The ambiguity of place branding consultancy: Working with stakeholders in Rio de Janeiro

Raquel Goulart Szejnberg
raquelszejnberg@gmail.com

Dr. Massimo Giovanardi, University of Leicester, United Kingdom,
m.giovanardi@le.ac.uk

To cite this article: **Raquel Goulart Szejnberg & Massimo Giovanardi (2017): The ambiguity of place branding consultancy: working with stakeholders in Rio de Janeiro, Journal of Marketing Management, DOI: 10.1080/0267257X.2017.1319404**

Abstract

This study explores the tensions inherent in place branding consulting, by problematising the prescriptive and functionalistic view of consultants that characterises the place branding literature. If consultants' pervasive impact on the contemporary place branding practice cannot be ignored, their fixed representation as powerful agents of top-down policies might limit more holistic accounts of consultancy practice. Indeed, consultants can find themselves mediating between bottom-up and top-down approaches to place branding. Thus, they can decide to promote more inclusive activities that give voice to local communities, while simultaneously addressing the needs of urban elites that are likely to pay the consultancy bill. *Liminality* is suggested as an appropriate idea to challenge role-fixity and appreciate the ambiguity of place branding consultancy. The study reports self-reflective accounts from a case study on Rio de

Janeiro, where the first author was involved in a three-year activity of working with stakeholders to stimulate a more inclusive public debate on city-brand management. Charting, snowballing, coopting consultants, informal advising, feeding and scientific arming are the six types of consulting practices of stakeholder engagement that the study identifies in order to offering a more nuanced representation of place brand consulting.

Keywords: place branding, stakeholder engagement, Rio de Janeiro, practitioners, scholars, consultants

Summary statement of contribution

This study conceptualises place branding consultancy as a *liminal* space, where consultants mediate between top-down and bottom-up approaches to place branding. A functional role-based model of consultancy is challenged through the self-reflective account of a consulting experience in Rio de Janeiro.

Introduction

With few exceptions (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2000; Hankinson, 2001), the early literature on place branding has been heavily inspired by the work of business consultants (e.g. Anholt, 2002, 2003; Olins, 2002; Anholt & Hildreth, 2004). It is not a coincidence that it was actually a consultant, Simon Anholt, who claimed the paternity of the discipline (Szondi, 2008, p. 2). Undoubtedly, consultants have played a key role in initiating the ongoing process and development of place branding, particularly in terms of “translating” languages and procedures of commercial branding into the realm of cities, regions and nations (see Giovanardi, Lucarelli & Pasquinelli, 2013). In spite of their limited critical engagement with the contradictions inherent in the application of marketing techniques within public management, it is hard to deny that consultants have offered some thought-provoking conceptual insights (e.g. Anholt, 2003).

The growing involvement of scholarly commentators working on place branding (e.g. Kavaratzis, 2004; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005) has increased the discipline's popularity among policy makers and has transformed place branding from an emerging discipline with a “confused identity” (Skinner, 2008) to an established area of study (e.g. Hanna & Rowley,

2011, 2013). The practice of systematising knowledge, which emerged from the consulting industry, and the necessity to forge a *koinè* that enables communication between different scientific areas (i.e. marketing, public diplomacy, geography, spatial planning) have fostered a challenging but constructive dialogue that brought together consultants and academics in a unique way (e.g. Kalandides & Kavaratzis, 2009). However, even a cursory glance at some of the most recent work published on academic outlets seems to give rise to concerns pointing to a seemingly insignificant, yet growing fissure between practice and theory (Kavaratzis, 2015; Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016). Accordingly, practitioners would tend to disregard the academic work, while academics would only provide a limited appreciation of consultants' "down-to-earth" evaluations of academics' theories and ideas (Kavaratzis, 2015, p. 268).

To aggravate the situation, remarkably diverging evolutionary paths have come to characterise the scholarly production on place branding (Green et al., 2016). According to Green et al. (2016) and other previous attempts (e.g. Lucarelli & Berg, 2011; Gertner, 2011a; 2011b), to map out 'diseconomies' of scale deriving from this embryonic interdisciplinary this disjuncture may stem from the multitude of disciplines that have illustrated the complexity of places as spatially extended products. For example, managerial domains, such as marketing and tourism management are mainly concerned with producing models to control and measure the processes of place-imaging (e.g. Merrilees, Miller & Herington, 2009), while the human sciences have examined the same processes by emphasising their sociocultural, often contradictory, facets (e.g. Jensen, 2008).

Given these disconnections, the practice of business consulting in the context of place branding deserves more explicit attention. While some consultants still firmly holds a traditional

role of charismatic ‘gurus’, who ultimately simplifies the theory and set current trends in the discipline (e.g. Baker, 2012; Anholt, 2016), other consultants are contributing to the emergence of alternative approaches that tend to be grounded in more critical and long-term attitudes towards the socio-political embeddedness of place brands (Kalandides, 2012; Freire, 2014; Boisen, 2015). Further, because place branding consulting is becoming more complex, it can conceivably challenge the assumptions associated with the traditional managerial and neoliberal gaze. This is the basis of the present study, which draws upon previous research and self-reflection to expose the opportunities and challenges associated with place branding consulting (e.g. Kalandides, 2011). We believe that reflecting on the changing figure of the place branding consultant offers a constructive way to address the gaps between theory and practice identified by Kavaratzis (2015).

The current paper adopts a practitioner’s perspective and (with the aid of an academic researcher) aims to capture her experiences of the place branding consultancy practice. In particular, it considers a specific case that focuses on Rio de Janeiro, where the first author was involved in a three-year activity that involved “working with stakeholders” (Stubbs & Warnaby, 2015) to stimulate an alternative, more inclusive public debate on city branding management. This study takes stock of the practitioner’s first-hand experiences to shed new light on the practice of place branding consulting and to problematise the simplistic and functional role usually ascribed to consultants, which many today may view as rigid and outdated.

Theoretical background: Place branding, stakeholder engagement and the role of consultants

Following the recent development of the place branding literature, detailed by Lucarelli and Berg (2011) and Gertner (2011a; 2011b), it was hardly possible to conceive that the development of the discipline would have progressed at a similar accelerated speed. Examples of relevant scholarship within marketing (e.g. Kavaratzis & Hatch 2013; Giovanardi, Lucarelli & Pasquinelli, 2013), tourism (e.g. Hanna & Rowley, 2015; Campelo et al., 2013) and urban disciplines (e.g. Zenker & Petersen, 2014; Pasquinelli, 2014) illustrate the vibrancy of this research area and indicate its growing academic recognition. Other work has focused on mitigating the fragmentation that usually hinders cross-disciplinary research domains, such as place branding (Kavaratzis, Warnaby & Ashworth, 2015; Zenker & Jacobsen, 2015), by emphasising the complexity of place branding, which is not always captured by the traditional tourism-centred perspective of destination branding (Zenker, Braun & Petersen, 2017). Arguably, the place branding literature has reached its “maturity” phase (Gertner, 2011b, p. 12), not only in terms of quantity but also in terms of scientific rigour.

One manifestation of this maturity has been identified by Kavaratzis (2012), who discusses the turn towards stakeholder-oriented place branding in response to the need to account for complex exchanges inherent in the process of place brand formation. Kavaratzis’ recalls the general management literature from the mid-1980s and particularly on the *stakeholding* concept, where a stakeholder is defined as “any group or individual who can

affect, or is affected by, the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman, 1984, p. 46). From this view, the managers of a given organisation are expected to identify and take care of the key actors who have a legitimate interest in the activities of that organisation. This seminal work regards the continual participation of these key actors (primary stakeholders) as vital for the survival of an organisation, or at the least, very important (as is the case with secondary stakeholders) (Clarkson, 1995). Since the 1980s, the strategic management literature has progressively refined the general definition of a stakeholder in an effort to appreciate the different criteria by which managers can assess a stakeholder's relevance to a company (e.g. Rowley, 1997; Greenwood, 2001). These efforts have also given due recognition to stakeholders' interdependency and other overlooked dimensions, such as urgency and power (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997).

