. However, in addition to this, data from other expanding urban agglomerates in and outside of China (for example, Hangzhou and Xi'an as well as Hong Kong and Singapore) is also included in the chapters of this book.

CITIES IN COMPETITION

Competing Where and for What?

It has been claimed that globalization, urbanization and the agglomeration of cities (especially in emerging markets) imply increased competition between cities worldwide (Economist Intelligence Unit Report, 2012). Cilliers et al. (2011) maintain that cities today operate in a global marketplace, competing with cities all over the world for limited resources – such as investors, tourists and consumers. City competitiveness can thus be seen as the ability of a city to compete on, possess and control the market in order to create value in a fast, economical manner, and to offer prosperity to its local residents. It has been argued that the main vital forces for being competitive are economy, science and technology, as well as international influence (Jiang and Shen, 2010). Doel and Hubbard (2002) have claimed that competitive advantage arises from the strategic manipulation of local

assets, and that the internal characteristics of a city are fundamental to the city's competitiveness and success.

Today, major urban areas can be found in developed regions, with a large proportion in North America alone. In 2011–12, the 10 most competitive cities in the world were, in order, New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, Singapore, Hong Kong and Seoul (Ni and Kresl, 2012). However, this situation is likely to change drastically in the future. In Asia, the competition among cities is predicted to intensify over the years to come (Yulong and Hamnett, 2002), and the expectation is that by 2025, one third of cities in developed markets will no longer make it into the top 600 cities, but be replaced by cities in emerging markets. Moreover, in 2025, 136 new cities are expected to enter the top 600, of which 100 will be cities in China (Dobbs et al., 2011).

The rapid development of cities, escalating worldwide urbanization, and the global competition between cities in the contemporary world are generally studied within the context of urban studies (urban geography, sociology, etc.), in the field of international relations (public diplomacy, etc.), as well as in areas of strategy and management (city management). In the last 10 years, there has also been increased activity in the way cities are 'marketed', 'branded' and communicated. Moreover, city marketing, metropolitan branding and place of origin positioning have been introduced as means to strengthen the competitive position of cities.

Competition or Co-opetition?

The extensive focus on competition between cities can however be regarded as partially misleading and unrealistic considering the cooperative, co-competitive and more network-orientated approaches that are rapidly emerging in the contemporary world (Pasquinelli, 2012; Bellini and Bramanti, 2010). Amin and Thrift (2002) acknowledge that cities are not bounded phenomena forming 'islands of economic competitiveness', but see cities more as parts of larger networks. Pasquinelli (2012) similarly emphasizes that places are increasingly understood as networks with a bundle of internal and external relationships linking the place to the inside and the outside worlds. Doel and Hubbard (2002) and Smith and Doel (2011) have related world cities to the concepts of networks and collaboration, claiming that world cities are a part of a worldwide network.

Sometimes neither competition nor cooperation can prevail. Co-opetition can then be regarded as an alternative, defined by Pasquinelli (2012) as 'collaborative strategies among geographies which do compete directly' (p. 4). Pasquinelli moreover claims that co-opetition can be seen as a rich set of strategies available to approach local and regional development, consisting

of varied combinations of competitive and cooperative attitudes adopted by geographies to enhance their competitiveness.

City Positioning

Regardless of whether one sees the driving force of urbanization as competition or co-opetition, city strategies are all concerned with positioning the city – in relation to other cities – in selected contexts. While the concept of positioning within strategic theory has been related to the specific economic, technical and industrial features of an organization in a market – the ‘positioning school’ (Porter, 1980; Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999) – the concept of positioning in marketing theory is more concerned with ‘how you differentiate yourself in the mind of the prospect’ (Duboff, 2001, p. 69), and thus the result of a ‘battle of minds’ (Ries and Trout, 1981). There is of course a strong link between positioning from the strategic and marketing perspectives – they are both concerned with differentiating an organization in relation to other organizations, in order to make them stand out as attractive and competitive.

