Rescaling a territory through identity: Amsterdam, a global city in the making

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Territories and complexity

Territorial marketing or territorial intelligence offers interesting opportunities in communication research, with the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). It also asks the major question of identity, a key issue that can be linked to ICT and territories. Facing international competition and in order to attract jobs, companies, inhabitants, tourists, cities are setting up territorial marketing strategies. In order to succeed in these strategies, they follow a process of development that identifies the key factors, which will be organized under this territorial marketing scheme. Urban marketing, city marketing as well as city branding fall under the same meaning (Anhlot, 2001, Kotler 2000). The subtile differences between these topics remain unclear: sometimes they focus on the marketing developed to attract tourism, other times on the strategy of combining the distinctive elements of the territory in order to develop a unique brand.

Moreover, as globalization, decentralization and the single European market have increased the circulation of capitals, goods, and people, ICT development, which has an impact on those phenomenons, could be seen as a way allowing people to overstep the geographical borders drawn by the Nation States.

Our approach focuses on communication, trying to show how ICT could be used to federate and mobilize target groups of a specific territory. Afterwards we
can address the question of identity. In France, ONLYLYON is the most ancient example. After analysis, the city has developed a brand, a logo and lots of others actions in order to compete with similar cities.

The first step is to analyse incorporating marketing methodology adapted to a systemic dimension of a territory (Gollain, 2010). Logically, no one can change the landscape and the facades of the territory.

Gollain offers the following definition (translated from French): “the effort of attractiveness of the territories which are facing competition in order to influence the public behaviour in their favour by offering more value to their competitors. A territorial marketing strategy is strong and able to evaluate the territory in order to define their objectiveness of the strategy…”

We propose to add a new angle focused on the mobilization of the stakeholders around the city marketing project: the mobilization of territorial resources applies to competencies that transfer between numerous local stakeholders within diverse cultures. For example universities, commercial tourism or business organizations have different methods, each one relying on a register that is adapted to a specific public.

There are two dimensions useful in characterizing territorial marketing.
The first dimension relies on the interlinking of three levels:

- the physical: landscape, infrastructures, geography, social and economical activities;
- the informative: types of relations between the territory and its hinterland, modalities of connectivity allowed by ICT tools (i.e. band width);
- the identity: symbolic and cultural dimensions, often based on historical and social symbols. For example, the Alsace region near the German border has, among others, two symbols: the first one is a stork, an emblematic bird nesting on rooftops, the second one is a hate-love relation with their German neighbours highlighting the several conflicts throughout history.

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1 « l’effort d’attractivité des territoires à des marchés concurrentiels pour influencer, en leur faveur, le comportement de leurs publics par une offre dont la valeur perçue est durablement supérieure à celles des concurrents. La démarche de marketing territorial est robuste et permet d’évaluer la situation du territoire, de définir les objectifs de la stratégie marketing », « Démarche de marketing territorial : comment faire ? », blog of Vincent Gollain, URL: [www.marketing-territorial.org/categorie-10200980.html](http://www.marketing-territorial.org/categorie-10200980.html), consulted on 24/11/2012, translation by the author.
The second dimension, on which we aim to emphasise, consists of a model with six variables of a communication register. The presence or the lack of each one has a meaning.

**Coordination of stakeholders and communication**

This frame allows us to link or connect physical landscapes and symbols, local and global, through communication and identity. In other words, territorial marketing contributes to highlight a unique space, which could be shared by several types of populations under their own practices of the territory. Physical dimensions are linked with individuals and institutions; informative ones are dimension, which refers to the social group of the territory and its way of communication; the symbolic aspects are delegated to a stakeholder assigned to enhance the brand and the campaign. For instance, the Economical Development Agency of Lyon is in charge of that, under the guidance of a multi-stakeholders board including institutions (chamber of commerce, universities, tourist office, city hall) and private stakeholders such as the airport management company. In brief, to explain how to organise this stakeholders, levels and energies, the type of management of the project is important. Coordination of stakeholders is crucial in a territorial marketing strategy.

Hence, before development of territorial marketing, stakeholders functioned independently, without group coordination, except when some politicians were particularly influential and committed to in the organization of their territory (i.e. Gérard Collomb, mayor of Lyon). Now, with ICT tools, in particular the participative web 2.0, the interactions are essential for the success of a project.

These physical and digital networks lead to mobilize local competencies under a shared brand strategy. Moreover, it also facilitates the collectiveness for the furthering of information and bettering of competencies. For instance, the web solution developed in the region Alsace or in the city of Lyon encapsulates a section devoted to offer or share business opportunities between stakeholders, as the copy of the screen below shows.
Market place of Club des Ambassadeurs d’Alsace

The territories and especially the global and regional cities (i.e. European cities) are evaluated and ranked by several organisations. While traditionally the Anglo-Saxon approach emphasises real estate and economic factors, new criterions involving life quality, mobility or sustainable development, have emerged in order to judge the attractiveness of a city. Five in particular should be mentioned, especially because they include many factors in a multidimensional analysis.