Arguably, a main factor underpinning the rapid emergence of the *stakeholder-oriented place branding literature* (Kavaratzis (2012) has to do with the fascinating complexity of conceptualising a place as a *sui generis* object of marketing research and practice (see Giovanardi et al., 2013; Warnaby & Meadway, 2013). Given the multilayered arrangements underlying place brand governance mechanisms (Kavaratzis & Hatch 2013) and the effort needed to manage a wide range of local players (Houghton & Stevens, 2011), the stakeholder approach is considered a relevant angle for which to appreciate these manifestations of relational complexity. The 'elective affinity' between stakeholder theory and place branding can be distilled even more clearly in light of Le Feuvre et al.'s (2016) work, whereby cities are framed as *loci* of strategic partnerships that provide "an additional level of complexity to any understanding of stakeholder activity and interaction" (p. 56). Compared to the firm-centric

perspective that often dominates traditional marketing management, the point of centrality for stakeholders in place-brands dynamics is more diffused and contested given the “fuzziness” of cities and regions in terms of the overlap between administrative boundaries and different (potentially clashing) levels of jurisdiction (see Warnaby, Meadway & Bennison, 2010).

It is in light of these arguments that the contemporary place branding literature considers stakeholder engagement as a fundamental practice, which is believed to secure a stable and effective place brand governance (e.g. Stubbs & Warnaby, 2015). Organizing “stakeholder workshops” and “internal brand engagement plans” are two examples of stakeholder engagement, which ultimately promote the collaboration of politicians, governmental organisations, promotion agencies, local businesses, the media and academic organisations, for example (ibid.). Collaborations among various place stakeholders is a dimension of the place branding literature that has been paid increasing attention as of late (see Ashworth et al., 2015, p. 247). Due to the simultaneous influence of both private and public stakeholders and the tight relationship between “producers” and “consumers”, places have come to be understood as the ultimate co-created products (Warnaby & Meadway, 2013), characterised by multiple forms of cooperation and alliances.

Much of the work exploring these collaborations and alliances through a stakeholder-oriented perspective tend to adopt one of two alternative approaches (i.e. top-down or bottom-up) to the development and maintenance of place brands. The top-down approach directly descends from the normative managerial marketing gaze, which tends to subject places to the tactics and strategies of commercial marketing practices (e.g. Kotler et al., 1999; Rainisto, 2003). In this largely prescriptive view, a top-down managerial philosophy aims to identify a set

of stakeholders located at the top administrative level (usually national or local government bodies) and ascribes them the role of initiating, implementing and controlling the place brand management process. The task of stakeholder engagement is subsumed under these tasks, where the appointed stakeholders are responsible for incorporating a large number of supporting stakeholders at a later stage. This allows them to maximise the effectiveness of place branding programmes, with participation ‘trickling-down’ in a prearranged and ‘engineered’ manner.

A radically different approach has warranted growing attention in recent years (Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker, 2013; Warnaby & Meadway, 2013; Inch & Stuart, 2015; Kavaratzis, 2017; Kavaratzis, Giovanardi & Lichrou, 2017). The advocates of a bottom-up approach have directed resolute criticisms against some of the limitations of the top-down approach, including a lack of transparency, accountability (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007), democracy and even effectiveness (Inch & Stuart, 2015). In particular, much importance has been placed on the linking of place branding activities to the expectations and actual needs of local communities, as a way to overcome some of these drawbacks. In response, advocates of a bottom-up approach argue for more inclusive, open and participatory methods to place brand development and assign citizens and local communities a more prominent position (Kavaratzis, 2012). Such participatory planning methods challenge the widespread tendency to engage residents only when their presence is ‘needed’ to provide political legitimisation to fancy marketing promotional practices (see Kalandides & Colomb, 2010).

Following suit, critical commentators have promoted an understanding of place brands as ‘grass-root’ identity platforms, which are negotiated and communicated via the engagement of citizens and are thus deemed to be more legitimate and effective than brands ‘manufactured’

by place managers in collaboration with marketing agencies. The benefits of a citizen-centred stakeholder engagement strategy have been demonstrated by Klijn, Eshuis and Braun (2012), who show that the participation of a place's residents represents a crucial factor for increasing both the ownership of the brand and the communal sense of responsibility for its development (Braun et al., 2013; Insch & Stuart, 2015).

Despite the differences of these two approaches, however, each one nonetheless seems to afford prominent roles to *some* specific place-brand stakeholder groups. While in a top-down approach, citizens and local communities are primarily treated as passive recipients or reluctant ambassadors of a largely 'monolithic' place branding strategy, a bottom-up approach empowers local communities who are able to articulate a vision for their place, thus giving them more autonomy in shaping more inclusive place brands. A similar role-based identification seems to be at work for business consultants, who are also included among those pivotal actors in place branding (Sarabia-Sanchez & Cerda-Bertomeu, 2016), especially within the established the top-down approach (Kavaratzis, 2007).

As was discussed in the introduction, business consultants are considered some of the most prominent trend-setters in the emerging scholarship and industry practice of marketing as it pertains to spatial and public realms (e.g. Olins, 2002; Dinnie, 2011; Anholt, 2016). Business consultants, as a stakeholder group or entity, are among the main deliverers of place branding projects and are often understood as the leading actors that influence local and national governments in (re)allocating resources and deploying specific image-related policies. In this way, even critical accounts on place branding developed in human sciences have described consultants and consultancy firms' pervasive and leading impacts on the place branding

practice, contributing to an understanding of consultants as powerful neoliberal agents of top-down policies (e.g. Jansen, 2008; Khamis, 2012; Aronczyk, 2008).

Thus, on the one hand, it seems as if the authoritative character of place branding consultants cannot be entirely neglected. On the other hand, however, the fixed role of a consultant as a top-down agent, as they are typically ascribed in the literature, appears to be somewhat simplistic and might not necessarily apply to every case or situation. In other words, by frequently associating business consultants with top-down place branding schemes that restrict civic participation, the literature has contributed to an absolute view of consultants as representatives of a system of “consultocracy” (Saint-Martin, 2000). This prescriptive and functionalistic view of consultants (see Werr & Sthyre, 2002) has so far dominated the literature on place branding, where local governments, business alliances and even local communities are considered vulnerable victims of consultants’ rhetorical skills and policy prescriptions.

As of late, less deterministic and functional accounts of the role of consultants have emerged, primarily from the practitioners themselves in an attempt to reflect on their own business consultancy practices. Kalandides (2011), for example, provides a critical assessment of a place branding strategy that he designed for the city of Bogotá (Colombia), following a successful competitive bidding process and the official appointment offered by Bogotá’s city council. The implications of the turbulent political dynamics are identified as one element that challenges consultants’ effort of pursuing a participatory approach to place brand design. Stubbs and Warnaby (2015) offer another illustration of the tensions specific to place branding practices from the perspective of a place branding consultant and an academic who jointly reported on their experiences from projects marketing the brands of select Scandinavian cities.

These seminal contributions indicate a slightly more holistic rendition of consultants' activities by acknowledging their more nuanced, interactive relationships with the sociocultural environment of the place and other stakeholders, such as representatives of local communities, local business gatekeepers and even academic researchers (Kavaratzis, 2015). Moreover, these accounts show that political instability and the often, unrealistic expectations of public managers can undermine consultants' abilities to adequately fulfil optimistic place branding projects, which are far from being linear and technocratic processes.

In line with these recent works and in accordance with the general management literature that demonstrates how consulting practices tend to go beyond functional and scripted role-based models (e.g. Sturdy, 1997), the present paper offers a more holistic examination of business consultants, as an important place brand stakeholder group. Using a case study approach, this study aims to unveil the complexities and "role ambiguity" (Le Feuvre et al., 2016, p. 61) associated with consultants' interactions with other stakeholders. However, before delving into the empirical findings, the next section provides a detailed discussion of the employed methodology.

Research approach and methods

This present paper adopts a case study research approach (Yin, 2013) in the form of an in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single case. Despite the fact that investigations of single cases can lead to a univocal evidence and biased views, analysing the interactions of business consultants with other place brand stakeholders in one city was considered the most appropriate way to

conduct this interpretative case study research (McDonough & McDonough, 1997; Gerring, 2006), since it has the potential to produce detailed, conceptual categories that can ultimately contribute to a rich theoretical discussion (see also Eisenhardt, 1989). More specifically, this study comprises a thorough examination of a marketing practitioner's first-hand experience with identifying, engaging and collaborating with several place brand stakeholders in a Brazilian city, Rio de Janeiro. Consistent with the approach adopted by Le Feuvre et al. (2016), this study benefits from the insider-position of the first author (marketing practitioner), who was able to uniquely acquire rich insights into different events, interactions and actions as they apply to consultants engaging in the process of stakeholder engagement.