As we primarily are concerned with city branding however, we lean more on the marketing perspective in this book. Thus, we define city positioning as the process by which a city is locating itself and its assets in relation to its competitors in the minds of selected audiences (Kapferer, 1992; Ellwood, 2009; Sutherland, 2011). The overall aim of this city positioning is then to create a competitive image of the city – its assets and advantages – in relation to other cities with which the city wants to be compared, or which have similar profiles or similar combinations of strategies.

Strategically, this positioning takes place in multiple contexts (geographical, industrial/economic, political, cultural, etc.) where the city attempts to claim certain positions. This might include functional roles (for example as a gateway, hub or centre of expertise), hierarchical position (for example as capital or regional centre), or just a position on a ranking list (for example as ‘the world’s most Liveable City’, ‘Best Cities of the World’, ‘Green Cities’ or ‘Smart Cities’). Apart from these strategic choices, another aim of city positioning is to improve the perception of the city as an attractive city to live in, to visit as a destination, to use as the location for meetings and congresses, and as a location for foreign direct investments. The late information age, with its direct and global access to all kinds of information about cities, ranking-lists of cities, social media reporting on impressions of cities, etc., has also drastically changed the conditions for the positioning of cities. In order to be seen – and valued – on the global ‘market of attention’ (Berg, Linde-Laursen and Löfgren, 1991), cities have to express themselves on the web, they have to market

themselves in alliances with other cities to appear as important (in terms of size as well as resources), and they have to find ways to prove their 'functionality' as cities in order to attract foreign direct investment and creative industries.

As the reader will find, many of the contributions in this book bring out these contextual and strategic aspects of city positioning and branding. We would even claim that without a strategic perspective, city branding does not make sense. Let us now take a closer look at some of the key concepts used in this book.

BRANDS AND CITY BRANDING

Brands in a Brand Society

Brands have been described as 'intangible assets based on audience perception' (Blombäck and Axelsson, 2007, p. 418). According to the American Marketing Association (AMA, 2014), a brand is a 'name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers'. In Kapferer's (2011) view, a brand is a vision (that includes values) as well as a source of understanding and loyalty. Keller (2008) maintains that strong confirmation of brand loyalty happens when customers engage with the brand, become brand ambassadors, and assist in communicating about the brand.

These definitions have obvious instrumental advantages. However, our own perspective – and thus definition – is somewhat different, as we define a brand as the purposeful symbolic embodiment of an object (product, organization, city, etc.) in order to create associations and expectations around it (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011, p. 21). This embodiment may take many forms, from the carefully crafted and maintained properties of the cityscape itself (including heritage and iconic buildings), to city visions or values (for example, green city, innovative city, liveable city), or the visual identity of the city (in the form of names, logos, labels, etc.). Branding has changed from being focused on the consistent use of graphic design, to being more about the philosophy and vision of the organization (Inskip, 2004). Design is however still regarded as influential in any branding programme, but only if it is rooted in and reflects a strategic brand concept (*ibid.*). It has even been claimed that consistency can be achieved through brand design, and that design can serve as a unifying element for all parts that constitute a brand experience (Montaña, Guzman and Moll, 2007).

Our definition also highlights the very essence of any brand, i.e., to

create associations and expectations among those encountering the city. Thus, as we see it, the strength of a brand is to be found in its ability to imprint the desired brand image of a city on the various audiences addressed. This distinction between the purposefully expressed brand and the resulting brand image is important, as brands that are produced for one purpose might easily be interpreted differently by their audiences, or even hijacked or repositioned by audiences with intentions very different from those that constructed the original brand.

More and more corporations are also using their corporate brand as a strategic marketing tool to improve their financial performance on the market (Schultz et al., 2000). In order to build a strong brand and create a consistent portfolio of meanings, a coordinated design management strategy (and thus the coordination of every single brand message) is crucial according to Montaña, Guzman and Moll (2007). Brands that are 'well-positioned' are also said to be those that possess distinct differentiation aspects, enabling great advantages over competitors (Roncha, 2009).