Nowadays a classical analysis (Sassen, 2007) focuses on capital, human or ideas fluctuations. The above are key determinants in order to characterise and identify a city. The capacities to communicate and attract those fluctuations become a significant element in the ranking of a city. A global city offers attractions and stimulating activities (research, business, arts, culture, etc.). It is also a place where capital, information, ideas, products and people can meet and interact. The city is a place of decisions; in particular as it offers a place for the headquarters of global companies (especially in the financial, technological and media sectors) and allows networking, which both enrich themselves and the city.

The perception of a city is underlined and partially determined by mobility, flexible economy, technology and human flux. But in order for a city to succeed and to create a dynamic link between stakeholders, a communication strategy should be implemented.

We have identified six variables, helpful to analysis a territorial marketing

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3 Public or private bodies such as GaWC studies from Loughborough University, (www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc), Global Cities Index from Foreign affairs review (www.foreignpolicy.com/node/373401), Global City Competitiveness Index, From the Economist (www.managementthinking.eiu.com/hot-spots) and Global Power City Index (GPCI) from the Mori foundation (www.mori-m-foundation.or.jp). We also have to mention European cities monitor for Europe (www.europeancitiesmonitor.eu).
communication. They are Web 2.0 platform; events in the country and aboard; system of ambassadors displayed on a voluntary basis; they are gathered in a network promoted by an operator, some other types of networks that are devoted to the sharing of information could be put in place. Moreover a shared brand for city tourists and institutional partners also exists (Arifon, 2008). The last variable, more specific, is the ability to take part in fairs; the two majors one are MIPIM in Cannes (www.mipim.com) and Exporeal in Munich (www.exporeal.net).

Two types of questions

At that point, two types of question emerge:

- First, questions concerning the impact of urban branding on identity such as: “can the urban brand operate as an umbrella, covering a multitude of stakeholders and audiences? Can the urban branding create in the mind of all the people that meet the city, the feeling that they are facing an entity with whom they can settle a relation?” According to the arguments offered by the city, in particular the operator responsible for the brand, how do citizens, tourists and companies construct their relation with the brand, and last, but not least, how do they adopt or develop an “affiliation feeling”, a sense of belonging to that territory? In “I amsterdam” case study, we will look at each of the 6 variables contributing to strengthen an “affiliation feeling”, a way to develop identity.

- Second, questions relating to the appropriate scale of the territory: which situation fits Amsterdam the most? The one of global community linked to the global culture? Or the one of an archipelago of communities where Amsterdam can break away from the geographical and historical context of the Netherlands?

The Amsterdam case

This study is based on competitive intelligence methodology and tools, which presents the communication done by Amsterdam. We have chosen to study this case because of three reasons: Amsterdam is a city classified Alpha in the GPCI index
details; secondly, the city branding strategy of Amsterdam is one of the most ancient in Europe along with Onlylyon; finally, after studying the case of Lyon, we wanted to examine an anglo-saxon approach of city branding.

Re-branding Amsterdam to actualize identity

The package development contains diverse content for the marketing strategy: a shared brand named “I amsterdam”, logo implementation developed for city promotion, institutional bodies and partners. The purpose is to create a shared identity of its 767 000 inhabitants and an attractive perception for 5,3 millions tourists in 2010.

This case study will focus on its city marketing strategy and on the identity of its inhabitants. We will consider how the city defines itself as part of the Netherlands, or as part of a global archipelago with its own identity reaching a similar city-state dimension as during the period of the Hanseatic League. This work develops several aspects that engage urbanism, sociology, communication and territorial marketing.

In 2003, the alderman of Economic Affairs, Dales Geert, asked to evaluate whether or not the implementation of a place branding strategy was necessary, the starting point was to evaluate the rank of Amsterdam in the world.

Although Amsterdam has benefited from its centennial trade tradition and its notoriety for culture and innovation, rankings revealed that even if Amsterdam was usually well spotted abroad and still scored well on several evaluations, its position was threatened by competition from, not only European but, worldwide cities. For example, Amsterdam was declining as being seen as a city of conferences or a major national and international cultural centre, even if the capital was still a significant player in international competition (6th best city to locate a business in the 2005 European Cities Monitor) and Schiphol was elected best airport in the

5 « Population of Amsterdam on the rise », 19/01/2012, website of I amsterdam, URL: www.iamsterdam.com/Population%20of%20Amsterdam%20on%20the%20rise.
world several years as well as best European airport between 1988 and 2003. Let’s note that Amsterdam is also facing competition from cities inside the Netherlands: The Hague is de facto the political centre of the Netherlands and Rotterdam is commercially challenging.