Analysing first-hand consulting experiences gathered daily provided a unique opportunity to delve deeply into very specific accounts of place branding activities (Kalandides, 2011). As noted by Vince and Reynolds (2009), the philosopher John Dewey is probably the main source of inspiration for the contemporary debate on reflection in management studies. Accordingly, thought and action appear to be ideally connected and constitute the basis of the educational process (Dewey, 1916 in Vince & Reynolds, 2009, p. 90). Similarly, the notion of “methodological reflexivity” still plays a role in management studies (Johnson and Duberley, 2000) and commonly manifests as the figure of the “reflective practitioner” (Schön, 1983), who has the ability to connect experience and the evaluation of that experience within a single dialogue; this applies to everyday situations, but can also occur retrospectively. In the context of the current study, tacit knowledge, as it relates to the practice of consulting, is connected with a reflexive understanding of those consulting accounts and actions.

The second author, in his role as academic researcher, played a major role in facilitating

this reflexivity, given that his direct involvement with the relevant stakeholders in Brazil was more limited. Accordingly, the second author acted primarily as a sounding board during the process of analysis and during some stages of the data collection, which was carried out by the practitioner in Rio de Janeiro between 2012 and the first half of 2015.

Data collection occurred in two stages. The first took place from 2012 and 2015 and included participant observation in meetings with place brand stakeholders, discussions and negotiations on how to develop partnerships, joint projects and public events. Overall, these occasions included both formal and 'non-formal' business practices (Mu, Peng & Love, 2008). A diary was kept that included field notes, as well as a record of the email conversations between the two authors from 2012 and 2015. Altogether, these materials contributed to an amass of data that described the practices and processes of stakeholder engagement from the perspective of a business consultant engaging in their everyday business routines. The data gathered allowed an ongoing process of interpretive classification of the practices of place brand stakeholder engagement from the perspective of the consultant. This interpretive classification began when the participant observation was still taking place, resulting in provisional avenues for inquiry, tentative typologies and broader questions to be subsequently addressed in an interview-context, during the following stage of data collection.

The second stage included seven face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with place brand stakeholders who were identified during the first phase of data collection and some supporting archival research. The decision to integrate the observational data with interviews and archival research allowed for a more holistic understanding of the types of relationships among significant stakeholders and the nature of their interactions, which can be appreciated in Figure

1. Thus, while the first stage of data collection provided an overview of place brand consulting, based almost entirely on a single practitioner's point of view, the interview phase allowed for a deeper understanding of consulting practices in the more general context of relationships among place brand stakeholders. The examination of official documents and media coverage also played a supporting role in evaluating the relational context in which the first author was immersed, as it aided the appreciation of consulting practices' discursive implications.

Interviews used broad and open-ended questions to focus on exploring the activities that place brand stakeholders are regularly engaged in. This allowed the respondents to answer freely and provide further clarifications on their respective involvement in place-brand related projects and on the nature of their interactions with other stakeholders (see Table 1 for the list of participants). Five of the interviews were conducted by the practitioner (first author) in Rio de Janeiro, and one was conducted by the academic (second author) via Skype; this was to alleviate any potential conflicts of interest between the first author and this participant, given their close collaboration on certain projects. The last respondent submitted written answers electronically in the form of an open-ended questionnaire due to many failed attempts to meet the participant in person. It proved somewhat difficult to recruit other participants to take part in the second stage of the data collection, given that some either declined or dismissed the invitation to take part in the research. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, approximately, and were manually transcribed by the two authors. Even though the thematic insights emerging from the analysis of the interview transcripts was somewhat limited, coalescing the interviews with the participant observation data enabled the authors to outline the actor-network represented in Figure 1 and to grasp practitioner perceptions of the stakeholder interactions that characterise

the scattered place brand management initiatives in Rio de Janeiro.

Subsequently, this classification was refined by the second author, who was able to tease out repetitive concepts and identify emerging patterns in the recorded materials. Following the thematic analysis (Bryman, 2005), the recorded interactions were converted into a detailed typology of six practices that is crucial to understand the dynamics inherent in the process of multiple stakeholder engagement from a practitioner point of view. These practices were revisited by the first author (practitioner), who ensured the trustworthiness of the data analysis in terms of revisiting the data and confirming the typology. Ultimately, this typology set the foundation for a critical conceptualisation of the role(s) of place brand consultants, indicating the ambiguous nature of place branding consultancy.

Findings and Discussion

Rio de Janeiro: Fragmented place brand leadership and limited participation

Rio de Janeiro is a metropolis located in the South-eastern part of Brazil. Former capital of Brazil, it hosts more than 15 million inhabitants. In 2012, Rio de Janeiro was the first to be recognised by the UNESCO World Heritage Site for its “cultural landscape”. In 2014 it hosted the FIFA Football World Cup and two years later hosted the Summer Olympic Games. The state of frenetic change characterising the urban landscape of Rio de Janeiro is a tangible proof of the entrepreneurial attitude of the local government, recently boosted by the international resources as a result of these two mega-events. This represents an interesting occasion of

accelerated globalisation (Gaffney, 2010) that implies certain economic (Ritchie, 1984) and social (Hiller, 2000) ramifications which tend to follow mega-events for hosting cities. For example, several public initiatives have sought to address urban mobility constraints or plan new landmark projects, including the Museum of Tomorrow (created to explore Brazil's future in the next 50 years), the Museum of Image and Sound (aimed at strengthening the musical heritage of Rio and Brazil) and the Museum of Art of Rio. This surge of innovation, also envisioned in Rio's most recent City Strategic Plan 2013-2016, advocates a very ambitious vision for the city; and in fact, Rio is expected to become one of the best cities to live, work and visit in the Southern hemisphere by 2030 (Strategic Plan).

The context of Rio de Janeiro is particularly intriguing, not only to understand how host cities leverage and manage "reputational capital" or "product/place imagery" (Askegaard & Kjeldgaard, 2007) to capture tourists and financial flows (see Zhang & Zao, 2009), but also to assess the more contradictory aspects of place marketing activities and the often overlooked consequences of these initiatives (see for example Evans, 2003; Kalandides & Colomb, 2010). In fact, despite the many positive (albeit stereotypical) associations attributed to Rio de Janeiro, place branding in the city has often been discussed in terms of its exclusory effects (Broudehoux, 2001), particularly its tendency to reproduce enormous social inequalities (Sánchez & Broudehoux, 2013) and manifestations of counter-branding (Maiello & Pasquinelli, 2015). In the words of this public communication coordinator,

"The world Cup was a huge success in terms of a footballing event, but I think Brazil as a country missed a huge opportunity to tell a new story about itself. All we got was more football, samba and *bundas* on the beach – for me it was incredibly lazy place branding" (interviewee no.

7)

A broad overview of the case study setting reveals that it shares many of the common characteristics that the place branding literature has previously reported in relation to relationship and leadership among place brand stakeholders (see Hanna & Rowley, 2011). For example, some public organisation departments are trying to influence tourists' perceptions of the city with their policies (e.g. the City Image Department, International PR department). Additionally, the presence of multiple private actors in the area of business (e.g. Federation of Industries of Rio de Janeiro) and education maintain ongoing relationships with both regional and local public administrations. It is worth noting that these public and private stakeholders belong to different administrative levels of regulation, i.e. local (e.g. local Rio businesses), regional (i.e. Regional Department of Culture) and national (i.e. Ministry of Tourism) levels. The resulting picture of stakeholder configuration is in line with multi-scalar accounts of place brand territorial governance processes described by Giovanardi (2015). The awareness of this fragmentation emerges in the words of Interviewee no. 4, who claims that

“what is missing is the collective definition of what ‘becoming the best place to live’ means. What is missing is the involvement of society to create a long-term management”.