As will be demonstrated in many of the chapters in this book, the city brand is also at the very core of the strategic city positioning process, aiming at identifying the desirable properties of the city and thus distinguishing the city from other cities. In this way, the communicated brand is also expected to convey the city vision, and the strategic direction of the city to those living in, as well as working in and for, the city (the process of auto-communication according to Christensen, 1997). Branding has gone from being focused on the external effects of the brand (and thus the relation between the organization and its environment) to focus more on the internal functioning of organizations (Kornberger, 2010). To have a strong brand is by some (for example Webster and Keller, 2004) regarded as important in order to attain consensus in the organization. This can also be related to the branding of cities.

To summarize, today brands are a natural part of our global and dynamic society. Brands are used by consumers in their symbolic constructions of self, to make up for a loss of meaning and individuality (McDonald, de Chernatony and Harris, 2001). Brands also often convey a sense of community to consumers (Keller, 2008). Brands moreover transform the way an organization's identity and culture is managed, and consequently impact on the aesthetics, politics and ethics of consumption (Kornberger, 2010). As such, brands can be regarded as 'interfaces' in that 'they mediate between production and consumption; between the planned system of organization and market forces; between control and desire. Brands form a new axis that connects inside and outside and traverses society on the diagonal' (Kornberger, 2010, p. 22).

City Branding

City branding can be described as a strategic element of a global trend of cities/places throughout the world competing with each other, aiming to generate revenue from tourism and secure investments, as well as attract and retain a qualified workforce (Koller, 2008). The early academic literature on what was then called 'place promotion' began to emerge in the 1970s and has mainly been covered in the urban policy and tourism literature (Hankinson, 2001). The literature on the branding and positioning of cities is still young, and in a development phase (Dinnie, 2011), but there is an increasing body of research and practice related to city branding (Hanna and Rowley, 2011). Hence, from a very limited interest in this field 20 years ago, the area of city marketing and city branding has now exploded, both in terms of the number of cities involved in strategic communication and positioning activities, and in terms of the increased number of academic publications about it.

However, the concept of city branding is not an easy one to define, as it comes under many headings. The authors contributing chapters to this book use a variety of concepts related to city branding, such as city marketing, place marketing, destination marketing, urban branding, place branding, destination branding, etc. One possibility for us could have been to use the more general concept of place branding (Kavaratzis, 2005), including all forms of places – from nations to clusters and cities. However, as this book is about cities, we have – as editors – chosen to use the city branding concept in our own introductory as well as concluding chapters.

City branding incorporates a wide range of marketing activities such as selling, promoting and positioning the city, and is connected to the planning, management and governance processes in cities (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011; Kavaratzis, 2004, 2007). The branding of cities also typically involves a large number of stakeholders (Kapferer, 2011), encouraging them to think strategically about the city's competitors and its (real and imaginary) strengths and weaknesses, resulting in a brand platform containing an intended positioning. The scope of city branding is no longer limited to the Western world, but city branding strategies are embraced and used all over the world in order for cities to stay competitive and relevant in the quest for investment and consumption (Wai, 2006). It is interesting to note for example how the practice of city branding has become a powerful means for cities in emerging economies to transform themselves and appear as attractive destinations.

City branding has developed from fragmented city promotional and marketing activities to the current state of more strategically oriented city branding (Kavaratzis, 2007). The marketing approach can be seen as involving techniques or processes of selling, promoting and strategically

positioning the city, including areas such as place marketing, destination marketing, promoting cities and urban marketing (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011). Branding, on the other hand, can be seen as providing a certain emphasis on the communicative aspects of all marketing processes (Kavaratzis, 2004), and as a 'continuous process interlinked with all marketing efforts and with the whole planning exercise' (Kavaratzis, 2007, p. 704). Various scholars (such as Hankinson, 2004; Rainisto, 2003; Trueman et al., 2004) have also recognized that this shift from marketing towards branding is manifested both in practices and in the academic sphere.

As can be seen in this book, there are also strong links between city branding as well as urban growth and economic development strategies (Rainisto, 2003). In many cases, city branding is purposely used in programmes designed to transform, and – as in the case of China – to modernize cities. City branding is also used to provide cities with a source of economic value, political and cultural significance, and image. It is also said to stimulate socio-economic development, create competitive advantage, increase inward investments and tourism, boost community development, and reinforce local identity among residents in a city (Balakrishnan, 2009; Cova, 1996; Kavaratzis, 2004).