Moreover, while the image of Amsterdam as a tourism destination was founded on two major historic themes, the second had become prevailing and was seen “inappropriate, as it overshadows other more desirable aspects of the city’s aspirations”.

The first historic theme dating back to “The Golden Age” of the Netherlands (17th century) has been held in high regard for its centennial trade tradition and powerful culture and innovation. As the Dutch East India Company conquered the world seas and established colonies all over Asia, Africa and the Americas, Amsterdam exerted its influence because it was, on one hand, the economical centre of the world and, on the other hand, the world’s cultural and scientific centre. Johannes Vermeer’s paintings testify the wealth of the commercial city, composed of canal-side buildings, and its attractiveness for upper-class European migrants.

At the end of the 1960, a second pervasive, but less popular, image of Amsterdam was born, stemming from its culture of liberalism and tolerance: a hippie-Mecca praising sexual liberalism and narcotic indulgence. In order to attract more types of visitors (not only those who come to smoke marihuana in the coffeeshops and to look through the Red-Light-District windows), it was important for Amsterdam to put into practice “the increasingly popular concept of re-imagining or re-branding cities”.

To put in perspective, as a reaction to the exacerbated competition, in the aim to move Amsterdam up in the respected international rankings, to associate the city with wider and more attractive qualities and perceptions in order to attract mobile resources (such as investment capital, companies, visitors and residents), “Amsterdam Partners”, was founded in 2004.
City Marketing organization

Amsterdam Partners defines itself as “a public-private foundation with the primary aim of improving the image of Amsterdam Metropolitan Area as an economic, cultural and creative hotspot in Western Europe amongst relevant international target groups by applying comprehensive city marketing policy. The motto used to support this effort is “I Amsterdam”\(^{17}\)).

As “city management consists of many collective and interconnected actions, which can be conceptualized as an action net and engage many and varied organizations\(^{18}\), this joint committee encompasses the local government services, the Region, the Convenant Partners – which are a large panel of institutions like the Amsterdam Centre for Architecture, Amsterdam Cruise Port, Amsterdam Cultural Institutes, Amsterdam Cultural Ticket Centre, Amsterdam Ports Associations, etc. – and Businesses in order to combine mutually-beneficial initiatives to increase unity within the shared message\(^{19}\).

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\(^{17}\) Amsterdam Partners, « Annual Report 2011 », p. 6, URL: www.iamsterdam.com/%7E/media/DB6E1F7AFF1F4C0EB5B55E3E9937A94B.pdf.


\(^{19}\) Amsterdam Partners, « Annual Report…, id.

The primary aims of Amsterdam partners are to optimise the potential of the Amsterdam brand and of the Amsterdam Partners network as well as to ensure that the “I amsterdam” motto acquires optimal visibility and significance\textsuperscript{21}.

Frans van der Avert, Director of Amsterdam Partners since 2011, has started reorganizing the organisations involved in the city branding of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. The first step has been the creation of Amsterdam Marketing, which gathers together 40 marketing employees from the 4 involved organisations - Amsterdam Partners, Amsterdam Tourism and Convention Board (ATCB), Amsterdam Uitburo (AUB is an agency responsible for the culture in Amsterdam) and amsterdam inbusiness (AIB) - under the same roof\textsuperscript{23}. The second step, which took place on the 1\textsuperscript{st} January 2013, has been the ultimate merger of Amsterdam Partners, ATCB and AUB in Amsterdam Marketing, which is now a single legal entity (AIB couldn’t be part of the merger as it is a municipal institution)\textsuperscript{24}. According to Angelique Lombarts, lector of city marketing and leisure management at the Inholland University for applied sciences in Amsterdam, it will have a huge impact on how the city marketing will be done\textsuperscript{25}.

\textsuperscript{21} Amsterdam Partners, «Annual Report 2011», p. 7, URL : www.iamsterdam.com/%7E/media/DB6E1F7AFF1F4C0EB5B55E3E9937A94B.pdf
\textsuperscript{22} Amsterdam Partners, «Annual Report…, id.
\textsuperscript{23} Amsterdam Partners, «Annual Report…, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{24} Amsterdam Partners, «Annual Report…, id.
\textsuperscript{25} Interview realized on 20/12/12.
Research and vision development

“I amsterdam” is not the first attempt to brand the city. Previous slogans like “Amsterdam has it”, “Amsterdam Capital of Inspiration”, “Amsterdam city of art”, “Small City, Big Business”, “Cool Capital”, etc. were badly managed and unable to express distinctive specific benefits, key values of Amsterdam and long term vision

Therefore the starting point of this new city branding strategy was a comparative study of the city marketing of Barcelona, Berlin, Dublin and Rotterdam and their practices. It highlighted that the city promotion of Amsterdam had to be improved as it didn’t emphasize the advantages as well as other urban areas, it did not make enough international advertising actions of urban improvements, and did not chose the key values capable to catch the essence of the metropolis. Moreover Amsterdam had to focus on some specific sectors and prioritize their actions. Finally, the management of the city image was fragmented as too many organizations were in charge of promoting the city.