Figure 1 illustrates the public and private actors who have some involvement in the design or implementation of brand-related activities operate. This figure is useful in providing a general overview of the numerous public and private actors involved in place branding activities. However, the landscape that the place brand stakeholder inhabits is contradictory: on

the one hand, there are very few powerful institutional actors (e.g. the City Hall) controlling the city's resources and influencing the public agenda; on the other hand, there exists a plethora of other place brand stakeholders in the city, who altogether generate a contested urban terrain where the official industrial and commercial narrative, promoted by the public authorities, is often challenged by multiple groups and alternative narratives, leading to an myriad of rich, but sometimes conflicting place brand identities (Maiello & Pasquinelli, 2015). As interviewee no. 6 describes it, by using an institutional language "the semiotic identity of the city is dispersed (despadronizada)".

This absence of an official platform to stimulate civic participation and incite inclusive public debates around place brand management in the city constitutes a main premise of the current study. Additionally, the contradictory nature of Rio as a place brand, characterised by both its stereotypical representations in the public eye and the fragmentation of its place brand leadership makes this city a particular fruitful case from which to study place branding.

Figure 1: Main place brand stakeholders in Rio de Janeiro

Working with place brand stakeholders: six practices

It is within the framework of fragmented place brand leadership and limited civic participation, presented in the previous section, that six types of consulting practices have been identified and contextualized, as they relate to stakeholder engagement. These practices were undertaken by the first author during her activities based on Rio and were not consecutive or mutually exclusive, but were conducted ‘in parallel’ rather than ‘in series’.

Charting stakeholders

The literature recognises the significance of “the methods used to identify stakeholders, [and] their interests” (Hanna & Rowley, 2013, p. 1787). Charting stakeholders refers to the practice where business consultants systematically select stakeholders to involve in a certain project. Mapping out relevant place brand stakeholders requires that the necessary background information be obtained via archival research in order to better understand the dynamics between different institutional actors. This process operates systematically from ‘the general to the particular’ and thus reflects some of the characteristics of a top-down approach, where relationships among business actors typically unfold linearly, from the top to the bottom of an organisational structure.

The practice of charting stakeholders in Rio de Janeiro revealed which institutional bodies were responsible for the key areas of expertise connected to “image-related” policies (Bellini,

2004). Subsequently, these institutional bodies made up the relevant target groups for project pitching. For example, it was relatively obvious that the Municipal Government in Rio de Janeiro was behind the Strategic Plan 2009-2012, given that they were explicitly mentioned in the document. Yet, neither the “letter from the mayor” (Rio de Janeiro Strategic Plan, 2009-2012, p. 7) nor the list of officers who were supposedly involved in the strategic planning (p. 240) was sufficient enough to identify the most relevant decision maker(s) in the municipal government. Thus, the practice of charting stakeholders is merely a preliminary approach by which consultants can obtain information to formulate deductive assumptions about stakeholders’ relevance as potential project funders.

Snowballing

The concept of snowballing serves as a metaphor that describes the less systematic and more spontaneous practice, whereby consultants identify and reach out to the place brand stakeholders that are considered as influential. Consultants typically rely on personal connections and their broader networks to ‘scout’ stakeholders that may not have been identified during the systematic practice of *charting*. Through snowballing efforts, practitioners can create meaningful connections that contribute to more inclusive debates on place brand management. As illustrated below in an email excerpt, the first author’s personal networks in Rio de Janeiro were crucial to incorporating place branding themes in an independent TED Talk event and eventually influence the public agenda:

“Maybe you will find it bizarre, but a friend who is an official organiser of an independent TED

event [...] will organise one in February around the theme “Metropolis”. This is to say that I spoke to him about you and suggest to invite you to give a speech” (e-mail excerpt from the first to the second author, 2 December 2013)

Serendipitous encounters with the practitioner’s personal connections and networks often led to unique collaborations with different organisations and individuals involved in grass-root type activities of place branding. In another example, the first author was invited to participate in a blog, which involved the collective reflection around Brazilian identity:

“I don’t know if I told you about the project ‘100 Degrees of Brazil’? A Brazilian MBA student in New York has created a blog in Portuguese and English (<http://100degreesofbrazil.wordpress.com>) and she collected various opinions and point of views on how the country thinks of its brand” (first author’s Linked-in message, 8 July 2013).

Through the practice of snowballing, the first author was able to establish relevant connections with ‘peripheral’ stakeholders, who were often not belonging to the local public institutions of Rio. For instance, following the recommendation of a doctoral researcher met during a networking event, the first author got in touch with the “Rio Eu Amo Eu Cuido”, a civic movement that devises campaigns that promote and sustain civic engagement within Rio de Janeiro and the local communities. Thinking this NGO deserved more attention within the public debate on city branding, the first author invited the NGO’s Director to deliver a presentation during an international workshop organised in 2014 by her marketing agency. This allowed other influential stakeholders to appreciate and discuss the activities of “Rio Eu Amo Eu Cuido”, which were then catapulted into the public agenda and promoted by the international workshop.

The practice of snowballing worked the other way as well, evidenced when the first author was invited to deliver a speech as a “place branding specialist” at a local festival organised in the district of Lapa, with the aim of sharing a unique perspective to the issues of “urbanism”, “policies of territorial intervention” and “gentrification” (Facebook post by the event organiser, 13 March 2015). The utility of recommendations and unforeseen encounters is a crucial factor in building what Zontanos and Anderson (1999) call “entrepreneurial networking”, which can contribute to make the process of stakeholder engagement dynamic.

Coopting consultants

A third practice of stakeholder engagement occurs when consultants join forces with other consultants who have similar interests in developing projects on place branding, urban marketing, and planning, for example. The notion of coopting entails getting others ‘on-board’, in order to extend a network that can result in shared efforts to engage relevant stakeholders and exploit joint business opportunities. It is possible to better appreciate the value of joint-ventures between consultants and private organisations when they are contextualised in a general framework of relations between public and private stakeholders, as illustrated below by one of the interview respondents:

“I once read an interview to the Mayor. He was saying that-his bit is done [...], but from now on private initiative[s] should work as well. *And he’s right*” (Interviewee no. 3, emphasis added).

In a context where institutional discourses seem to encourage the emergence of synergies

within the private sector, alliances with other consultants can occur both officially as well as more ‘spontaneously’. As an illustration of the former, the first author’s marketing agency collaborated with European consultants in order to consolidate the relevant expertise needed to effectively present communication projects in the local municipality of Rio. The benefits of this were two-fold. First on a purely functional level, these collaborations contributed to the joint provision of multiple services, and second, the company managed to increase its reputation and also the prestige of its consultants.

With regard to the more ‘spontaneous’ relationships emerging among the local consultants, the first author shared an established, yet informal repertoire with her former colleagues at other consulting firms, who provided long-lasting sources of social capital (see Grossetti, 2005, p. 292). For instance, some of her former colleagues, who were active in the professional marketing associations, secured a guest lecturing position for the second author at a prestigious private Business School in Rio de Janeiro.

There is, however, a contradiction inherent in the practice of coopting consultants, which lies in the “coopetitive” character that characterises the dynamic between business actors (see Mariani & Kylänen, 2014). The transparent and collegial attitude that business consultants express towards one another, evident, for example, when sharing ideas, can vary over time. Indeed, aspects of competitiveness can manifest and, as a consequence, hinder the potential synergies between private stakeholders. The spirit of competition can encourage consultants to invest more time into actions that may “stimulate the immediate demand for their services” (Whittle, 2006, p. 425), such as presenting pitches to institutional and ‘high-scale’ stakeholders:

“And I also start noticing signs of competition in this, as far as place branding suppliers/specialists are concerned. In the end, who would not like to sign a strategy for the city?” (e-mail excerpt from the first to the second author, 13 November 2014)

This excerpt recalls the first author’s feelings of frustration, following a meeting held with a private sector organisation active in encouraging foreign tourism. Indeed, such feelings are common in the management literature on consultants (Whittle, 2006) and are in stark contrast with the spirit of civic engagement that emerges in the more open and inclusive practice of snowballing. These worries and fears that stem from the competitive practice of pitching clients are useful in introducing another practice, which touches more resolutely on the problems associated with dealing with stakeholders who are ‘high-up’ on the institutional hierarchy.

Informal advising

The practice of informal advising allows consultants to establish trust and acquire prestige in the eyes of influential stakeholders, by offering them a free ‘trial’ of consultancy services. In the context of Rio de Janeiro, the practice of informal advising occurred through both unofficial and personal consultations, whereby key stakeholders would ask for clarification, suggestions or third opinions about issues of tourism development and place brand management. The provision of informal advising took place in preliminary and follow-up meetings with stakeholders on a municipal, regional and/or national scale.