Kavaratzis (2007) has drawn parallels to Mommaas' (2002) ideas that branding is not just an economic activity inspired by market considerations, but rather – in a deeper, cultural sociology sense – a manner of creating certainty and order in an otherwise rather chaotic reality. Taking this view, brands and branding are largely about collectivity, continuity and identification. We agree to this, but would also like to hoist a flag of warning for the tendency to see city branding as a cure for all kinds of urban problems, be they economic, social or cultural. City branding programmes are most likely but one of many options for developing cities – and will undoubtedly be complemented or replaced by other perspectives, models and techniques for city change and development as time passes.

It has also been maintained that it is important to acknowledge that even though there are benefits for cities from engaging in city branding practices, there are also limitations. In the literature, branding cities is described by some as a complex process with numerous stakeholders and interests involved, which can contribute to a lack of unity of purpose and decision-making, which are regarded as crucial elements when building a city brand (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002; Merrilees et al., 2009).

Cities as Products?

The most serious problem facing those involved in city branding however is not the efficacy of the programmes as such, but the missing link between

the city branding process and the legitimate democratic governance of the city. As long as we are not able to answer the question of 'who owns the city', we will find it difficult to answer the crucial question of 'how to brand it'. The issue of ownership is also one of the reasons why it is so difficult to draw parallels between city branding and the branding of corporations, products and services. Another problem is that branding cities involves a much higher degree of complexity compared to branding products, arising from the number of stakeholders influencing the brand, the diversity of the stakeholders, and the limited control that brand managers have over the branding process and the different target groups (Kavaratzis, 2009).

However, several commentators point to the relevance of the 'metaphor of place as corporate brand' (Anholt, 2002). Also Balmer and Greyser (2006), Hatch and Schultz (2009), and Kavaratzis (2004) draw parallels between corporate branding and city branding, claiming that city branding has similarities with corporate branding, and that concepts of place branding are grounded in corporate branding. Similarities between corporate brands and city brands are, for example, that they address multiple groups of stakeholders, have multidisciplinary roots, have a high level of intangibility and complexity, that they both need to consider social responsibility, have to deal with multiple identities, and need long-term development (Hatch and Schultz, 2009).

There are also significant differences between corporate branding and city branding however. The complexities involved in city branding are greater than in corporate branding, and the difficulties are more acute. For example, it is harder for a city to adopt and project a single clear identity, ethos and image, and this might not even be desired (Kavaratzis, 2009), implying that the goals of the company and the city may be different. Furthermore, cities do not compete in the same way that companies compete, with profit maximization as the most important objective. Cities instead compete for residents, tourists, funding, events, investments, etc. (Lever and Turok, 1999). Thus, as editors of this book, we firmly maintain that the branding of cities should be done, and studied, based on its own premises, without reducing living cities to competitive, profit-seeking corporations or attractive commodities.

Studying the Branding of Chinese Cities

Previous research about city branding in China indicates that there are various differences between China and a more Western-oriented context, in terms of governmental structure, culture, demographics, etc. (Wu, 2000; Wu and Ma, 2006). One difference is related to the rapid urbanization process that China is experiencing, resulting in various opportunities as

well as challenges within large Chinese cities (Johnson, 2013; Li, 2006; Shen, 2011). Another difference is that city development and city branding is controlled by the government to a larger degree in China than in the West (So and Shen, 2004; Xu and Yeh, 2005). In addition, the communicative approach and communication methods, as well as the media landscape, differ in China compared with the West – influencing the way city branding is practised (as illustrated by Fan, Chapter 8 and Wen and Sui, Chapter 7). Furthermore, city branding in China appears to be influenced by ideology from the national state level, and communicated through pictorial language, images, concepts, etc., rooted in China's history, culture and traditions.

The literature depicting Asian experiences in city branding is rapidly increasing, yet still marginal from an international perspective (Wai, 2006). Limited studies have hitherto depicted urban competitiveness in transitional economies such as China (Jiang and Shen, 2010), and little is known of the rapid, and seemingly competitive, urbanization process that is taking place in China today. Even less is known of the attempts of Chinese mega-cities to carve out and communicate their roles in the world.