Analyze of the city marketing campaign key elements

1) Branding strategy

As preliminary remarks, let’s note first that the targets and objectives of the cities are usually quite similar: attracting companies and competencies, increasing their visibility worldwide, federating stakeholders on its territory to gain maximum leverage from the synergies, etc. Moreover, competition between cities is on worldwide scale and the somehow abolishment of borders by ICT usually justifies the cities choice to lead their city branding campaigns in English as a lingua franca.

POSITIONING

To discover which elements have made the city unique according to the opinion of different actors of the city, a consultancy company combined the realization of interviews to the analysis of specialty literature about urban marketing, statements about Amsterdam from

documents of public policies and travel guides for example\textsuperscript{30}. It resulted from this collection of data that Amsterdam had to express its “versality” through a combination of values and dimensions. On the one hand, the three core values of “spirit of commerce”, “creativity” and “innovation” have been the city’s strengths for centuries. The “I Amsterdam” manifesto, written by an advertising agency, put these values in perspective:

“(…) Amsterdam has many advantages for business enterprises that make use of the excellent transport and distribution facilities offered by Schiphol Airport and the Port of Amsterdam. Schiphol Airport has been voted Europe’s number 1 airport for passenger services several times in the last decade. International businesses find Amsterdam as a logical and convenient location for head offices, business conference and meetings. Amsterdam is a tech nerve centre and home to the AMS-IX (Amsterdam Internet Exchange), Europe’s largest Internet hub. Several companies base their European and Global headquarters in Amsterdam including: Heineken, Philips, ABN AMRO, ING, Yahama, Canon, Mitsubishi, Cisco, Numico and TPG/TNT.

(…) Furthermore, Amsterdam’s creative, intellectual and cultural contributions are significant and respected. With some of Europe’s most important museums, including the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh, Amsterdam is a natural choice for inspiration. Amsterdam’s tolerance, multicultural neighbourhoods\textsuperscript{31} and broad diversity provide a fertile environment for creative people. Amsterdam is also the leading centre for the study and development of life sciences and advanced research facilities and expertise. Fashion and industrial design have established Amsterdam as a creative city with a sense of humour and style.

Amsterdam’s creativity and innovation combine, of course, in it’s handling of water and existence below the sea level. Every day is a powerful reminder of Amsterdam’s intelligent use of resources, engineering and technology to provide a beautiful and functional city surrounded by water. Very few cities in the world can mix such global, commercial competitiveness with a centre that is so liveable, compact and accessible. (…)\textsuperscript{32}.

A good illustration of how the city branding campaign combines Amsterdam renown for

\textsuperscript{31} « Amsterdam boasts 178 nationalities”, in « Population of Amsterdam on the rise », 19/01/2012, website of I amsterdam, URL: www.iamsterdam.com/Population%20of%20Amsterdam%20on%20the%20rise.
\textsuperscript{32} « What is I amsterdam », website of I amsterdam, URL: www.iamsterdam.com/en-GB/Amsterdam-Partners/i- amsterdam/what-is-i-amsterdam, consulted on 27/12/2012.
being a welcoming place to all immigrants to its core values can be seen in the promotional video called “I am… unique”\textsuperscript{33}.

On the other hand, the sixteen dimensions represented in the spidergraph below have been considered as priorities and opportunities for the current image of Amsterdam and its re-imaging\textsuperscript{34}. Among the 16 dimensions, six have been considered as priorities by the marketing organization. As City of culture, City of canals, City of meetings are already strong, the city will continue to benefit from them. City of knowledge, Business city and Residential city need strengthening and investments to benefit from them later on\textsuperscript{35}. The spidergraph shows (but it is also perceptible in the manifesto) that Amsterdam wants to weaken its image of city of “sex, drug and R&R”, which has however largely contributed to its success.

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\textit{Spidergraph of the 16 dimensions of the Amsterdam brand}\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{33} I Amsterdam, « I am… unique » (video), 2012, URL: \url{www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsrAooQGIXRQ}, consulted on 27/12/2012.

\textsuperscript{34} City of Amsterdam, 2004, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{35} Amsterdam Partners, «The Making of the city marketing of Amsterdam», p. 17, URL: \url{www.iamsterdam.com/~/media/PDF/the-making-of-the-city-marketing-definitief.pdf}.