Further, this type of non-formal business activity was at times very demanding. Consultants can feel that they are stuck in paradoxical situation, where they are expected to

propose tactical solutions in the absence of any proper elucidation on long-term project goals and aspirations:

“By the next fifteen days I will have to define a model of a workshop for the team of this public organisation [...] They have no clear indication (neither do I, I have to say) of what needs to be done” (e-mail message from the first to the second author, 26 November 2013).

This uncertainty, resulting from a lack of clearly defined objectives, encouraged the first author and her team to admit and “accept what it is that they truly [did] not know” about the situation of their potential client (Schein, 1997, p. 206). This reality, however, is part of a business consultant’s job, that is, to “always be helpful”, be patient and create conditions that empower the client(s) to eventually develop their focus (ibidem). From the point of view of consultants, instead, the practice of informal advising provides an opportunity to gain a holistic overview with regard to the public administration’s sentiments towards issues of city reputation and image management. Thus, such can be viewed as an opportunity to get closer to the centre of political decision-making to eventually establish trust with key decision makers.

The quantity and quality of informal advising varies among the different stakeholders depending on their status and perceived institutional influence. Echoing the arguments proposed by Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997), the practice of informal advising reinforces a relational dynamic where consultants may be subordinate and prone to stakeholders who are perceived as powerful and influential. A less deferential practice of stakeholder engagement is illustrated in the following practice.

Feeding

Knowledge dissemination events, such as conferences and workshops, are widely used to inform, engage and empower place brand stakeholders in both the early and later stages of place branding initiatives (Stubbs & Warnaby, 2015). In the case of this study, the first author put in a great deal of effort to attract the attention of public and private place brand stakeholders using an educational approach. A critical reflection on these effort reveals the paradoxical benefits associated with adopting an educational approach: one the one hand, these efforts enable consultants to address and involve more ‘minor’ stakeholders, publicising the debate on city branding; on the other hand, these educational events give consultants more proximity to certain key stakeholders that occupy strategic positions within the institutional hierarchy of the city.

With regard to the first benefit, a pedagogical commitment, i.e. public speeches in local events, forums and festivals in Rio de Janeiro (e.g. “Lapale’ Festival”, March 2015) and in other Brazilian cities (e.g. Florianopolis), helped generate the interest of place brand ‘novices’ towards best practices stemming from research (prevalently) based on Northern-European cities. This was consistent with the first author’s aim to stimulate public debate and, in particular, “making reflect on the brand ‘Rio’ or ‘Brazil’ (or the absence of a brand)” (e-mail message from the first to the second author, 17 June 2014). Other stakeholder groups were addressed through educational platforms including educational institutions, business professionals and students. For example, the first author was invited to develop two different course proposals about place branding to two higher-education institutions in Rio. Both attempts, however, were unsuccessful due to a lack of participant registration. In spite of the problems encountered in the direct delivery of educational services, however, these efforts engendered a passion and

commitment from the first author, which she described in terms of “evangelisation”, to communicate the complicated and meticulous character of educational dissemination activities.

Regarding the second benefit, participation in these educational events also worked as a means to gain national publicity and attract the attention of key public stakeholders, known for their capacity to fund large place branding projects. Such was the case at an international workshop organised by the first author in the autumn of 2014, which facilitated a more instrumental use of educational tools, where a “non-profit event” (invitation letter sent to invited speakers, 17 July 2014) became an opportunity for increased strategic public engagement:

“Our proposal about the workshop is going on. [...] If it does finally turn into reality, it seems like a fantastic opportunity to disseminate the place branding thought and invite participants to define a distinctive strategy for Rio” (e-mail message from the first to the second author, 21 January 2014)

As an unexpected consequence of the promotion of this event, the Brazilian Minister of Tourism expressed his interest in taking part in the event as a guest speaker. Furthermore, through this major event, the first author and her marketing agency were able to collaborate with a key educational institution, which was in quite close touch with key decision makers within the local municipality. The proximity between the municipality and the institution is expressed in its director’s own words:

“The City Council has invited me to be a member of a strategic committee, I mean, a committee of 150 people [...] they are 150 ‘Wise men’, chosen among influential figures in the areas of academy, science, art, design, technology and transportation within the city [...] that the City Council consults in order to elaborate the strategic plan” (Interviewee no. 1)

In addition to the benefits of increased inclusivity and public participation, the practice of feeding also serves as a proxy for targeting stakeholders that are usually among the top players in a top-down approach, such as city councils and tourism departments. A similar ambivalence can be found in the last practice, which leverages the legitimating power of scientific discourse.

Scientific arming

As indicated in the previous section, the first author devoted a lot of energy in providing research-based evidence to public administration and trade associations about the opportunities and challenges of place branding projects, thus leveraging the role that scientific support can play in engaging place brand stakeholders. The international workshop organised by the first author is just one example denoting the practice of scientific arming, where consultants find support and legitimation in the methods and language of scientific research to acquire new customers and/or secure a top position among local business decision makers.

The practice of scientific arming was also facilitated by the first author's participation in a recognised international research organisation of place branding professionals and scholars based in Europe:

“One of the founders added me on Linked In and invited me to be part of the group of associate experts” (e-mail excerpt from the first to the second author, 20 November 2013)

Belonging to this international research organisation provided the first author with a preferential route to the identification of some international researchers to invite for the

workshop. The presence of the recognised international research organisation was also emphasised by the first author and her team as a main added value of the event for local stakeholders. Similarly, the presence of scientists was emphasized in press releases and, as a result, was prominent in the media coverage generated, which took note of the participants' academic affiliations and their research interests (article published on the business magazine "Propmark", 10 October 2014).

Despite these advantages, however, concerns about the interactions between commercial and academics have long been an issue in the public policy domain (Wood, 1998). Some suggest that academic advisors can be used as scientific weapons by commercial consultants in order to more effectively "play the game" inherent in negotiations and decision-making processes within institutional settings. And yet, the practice of scientific arming also featured aspects that are not tightly linked to any immediate goal or generation of new business opportunities. As an illustration of this, a meeting organised by first author provided an opportunity to connect local researchers, working at that time on tourism and innovation, and the second author. "Interesting exchanges" (first author's e-mail message, 22 October 2014) and "future opportunities", such as the "Place Marketing/Branding Conference in Poland, May 2015" (first author's email message to local researchers, 24 October 2014) illustrate the importance attributed by the first author to the 'intrinsic' value of scientific knowledge on place branding, which can inform and empower consultants in identifying, for examples, best practices available in the literature and nurture relationships with academics (Kavaratzis, 2015). The ongoing knowledge exchange between the two authors is evidenced in the following excerpt:

“Saturday afternoon I will give a presentation [...] on territorial transformation and place branding. Do you have any suggestions for interesting references, texts or examples to cite?”
(e-mail excerpt from the first to the second author, 24 April 2015).

Conceptualising the ambiguity of place branding consultancy

The six types of practices outlined in the previous section describe the interactions of “multiple stakeholder engagement” (also see Hanna & Rowley, 2011), as experienced by the first author during her experiences in consulting in Rio de Janeiro. This section discusses the identified practices in relation to the previous research on place branding that has typically labelled business consultants as adherents to somewhat predictable, top-down and relatively exclusive practices. Consistently, the accounts that emerged from this particular case study in Rio de Janeiro illustrate a less deterministic and more nuanced representation of place brand consulting, with consultants making noticeable attempts to increase stakeholder engagement and spark more inclusive public confrontations on the subject of place brand management.

In order to better understand the value of the six identified practices, it is helpful to conceptualise them through two different dimensions that characterise their interactive nature: (a) the socio-spatial proximity to the local context of Rio, spanning from the “*logic of milieu*” to the “*logic of transterritoriality*” (see Cova, Mazet & Salle, 1996); and (b) the schismogenetic nature of communication, spanning from “*complementary*” to “*symmetric*” (see Watzlawick et al., 2011).