There is, however, a rather extensive amount of literature on urban development in China (Xu and Yeh, 2005). For example, scholars that have focused on research areas relating to city branding in a Chinese setting have studied the connection between globalization and urban development; place promotion and city image (Wu, 2000; Wu, 2003; Zhu, Qian and Gao, 2011); the building and measuring of urban competitiveness in China (Xu and Yeh, 2005; So and Shen, 2004); place-making and the planning process of brands in Chinese cities (Friedmann, 2007; Karvelyte and Chiu, 2011); and the meaning of events for city branding, focusing on the Beijing Olympics (Zhang and Zhao, 2009; Lee, 2010) and the Shanghai World Expo (Dydon, 2011).

There are indications in the literature signalling that China needs to be understood on its own terms – and not through a Western lens. Karvelyte and Chiu (2011) tested a conceptual frame (based mainly on Western city branding literature) in the context of Taipei City, concluding that the Western-oriented frame could only partially be used in the context of Taipei, in part due to the influence of the governing structure and leaders. McGee et al.'s (2007) work on 'China's Urban Space: Development under Market Socialism', as well as Wu et al.'s (2007) book 'Urban Development in Post-Reform China: State, Market and Space', aim to capture and interpret urban development in China, which they claim has been based on Western theories and Western experiences of urbanization.

It can be seen as somewhat problematic that many researchers still today often take as their point of departure Western concepts, theories

and models when trying to understand the development and branding of Chinese cities. In reality, there may in fact be completely different imaginaries (visions, values, images, frames of ideas) that steer the development and branding of Chinese cities in the contemporary setting. Jacques (2009), for example, opposes the use of Western concepts when studying China. He renounces what he calls a widespread assumption held in the West that, as countries modernize, they also Westernize. Consequently, studying city branding, mega-cities and city competitiveness in a Chinese setting requires openness to other dimensions than those that have impacted development in the Western hemisphere. As editors of this volume, we hope that this book can contribute to an increased awareness of city branding in China. We also hope that this book can assist in theorizing Chinese mega-cities and their city branding, taking social, historical, cultural, political, economic and discursive dimensions into consideration.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book offers descriptions and theoretical conceptualization of the strategies, practices and challenges involved in branding Chinese mega-cities. The focus is on city branding, with an emphasis on the positioning of Chinese cities and regions. In other words, ‘city branding’ is the main focus of the book, but the phenomenon of city branding is studied primarily from the perspective of Chinese mega-cities. In order to provide a ‘thick’ description of current place branding practices in China, this book brings together different views on city branding. Contributing authors are from a variety of academic disciplines such as marketing, management, communication, tourism, leisure and culture services, as well as China studies, cultural sciences, philosophy, social and economic geography, political science, economic history, geography, urban planning and public administration.

The book also contains material from cities in other parts of the world, with the purpose of supplying relevant insights from other contexts than the Chinese one. The inclusion of ‘lessons’ from cities in other parts of the world, and theoretical contributions by non-Chinese scholars, contributes different perspectives and innovative views on city branding from a more general outlook. The chapters in this book that focus on cities outside China assist in illustrating seemingly general problems and issues in city branding practices. These chapters also help to distinguish between certain branding practices in small vs. large or mega-cities, and assist in pointing out contemporary issues in city branding practices in the international

research community, and in Europe particularly. The authors of the chapters focused on city branding in other parts of the world than China have, however, related their chapters to city branding in China.

Three Parts

The book is divided into three parts, containing in total 17 chapters, as well as this introduction ('Setting the scene') and a conclusion ('Branding a different species of cities?'). The first part of the book deals with the economic, political, cultural and social background to the development of Chinese mega-cities as well as their mechanisms of governance and urban strategies for growth. The second part of the book deals with the practice of city branding, and development in China and in other parts of the world. The third part of the book addresses how cities build brands, compete internationally, and are positioned around the globe. Each part of the book has its own introduction.

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