\textsuperscript{36} « The Making of the city marketing of Amsterdam », p. 16, URL: \url{www.iamsterdam.com/~/media/PDF/the-making-of-the-city-marketing-definitief.pdf}. 
TARGETS

According to Floor Baster, “who do we want to have in our city?” is a founding question of a city branding strategy. Besides existing and potential, national and international companies, visitors and inhabitants, which are the usual targets of a city branding strategy, Amsterdam has chosen to focus on seven specific target groups:

- the business decision makers of international companies established in the Amsterdam area like ABN Amro, Heineken, Hitachi, ING, KLM, Philips, etc;
- the logistic service providers;
- the creative industry: design companies in the media, content producers, ICT, fashion, production and business service providers;
- the knowledge workers who are usually young, talented creative people and scientists attracted by the knowledge and business climate in the city and its quality of life;
- the active city dwellers are residents like empty nesters, two-income couples, homosexual couples, young professionals or students attracted by Amsterdam facilities and atmosphere;
- the international visitors as foreign tourists as congress participants especially in 2011 from the USA (New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston), Japan (Tokyo), China (Beijing, Shanghai), India (Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore), and Europe (Russia, Berlin, Barcelona);
- the inhabitants of Amsterdam area seen as ambassadors for the city.

Nevertheless, according to principles of social justice, political balance, future security and sustainability, a city should not be in position to rule out certain groups of people, unlike commercial companies. But according to Oudenaarspsen in its 2007 study “Amsterdam TM, the city as a Business”, the drive to give Amsterdam a distinctive relevant position goes hand in hand with selective processes of inclusion of the businesses and residents with purchasing power and exclusion of the less well-educated: the non creative, non innovative and less

enterprising people, who are not able to showcase the 3 core values the city wants to reflect. In addition, consequences on the design and layout of the living environment of the residents can be expected as locations and infrastructures of business have become a priority for the city administration and the urban planning department. For example, the city has undertaken several civil works, which support the “spirit of commerce” and businesses as core value and key target of its branding strategy. The “Zuidas” at the southern of Amsterdam is 270 hectares converted into a new urban centre for multinationals dedicated to commerce and knowledge development.

NEW SLOGAN AND LOGO

An agency was hired to develop a new slogan and logo for the city, which would underpin the whole city marketing campaign. Instead of focusing on one or two specific dimensions like previous slogans as “City of...” which additionally excluded certain kind of audiences, they choose the motto “I amsterdam” to carry the brand. This unique slogan should have the advantage of being able to express the entire range of the key values and dimensions of the capital while allowing all the targets to build on their own way an identity relation with the Amsterdam brand. Visually, “I am” is highlighted in red. In this way, the city is giving a front seat role to the citizens, tourists or companies’ involvement in the city marketing project. The “I amsterdam” logo has been successfully declined in an urban furniture which is one of the most photographed spots in Amsterdam: the more than 2 meters high letters sit on the Museumplein in front of the famous Rijksmuseum. A second set of letters has been installed in Schiphol airport since July 2012 to welcome visitors and a third one is regularly moving throughout the city.

However several remarks can be pointed out. First, we may have doubts about the ability of the motto to express Amsterdam chosen core values and dimensions. Moreover, their choice has been made on the assumption that the slogan was clear, short, powerful, easy to remember.

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and with great potential for people to identify with. Then, who more than the citizens of Amsterdam themselves could feel they “are” Amsterdam? Was it wise therefore to pick up a slogan, which relies on an English wordplay while the national language is Dutch\textsuperscript{46}? Especially as there has been a “comforting agreement that the first desired result of Amsterdam’s marketing effort and a necessary condition for the next phases is to make its residents believe in the core values of the city, “feel” the city’s brand and be proud of their city\textsuperscript{47}, in the aim to create from the many “I” a unity who speaks with one voice and convey the city discourse to its main targets: international businessmen and tourists. But it seems, according to what Angelique Lombarts says, that they have been kind of forgotten during the first phases of the city marketing campaign\textsuperscript{48}.

While “a brand is not a message, but the context in which messages are received” (Anholt 2006, 22 article sur coffeshop) the branding strategy of Amsterdam has been coordinated with other actions: the setting up of a Web 2.0 platform, a network, ambassadors and events.

\textbf{2) Web 2.0 platforms}

The Web 2.0 platforms under the name “I amsterdam” (Portal, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, Youtube channel, Smartphone’s applications) are not only window displays but reinforcements of the city branding strategy in a cumulative approach.

The institutional website www.iamsterdam.com is a co-production of the City of Amsterdam, Amsterdam Partners, Amsterdam Tourism and Convention Board (ATCB), the Amsterdam Uitburo, amsterdam inbusiness and the Expatcenter, as well as a combination of their websites.