Figure 2: Conceptualising consultants' practices of stakeholder engagement

The six identified practices can be characterised by two different logics, which position consultants' work at the intersection of two complementary and relational geographies. As illustrated in Figure 2, the practices of “snowballing” and “informal advising” largely follow the “logic of milieu” (Cova et al., 1996), given their emphasis on socio-spatial proximity (e.g. the physical proximity between the first author and her former colleagues) and territorial

embeddedness. From this perspective, the constraints and opportunities faced by place branding consultants are context (i.e. place) specific, since they largely depend on local modes of social regulation and expectations.

Alternatively, the “logic of transterritoriality” (Cova et al., 1996) entails “long distance systems of cooperation ties” characterised by a “lack of proximity between partners” (Camagni, 1994, p. 36 in Cova et al., 1996, p. 655). As shown in Figure 2, the practices of “feeding” and “scientific arming” follow the logic of transterritoriality, where places and organisations that are physically located in other continents (mainly in Europe) become socially connected to Rio de Janeiro through the liaising of the place brand consultants, who draw on international partnerships and research networks to conjure new energy and excitement into their projects. The practice of “coopting consultants” is meaningful in this respect, featuring elements that belong to both logics. The fact that both local and external consultants work together indicates that generating and nurturing stakeholder commitment is not only physically manifested in Rio de Janeiro, but spans across a much wider spatial network that incorporates persons and ideas from many different countries.

The *schismogenetic* nature of communication is identified as a second dimension that is useful to compare the six practices. This is a concept that psychiatrist Paul Watzlavick borrowed from the anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1935) in the 1960s to describe the relationship between communication and power dynamics (see Watzlavick et al., 2011). According to thee authors, human communication illustrates (and simultaneously reinforces) social divisions and power structures. Watzlavick et al. (2011) further distinguishes between two main logics termed “symmetrical” and “complementary” communication, which essentially

indicate the equal (symmetrical) and unequal (complementary) power held by two social actors as a result of their cumulative interactions. In this way, symmetrical communication is based on equal power, while complementary communication is based on a difference of power (see also Griffin, 1997).

As illustrated in Figure 2, the practices of “informal advising”, “scientific arming” and “coopting consultants” are characterised by different types of unbalanced power relations between consultants and other stakeholders. For example, the practice of “informal advising” assumes that consultants are inferior compared to some of the public authorities, who, for example, ask them to do reviews of drafts of policy documents. Accommodating the requests of potential clients further reinforces their lower-level position within a logic of complementary communication. Following Whittle (2006), “informal advising” can be seen as one of the practices whereby business consultants aim to quickly generate future business (Whittle, 2006), which is sometimes at odds with consultants’ aspirations to convince local authorities to pursue long-term plans that ensure inclusive place brand stakeholder engagement. A similar logic of subordination is expressed in the almost impersonal practice of “charting”, whereby consultants obtain information on institutional public stakeholders without directly interacting with them.

This hierarchy is also maintained in the practices of “scientific arming” and “coopting consultants”, as consultants seek to gain legitimation and hence reinforce their ‘one-down’ position, compared to the local authorities. Consultants’ attempt to introduce best practices grounded in scientific studies indicate an implicit effort to emphasise that this is not an interaction occurring between peers, and that more qualified ‘arbiter’, such as academic consultants (see Wood, 1998), are necessary to strengthen with their ‘rubber’ stamp the ideas

and projects of business consultants.

The practices of “feeding” and “snowballing” provide an illustration of more symmetric interactions between consultants and other place stakeholders. Interactional exchanges based on equality were witnessed during educational activities (e.g. public speeches in local festivals) and during day-to-day spontaneous networking events. Even though educational activities can be implemented by business consultants to teach and promote ‘muscular’ tactics of impression management, the first author was primarily committed to stimulate a public debate on city brand management, which generated forms of involvement-from-below, as was the case with the NGO “Rio Eu Amo Eu Cuido” and the international workshop they established together with foreign researchers.

A general overview of the business consulting practices as they relate to multiple stakeholder engagement is offered in the framework proposed in Figure 2. These practices do not describe a simple nor univocal role of a place brand consultant, but rather a multi-faceted and ambiguous one. Modes of interactions that derive from (and reinforce) a top-down approach to stakeholder engagement are juxtaposed with modes of interactions that resemble a more grass-roots, bottom-up approach to stakeholder engagement. Similarly, modes of interaction that reproduce socio-spatial practices characterising the milieu of Rio de Janeiro are articulated by consultants together with modes of interactions that follow transterritorial logics and reach out to international scales of global knowledge exchange.

This juxtaposition is particularly evident in practices that stretch across two quadrants of the Cartesian system, such as “scientific arming” and “feeding”. These two practices nicely

illustrate the ambiguous nature of consulting, which can be understood as both a propensity to increase inclusivity and a tendency to cater to a few influential stakeholders, with the overarching aim to connect a place (and its inhabitants) with knowledge networks that reach across national boundaries.

A fresh perspective of this duplicity may be cast through the concept of liminality (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003). Drawing from the anthropological work of Turner (1982), the authors apply the notion of “liminal space” to understand consultancy as a “condition” of “transition”, where role fixity is challenged and change is welcomed. From this lens, the apparent contrasting tendencies of consulting (i.e. facilitating stakeholder participation from the ‘top-down’ and the ‘bottom-up’) can be reconciled through a notion that Czarniawska and Mazza (2003, p. 272) identify as the “possibility of creation”. Here, change is embraced and the *agency* of consultants is considered. Indeed, this finding is in stark contrast to the traditional deterministic accounts of consulting, that regard place brand consultants as rigid and unscrupulous executors of linear, top-down place branding campaigns. From this new perspective, we have an opportunity to mitigate, and even embrace, the tensions inherent in negotiations with different stakeholders (e.g. dominant vs subordinate; locally embedded vs international) that can eventually lead to experimentation of new approaches and unique collaborations. In particular, collaboration with academics, via international knowledge networks, events, conferences and public engagement activities can reach to local communities, as a first step towards their empowerment.

Notably, such a finding does not necessarily intend to promote a naïve view of ‘good’ or heroic consultants, but rather aims to challenge deterministic accounts of consulting that

necessarily exclude the possibility for consultants to express civic responsibility in their consulting activities.

Conclusions and Implications

Taking a first step towards developing an alternative view of place branding consultants, this study seeks to go beyond the functionalistic perspective dominating the current literature. Place branding consultants do not simply fulfil a univocal role during the delivery of campaigns that seek to create favourable dispositions within both internal and external place brand stakeholders. They might be involved in particular markets and sociopolitical contexts where, like Rio de Janeiro (e.g. Maiello & Pasquinelli, 2015), place brand management is characterised by a fragmented leaderships and by a limited possibility for local communities to take part in the definition of a shared place brand identity. Consultants, in this context, can find themselves mediating between bottom-up and top-down approaches. Thus, they can decide to engage in projects and activities that give voice to local districts and communities, while simultaneously catering to key stakeholders (i.e. potential funders of projects), by facilitating certain instrumental and exploitative interactions, evident, for example, in the practice of “informal advising”. Such a position is characterised by an ambiguity that cannot be fully resolved, but can be a resource for affecting change (see Whittle, 2006); this is true particularly when understood from a perspective that emphasises the liminality of the consulting process (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003), which helps to overcome the fixed, functionalistic views of consultancy. Conceptualising the practice of consulting as a liminal space can enrich the view

and the practice of place branding consultancy, empowering the consultants themselves to take charge of the opportunities that can arise from connecting the local interests of a city's well being with the transitional place branding practices available today.

However, this new perspective leaves several questions unanswered, which underpin some of the limitations of the present study. For one, the multiplicity of “client positions” (Alvesson et al., 2009) available to consultants when operating in the realm of place management can be very fascinating but also very contradictory. For example, in Rio de Janeiro, consultants often explicitly focused on “primary clients”, namely the members of organisations who pay the consultants’ bills (Schein, 1997, p. 203). More attention should have been paid in understanding all the local communities “whose welfare must be considered” in consultancy interventions (ibidem). In other words, in a place characterised by social inequalities, fragmented place brand leadership and remarkable manifestations of counter-branding, a more critical and thorough application of the practice of snowballing would have been appropriate. For example, how are different local districts in Rio dealing with problems of territorial stigmatisation? Is it possible to create synergies about the different local festivals where issues of urban regeneration are discussed? Can consultants have a role in facilitating a more organic discussion on local communities discontent? Can this process of inclusive reflection be truly supported by public authorities, or simply high-jacked? Far from being exhaustive, these questions show the traditional tendency to “search for *a* client” and the established practice to fine-tune a project proposal for the needs of *one* influential institutional actor might not always be appropriate for contemporary place branding.