In 2011, its number of visitors increased by 28.5% to reach around 4.4 million\textsuperscript{49}. Amongst those visitors, 70% were new against 30% of repeated visits, which are beneficial for continuity\textsuperscript{50}. Investments in search engine optimization (SEO) have been done but a research about “Amsterdam” on Google redirects the user to the “I amsterdam” portal only as a fourth result, after advertising about Amsterdam and Wikipedia. A new content management system

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\textsuperscript{46} Kavaratzis M. and Ashworth G.J., « Partners in…, id. \\
\textsuperscript{47} Kavaratzis M. and Ashworth G.J., « Partners in…, p.21. \\
\textsuperscript{48} Interview realised on 20/12/12. \\
\textsuperscript{49} Amsterdam Partners, « Annual Report 2011 », p. 18, URL: http://www.iamsterdam.com/%7E/media/DB6E1F7AFF1F4C0EB5B55E3E9937A94B.pdf \\
\textsuperscript{50} Amsterdam Partners, « Annual Report…, id. 
\end{flushright}
CMS) fully launched in May 2012 has also been installed to improve profiling of users and integrate more deeply the social media platforms.51

"I AMSTERDAM" WEBSITE IN NUMBERS (2011)52

The general aspect of the website is successfully completed, with numerous serious information about the activities and services provided by the city. The graphic charter is based on the red and white colors, which stems from the “I amsterdam” letters. The home page is dynamic, with pictures changing continuously and showcasing media content. Its approach is “user-centric” with under tabs speaking directly to users (ex. “plan your trip”, “book your stay” or “setting up your business”). Moreover, the numerous links as well as the internal search engine make the searches easier. As the website is a platform aimed at supporting the “I amsterdam” branding strategy, the page untitled “What is I amsterdam”53 presents the manifesto, which highlights the key values studied before.

Even if it claims to be “a website for everyone”, it also officially announces its aim of “providing visitors with everything they need to know to travel, live, do business and take in a

51 Amsterdam Partners, « Annual Report…, id.
52 Amsterdam Partners, « Annual Report…, id.
53 « What is I Amsterdam », website of I amsterdam, URL: www.iamsterdam.com/en-GB/Amsterdam-Partners/i-amsterdam/what-is-i-amsterdam, consulted on 27/12/2012.
A wide variety of cultural activities in Amsterdam”54, which explains that the default version of the website is in English. In comparison to the Dutch, French, Spanish, Italian and German versions, it is also the most complete one.

The website is divided into 3 tabs. First, the “experience” tab, which is handled by both the Amsterdam Tourism & Convention Board (ATCB) and the Amsterdam Uitburo (AUB), is aimed at tourists. It gives classic tourist information about shops, exhibitions, shows, concerts, festivals, nightlife, restaurants, etc and offers online booking services for hotel rooms or for the I amsterdam city card (it offers a detailed city map, unlimited use of public transportation, free entrance to Amsterdam’s best museums and attractions, discounts, etc.)55. This section is available in English, Dutch, French, Spanish, Italian, and German.

Secondly, the “living” tab presents “the necessary whos, whats and hows of living in Amsterdam”56 like registration, tax ruling, family and health matters, education, housing, transportation, etc. It has been managed by the City of Amsterdam and the expatcenter. Its “expatcenter” under section is particularly intended to new inhabitants by assisting them in the process of settling in. However, its teleservices are not enough developed to do administrative matters online and this section can be resume to a condensation of information57. The “living” section, only available in English, shows once more that the website, as the city branding strategy, is directed to an international audience. If the citizens of Amsterdam want to have information in Dutch about living, working and spending free time in Amsterdam, they will surf on the website of Amsterdam’s municipality www.amsterdam.nl, which automatically switch to the “I amsterdam” website if you want to consult it in English.

Third, “business” is a section available in English, Dutch and Chinese, devoted to “news and resources for professionals in hotel development, meetings and conventions, the film industry and international companies interested in setting up shops in Amsterdam Metropolitan Area58”.

“I amsterdam” app for Smartphone’s has also been developed as well as an “I amsterdam to go” app downloaded 60 000 times in 2011, which is a lighter version that could be quickly accessed\(^59\).

Icons situated on the top of the website, redirect users to Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. The social networks allow them to interact (questions asked, tips offered, etc.) and discuss with the brand, which is not possible on the website. The homepage also presents a box with the latest discussions on the Facebook page as well as the number of people who like the “I amsterdam” page.

Since January 2013, more than 122 000 people have liked the “I Amsterdam” Facebook page. According to statistics of 2011, when you could still be fan of the page, only 16% of the fans were living in The Netherlands. Fans were relatively young: 32% were between 18 and 24 years old and 37% were between 25 and 34 years old\(^60\).

However the brand has another official Facebook page in Dutch, “Iamsterdam.nl”, which targets the Dutch citizens of Amsterdam in particular. If the two pages are quiet similar, the international one is more regularly updated and its photo albums are better organized than the Dutch page. Liked by nearly 6 000 people at the beginning of 2013, the Dutch page is less popular than the international one. Its bad referencing can explain it: it can only be found by typing its exact name in the Facebook research browser.