Resonating with the spirit of Alvesson et al. (2009), much effort is needed to problematise

Schein's concept of the "ultimate client" and to determine whether or not the widely accepted terminology (i.e. "consultant" and "client") contributes to an appropriate representation of the dynamics that actually take place among several social actors comprising a multi-level place brand governance. Issues of context-dependency are also important, and further research is needed to compare different types of place branding consultancies across different socio-political and institutional settings.

The present study responds to Kavaratzis (2015)'s call for a more integrated exchange between theory and practice in place branding. In addition to the joint authorship, involving both a practitioner and an academic, the three-year self-reflective account of a consulting experience in Rio de Janeiro emphasised the importance of knowledge networks as a "route to knowledge exchange" between practitioners and scholars (see also Hughes et al., 2008). International knowledge networks can contribute to the empowerment of commercial consultants and, arguably, lead to a consultancy model that deviates from the traditional quick-fix policy recipes proposed by marketing management 'gurus', to reflect one that represents consultants as self-reflective and critical practitioners (Kalandides, 2011), acutely aware of the contradictions characterising their profession.

References

- Aitken, R., & Campelo, A. (2011). The four Rs of place branding. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(9-10), 913-933. DOI: 10.1080/0267257X.2011.560718
- Alvesson, M., Kärreman, D., Sturdy, A., & Handley, K. (2009). Unpacking the client(s):

constructions, positions and client–consultant dynamics. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 25(3), 253-263. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org.ezp.sub.su.se/10.1016/j.scaman.2009.05.001>

Anholt, S. (2002) Foreward. *Journal of Brand Management*. 9(4/5), 229-240.

Anholt, S. (2003). *Brand new justice: The upside of global marketing*. Butterworth-Heinemann.

Anholt, S. (2016). *Places: Identity, image and reputation*. Springer.

Anholt, S., & Hildreth, J. (2004). *Brand America: The mother of all brands*. Cyan Communications.

Aronczyk, M. (2008). 'Living the Brand': Nationality, Globality, and the Identity Strategies of Nation Branding Consultants. *International journal of communication*, 2, 41-65.

Ashworth, G., Kavaratzis, M. & Warnaby, G. (2015). The need to rethink place branding. This is a chapter. In Kavaratzis, M., Warnaby, G., and Ashworth, G. J. (Eds.) *Rethinking Place Branding* (1-11). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Askegaard, S., & Kjeldgaard, D. (2007). Here, there, and everywhere: place branding and gastronomical globalization in a macromarketing perspective. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 27(2), 138-147. doi: 10.1177/0276146707300068

Baker, B. (2012). *Destination Branding for Small Cities (2nd Edition)*. Creative Leap Books

Bateson, G. (1935). Culture Contact and Schismogenesis. *Man*, 178-183.

Bellini, N. (2004). Territorial governance and area image. *Symphonya*. Emerging Issues in Management, (1), 14-26.

Boisen, M. (2015). Place Branding and Nonstandard Regionalization in Europe. In Zenker, S & Jacobsen, B.P., *Inter-Regional Place Branding* (pp. 13-23). Springer International

Publishing.

Braun, E., Kavaratzis, M., & Zenker, S. (2013). My city-my brand: the different roles of residents in place branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 6(1), 18-28.

Broudehoux, A.M. (2001), "Image making, place marketing and the aesthetization of social inequality in Rio de Janeiro", in Alsayyad, N. (Ed.), *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage*, Routledge, London, pp. 273-97.

Bryman A. (2012). *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Campelo, A., Aitken, R., Thyne, M., & Gnoth, J. (2013). Sense of place: The importance for destination branding. *Journal of Travel Research*, doi: 0047287513496474.

Clarkson, M. B. E. (1995). A Stakeholder Framework for Analysing and Evaluating Corporate Social Performance. *The Academy of Management Review*, 20(1), 92-117.

Cova, B., Mazet, F., & Salle, R. (1996). Milieu as a pertinent unit of analysis in project marketing. *International Business Review*, 5(6), 647-664. DOI: 10.1016/S0969-5931(96)00032-7

Czarniawska, B., & Mazza, C. (2003). Consulting as a liminal space. *Human Relations*, 56(3), 267-290.

Dinnie, K. (2011). *City branding: theory and cases*. Palgrave macmillan.

Eisenhardt, K.M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 532-51. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/258557>

Evans, G. (2003). Hard□branding the cultural city—from Prado to Prada. *International journal of urban and regional research*, 27(2), 417-440. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2427.00455

Freire, J. (2014). Place branding in Africa. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 10(1), 32-34. DOI: 10.1057/pb.2013.31

Freeman, E.R. (1984). *Strategic management: a stakeholder approach*. Pitman, Boston.

Grossetti, M. (2005). Where do social relations come from? A study of personal networks in the Toulouse area of France. *Social networks*, 27(4), 289-300.
doi:10.1016/j.socnet.2004.11.004

Kalandides, A., & Colomb, C. (2010) . The ‘be Berlin’ campaign: Old wine in new bottles or innovative form of participatory place branding?. This is a chapter. In Ashworth, G. and Kavaratzis, M. (Eds). *Towards Effective Place Brand Management. Branding European Cities and Regions* (173-190). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Kalandides, A. & Kavaratzis, M. (2009). From place marketing to place branding – and back: a need for re-evaluation. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 2(1), DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/jpmd.2009.35502aaa.001>

Khamis, S. (2012). Brand Australia: half-truths for a hard sell. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 36(1), 49-63. DOI: 10.1080/14443058.2011.646284

Kotler, P., Asplund, C., Rein, I., & Haider, D. (1999). *Marketing Places Europe*. Prentice Hall. ISBN 0, 273(64442), 4.

Gaffney, C. (2010). Mega-events and socio-spatial dynamics in Rio de Janeiro, 1919-2016. *Journal of Latin American Geography*, 9(1), 7-29. doi: 10.1353/lag.0.0068

Gerring, J. (2006). *Case study research: Principles and practices*. Cambridge University Press.

Gertner, D. (2011a). Unfolding and configuring two decades of research and publications on place marketing and place branding. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 7 (2), 91-106. DOI: 10.1057/pb.2011.7

Gertner, D. (2011b). A (tentative) meta-analysis of the “place marketing” and “place

branding” literature. *Journal of Brand Management*, 19(2), 112-131. doi:10.1057/bm.2011.13

Giovanardi, M. (2015). A multi-scalar approach to place branding: The 150th anniversary of Italian unification in Turin. *European Planning Studies*, 23(3), 597-615. doi: 10.1080/09654313.2013.879851

Giovanardi, M., Lucarelli, A., & Pasquinelli, C. (2013). Towards brand ecology: An analytical semiotic framework for interpreting the emergence of place brands. *Marketing Theory*, 13(3), 365–383. doi: 10.1177/1470593113489704

Green, A., Grace, D., & Perkins, H. (2016). City branding research and practice: An integrative review. *Journal of Brand Management*, 23(3), 252-272. DOI: 10.1057/bm.2016.8.

Greenwood, M. (2001). The Importance of Stakeholders According to Business Leaders. *Business Society Review*, 106(1), 29-49. DOI: 0.1111/0045-3609.00100

Griffin, E. (1997). *A first look at Communication Theory*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies.

Hanna, S. & Rowley, J. (2011). Towards a strategic place brand-management model. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(5-6), 458-476. DOI:10.1080/02672571003683797

Hanna, S., & Rowley, J. (2013). A practitioner-led strategic place brand-management model. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29(15-16), 1782-1815. DOI: 10.1080/0267257X.2013.800901

Hiller, H. (2000). Toward an urban sociology of mega-events. *Research in Urban Sociology*. 5(1), 181-205.

Houghton, J.P. & Stevens, A. (2011). City branding and stakeholder engagement, in Dinnie, K. (Ed.), *City Branding: Theory and Cases*, Palgrave-Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp. 45-53.