\(^{59}\) Amsterdam Partners, « Annual Report 2011 », p. 20, URL : [http://www.iamsterdam.com/%7E/media/DB6E1F7AFF1F4C0EB5B55E3E9937A94B.pdf](http://www.iamsterdam.com/%7E/media/DB6E1F7AFF1F4C0EB5B55E3E9937A94B.pdf)

\(^{60}\) Amsterdam Partners, « Annual Report 2011 », p. 19, URL : [http://www.iamsterdam.com/%7E/media/DB6E1F7AFF1F4C0EB5B55E3E9937A94B.pdf](http://www.iamsterdam.com/%7E/media/DB6E1F7AFF1F4C0EB5B55E3E9937A94B.pdf)
The international Twitter account, @iamsterdam, has 28 000 followers since January 2013 and have sent about 3 000 tweets while the Dutch one, @iamsterdam.nl has been followed by 160 people and has “tweet” about 330 times. The common strategy is to “retweet” messages concerning the Amsterdam Metropolitan area, provided as by the city as well as by its Twitter users. Like for the Facebook page, “I amsterdam” brand has split its pages aimed at its tourists from those aimed at its citizens. On both social networks, the Dutch pages are less updated and less followed.

Therefore, we can conclude that the use of social networks to strengthen the identity of the citizen of Amsterdam is less effective than the other use aimed at strengthening the attractiveness of the city towards the tourists.

3) Ambassadors

The city branding strategy didn’t benefit from a formal network of ambassadors of the city, as we can find it in Lyon (www.onlylyon.org/role-et-avantages-17-1.html) or in the Alsace region (www.ambassadeurs-alsace.com). A network of ambassadors could be defined as citizens of a city (living in that city or in a foreign country), businessmen, chief executives, company managers, university professors, researchers, leading figures in the world of arts and entertainment, etc. who have decided to join a network of ambassadors to contribute to the local and international promotion of their city. However, Virginie Mahé mentioned in her

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2010 MA thesis the existence of a former network of ambassadors, called “I ambassadors”, which surprisingly no longer exists today.\textsuperscript{63}

Along the same line as the promoting goal of the ambassadors, the Hospitality project was launched in 2004 to make the city more hospitable and welcoming for foreigners. Therefore, it required the implication and training of some very influential groups on the urban image, such as the cab drivers.\textsuperscript{64}

4) Network

Amsterdam Economic Board is a joint initiative allowing collaboration between governmental agencies, knowledge institutions and the trade and industry sector to make the educational and employment opportunities Amsterdam can offer more visible.\textsuperscript{65} It is an additional way to enforce the city branding core values of innovation and commercial spirit.

Besides creating projects and supporting existing ones to further develop, the Board heads Amsterdam Innovation Motor (AIM), which is an initiative of KennisKring Amsterdam (Amsterdam Knowledge Network Foundation) initiated in 2004.\textsuperscript{66} AIM is a network established to promote innovation, cooperation and new business in the Amsterdam region by focussing on the development of sectors related to the creative industries, ICT, life sciences, financial and business services and sustainability.\textsuperscript{67} Angelique Lombarts explains that to make the network efficient, AIM organizes every month informational or educational meetings in addition to the Amsterdam Economic Board meeting which occurs two or three times a year, where all the members of the network can meet.\textsuperscript{68}

Let’s note that the “I amsterdam” website does not mention the existence of that network. Moreover, information about the Amsterdam Economic Board is only available in Dutch, which seems strange according to their willingness to attract international companies.


\textsuperscript{65} Amsterdam Partners, « Annual Report 2011 », p. 8, URL: www.iamsterdam.com/%7E/media/DB6E1F7AFF1F4C0EB5B55E3E9937A94B.pdf.

\textsuperscript{66} « About AIM », website of Amsterdam Innovative Motor, URL: www.aimsterdam.nl/english, consulted on 04/01/2013

\textsuperscript{67} « About AIM », id.

\textsuperscript{68} Interview realised on 20/12/2012.
5) **Events in the country and abroad**

The “I amsterdam” motto is also connected to a large range of events, festivals, congresses, exhibitions and other activities taking place both in Amsterdam and in the defined target countries, to attract public and generate high media coverage. This strategy allows the brand to gain visibility and increased significance through its core values of creativity, innovation and commercial spirit, while “the target groups experience first-hand what the brand is all about”. Moreover, combining promotion of those actions on its social networks results in additional brand exposure. That is the reason why it “is one of the most significant selection criteria behind association with the “I Amsterdam” motto”.

In addition, Amsterdam partners along with amsterdam inbusiness and the ATCB works with private partners in the target countries to generate international multimedia campaigns as support of certain events.

All events are not organized directly by Amsterdam Partners: those with an international reputation and exposure that combine the city marketing core values can be sponsored for marketing and public relations. In exchange of being communicated and executed under the “I amsterdam” name, these events benefit from the association with the “I amsterdam” brand. However, events that do not fit with the numerous criteria of Amsterdam Partners fall by the wayside.