Hughes, T., Tapp, A., & Hughes, R. (2008). Achieving effective academic/practitioner knowledge exchange in marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 24(1-2), 221-240. DOI: 10.1362/026725708X274019

Insch, A., & Stuart, M. (2015). Understanding resident city brand disengagement. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 8(3), 172-186.
<http://dx.doi.org.ezp.sub.su.se/10.1108/JPMD-03-2016-0009>

Jansen, S. C. (2008). Designer nations: Neo-liberal nation branding—Brand Estonia. *Social identities*, 14(1), 121-142.

Johnson, P., & Duberley, J. (2003). Reflexivity in Management Research. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(5), 1279-1303.

Kalandides, A. (2011). City marketing for Bogotá: a case study in integrated place branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 4(3), 282-291.
<http://dx.doi.org.ezp.sub.su.se/10.1108/17538331111176093>

Kalandides, A. (2012). Place Branding and Place Identity. An integrated approach. *Taifor Journal*, 43.

Kalandides, A., & Kavaratzis, M. (2009). From place marketing to place branding—and back: a need for re-evaluation. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 2(1).
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/jpmd.2009.35502aaa.001>

Kavaratzis, M. (2012). From ‘necessary evil’ to necessity: stakeholders' involvement in place branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 5(1), 7-19.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/17538331211209013>

Kavaratzis, M. (2017). The participatory place branding process for tourism: linking visitors and residents through the city brand. In Pasquinelli, C & Bellini, N., *Tourism in the City*

(pp. 93-107). Springer International Publishing.

Kavaratzis, M., Warnaby, G., & Ashworth, G. J. (2014). *Rethinking Place Branding*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Kavaratzis, M, Giovanardi, M & Lichrou, M. (2017). *Inclusive Place Branding: Critical Perspectives in Theory and Practice*, Routledge Critical Marketing series, forthcoming.

Kavaratzis, M., & Ashworth, G. J. (2007). Partners in coffeeshops, canals and commerce: Marketing the city of Amsterdam. *Cities*, 24(1), 16-25.

Kavaratzis, M., & Hatch, M.J. (2013). The dynamics of place brands an identity-based approach to place branding theory. *Marketing Theory*, 13(1), 69-86. doi: 10.1177/1470593112467268

Kavaratzis, M. (2007). City marketing: The past, the present and some unresolved issues. *Geography Compass*, 1(3), 695-712. DOI: 10.1111/j.1749-8198.2007.00034.x

Klijn, E. H., Eshuis, J., & Braun, E. (2012). The influence of stakeholder involvement on the effectiveness of place branding. *Public management review*, 14(4), 499-519.

Le Feuvre, M., Medway, D., Warnaby, G., Ward, K., & Goatman, A. (2016). Understanding stakeholder interactions in urban partnerships. *Cities*, 52, 55-65. DOI: 10.1016/j.cities.2015.10.017

Lucarelli, A. & Berg, P.O. (2011). City Branding- A state of the art review of the research domain, *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 4(1) 9–27.

Maiello, A., & Pasquinelli, C. (2015). Destruction or construction? A (counter) branding analysis of sport mega-events in Rio de Janeiro. *Cities*, 48, 116-124.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2015.06.011>

Mariani, M. M., & Kylänen, M. (2014). The relevance of public-private partnerships in

coopetition: Empirical evidence from the tourism sector. *International Journal of Business Environment* 5, 6(1), 106-125.

McDonough, J. & McDonough, S. (1997). *Research Methods for English Language Teachers*. London: Arnold.

Merrilees, B., Miller, D., & Herington, C. (2009). Antecedents of residents' city brand attitudes. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(3), 362-367.

Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. R., & Wood, D. J. (1997). Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *Academy of management review*, 22(4), 853-886.

O'Shaughnessy, J., & O'Shaughnessy, N. J. (2000). Treating the nation as a brand: Some neglected issues. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 20(1), 56-64.

Olins, W. (2002). Branding the nation—the historical context, *The Journal of Brand Management*, 9(4/5), 1–9.

Pasquinelli, C. (2011). Place branding and cooperation: Can a network of places be a brand? This is a chapter. In Pike, A. *Brands and branding geographies*, 230-247. Edward Elgar Publishing

Pasquinelli, C. (2014). Branding as urban collective strategy-making: The formation of Newcastle Gateshead's organisational identity. *Urban Studies*, Vol. 51 No. 4, pp. 727-743.

Rainisto, S. K. (2003). *Success factors of place marketing: A study of place marketing practices in Northern Europe and the United States*. Doctoral dissertation, Helsinki University of Technology.

Mu, J., Peng, G., & Love, E. (2008). Interfirm networks, social capital, and knowledge flow. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 12(4), 86-100.

Ritchie, J. B. (1984). Assessing the impact of hallmark events: Conceptual and research issues, *Journal of travel research*, 23, 2-11.

Rowley, T. J. (1997). Moving beyond dyadic ties: A Network Theory of Stakeholder Influences. *The Academy of Management Review*, 22(4), 887-910.

Sarabia-Sanchez, F. J., & Cerda-Bertomeu, M. J. (2016) Place brand developers' perceptions of brand identity, brand architecture and neutrality in place brand development. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 1-14. DOI:10.1057/s41254-016-0017-7

Sánchez, F., & Broudehoux, A. M. (2013). Mega-events and urban regeneration in Rio de Janeiro: planning in a state of emergency. *International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development*, 5(2), 132-153.

Schein, E. H. (1997). The concept of “client” from a process consultation perspective: A guide for change agents. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 10(3), 202-216.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. London: Maurice Temple Smith.

Skinner, H. (2008). The emergence and development of place marketing's confused identity. *Journal of marketing management*, 24(9-10), 915-928. DOI: 10.1362/026725708X381966

Stubbs, J. & Warnaby, G. (2015). “Rethinking Place Branding from a Practice Perspective: Working with Stakeholders”, Kavaratzis, M., Warnaby, G., and Ashworth, G. J., *Rethinking Place Branding*. Springer International Publishing, Switzerland, pp. 101-118.

Sturdy, A. (1997). The consultancy process—an insecure business? *Journal of Management Studies*, 34(3), 389-413.

Szondi, G. (2008). *Public diplomacy and nation branding: Conceptual similarities and*

differences. Netherlands Institute of International Relations' Clingendael'.

Turner, V. (1982). *From Ritual to theatre: the Human Seriousness at Play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal.

Vince, R. & Reynolds, M. (2009). Reflection, Reflective Practice and Organizing Reflection, In Armstrong, S. J., & Fukami, C. V. (Eds.). (2009). *The sage handbook of management learning, education and development*. Sage, pp. 89-103

Warnaby, G. & Medway, D. (2013). “What about the ‘place’ in place marketing?”, *Marketing Theory*, 13(3), 345-363. DOI:10.1177/1470593.11.3492992

Warnaby, G., Medway, D., & Bennison, D. (2010). Notions of materiality and linearity: the challenges of marketing the Hadrian's Wall place ‘product’. *Environment and Planning A*, 42(6), 1365-1382. DOI: 10.1068/a42481

Watzlawick, P., Bavelas, J. B., Jackson, D. D., & O'Hanlon, B. (2011). *Pragmatics of human communication: A study of interactional patterns, pathologies and paradoxes*. WW Norton & Company.

Werr, A., & Styhre, A. (2002). Management consultants-friend or foe? Understanding the ambiguous client-consultant relationship. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 32(4), 43-66.

Whittle, A. (2006). The paradoxical repertoires of management consultancy. *Journal of organizational change management*, 19(4), 424-436. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org.ezp.sub.su.se/10.1108/09534810610676635>

Wood, G. D. (1998). Projects as communities: consultants, knowledge and power. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 16(1), 54-64.

Yin, R. (2013). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. London: Sage Publications.

Zenker, S. & Jacobsen, B. P. (2015). *Inter-Regional Place Branding*, Springer.

Zenker S. & Petersen S. (2014). An integrative theoretical model for improving resident–city identification, *Environment and Planning A*, 46(3), 715-729.

Zenker S., Braun E. & Petersen S. (2017). Branding the destination versus the place: The effects of brand complexity and identification for residents and visitors. *Tourism Management*, 58, 15-27. DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2016.10.008

Zhang, L. & Zhao, S.X. (2009). City branding and the Olympic effect: A case study of Beijing, *Cities*, 26(5), 245-254. DOI: 10.1016/j.cities.2009.05.002