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69 Amsterdam Partners, « Annual Report 2011 », p. 9, URL: [www.iamsterdam.com/7E/media/DB6E1F7AFF1F4C0EB5B55E3E9937A94B.pdf](http://www.iamsterdam.com/7E/media/DB6E1F7AFF1F4C0EB5B55E3E9937A94B.pdf).

70 Amsterdam Partners, « Annual Report…, id.

71 Amsterdam Partners, « Annual Report…, id.


Amongst events organised in Amsterdam, let’s speak about the project “Amsterdam 2013”. Throughout the year, the city will celebrate 10 milestones and anniversaries: the 400th anniversary of Amsterdam’s Canal Ring, the reopening of the Rijksmuseum, the 40 years of the Van Gogh Museum, the 125 years of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, the 225 years of Felix Meritis, the 175 years of Artis Royal Zoo, the 100th anniversary of Frans Hals Museum, the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery as well as the 400th years of trade between the Netherlands and Russia. These celebrations, profiled in a line-up of art exhibitions, concerts, new ways of seeing the city, processions or international sporting events, are a way to allow citizens and tourists “to explore and participate in the past, present and future of the city”.

When it comes to international activities in its target countries, “I amsterdam” is very active. A campaign called “New Amsterdam 2009” occurred in New York to celebrate the discovery of the North-American coast by Henry Hudson in the early 17th century and the establishment of the “New Amsterdam” colony. Amsterdam partners organized a series of events related to this theme throughout the year, generating a lot of visibility and brand significance for the “I amsterdam” motto, which culminated in September with among others an outdoor campaign in the Metrolights, bus shelter, WFC in lower Manhattan, a large “I amsterdam” banner on a ferry, a set of 3D “I amsterdam” letters on Governors Island and another moving set in Lower Manhattan, adverts in local papers, 20 “I amsterdam” bicycles at the Boulevard of Broken Dreams.

77 « Amsterdam 2013 »…, id.
The collaborative strategy on events appears to be more intended to tourists and investors attraction than citizen’s commitment.

Elements of conclusion: new identity, new borders, new marketing

*A city brand, for what purpose and for who?*

To answer the questions concerning the impact of urban branding on identity, as the first goal of the city branding strategy has been to attract tourists and investors in Amsterdam, it could contribute to reinforce the identity and civility of the citizens of Amsterdam as a ripple effect. But, until now, our research results show the contrary. Indeed, the case shows that citizens have not been the main targets, even if the marketing discourse mentions them. This could be one of the limits of city marketing strategies, as they focus on specific targets i.e. high potential workers, business leaders. According to Angelique Lombarts, who holds a chair of city marketing and leisure management at the Inholland University for applied sciences in Amsterdam, Amsterdam Marketing has now taken a new direction in its strategy, especially as they have achieved their objectives in term of rankings on the tourists level: “they were more focusing on tourists and companies, but I think with the new director, Franz Van der Avert, they really focus on citizens and on companies, and then on tourists. In the beginning, it was really difficult to find out if city marketing was really different of tourists marketing. At that time, the tourism marketing organization was the most powerful
organization involved in the city marketing: they had around hundred employees working on tourism while the real city marketing organization had only eight people. They imposed what they thought city marketing was. Now, they are really addressing the focus on citizens; they really put them on the first place or at least, on a place as important as foreigners and tourists.Only a detailed survey of the citizen’s perceptions could prove that, since 2004, their city marketing strategy has contributed to reinforce the identity of their citizens.

**About borders and identity**

The second dimension of our research has been related to the appropriate scale of the territory and the most suitable situation of Amsterdam, with its hinterland as well as within the Netherlands. We have noticed that documents and information provided do not ever mentioned that Amsterdam belongs to or is linked with the Netherlands. For several centuries, State, citizens and territories were used to live in and travel into or across physical borders. It seems clear that borders are no longer appearing as some scholars scrutinising the rise of Internet or the multiplication of low cost companies. A double phenomenon has emerged: mental and physical reconstruction of borders, such as migrant’s regulation and walls between communities, like the structures between United States and Mexico borders, and the development of a new type of “network borders”. “In three domains, private life, professional life and geopolitics, “network’s borders” could serve to get round and to cross obstacles by superposition of a new hybrid space border which overflow institutional limits and blockages of physical borders.

It is exactly what this article tries to do: presenting stakeholders and actions engaged into a communication strategy, dealing with digital borders, with physical competition between territories, and in fine elaborating and reconstructing an identity, more of less adopted by inhabitants, tourists and businessmen. Since the central or nation State remains absent, a city like Amsterdam develops itself in a relative autonomy.

Identity is a very complex question that we will concisely discuss here. According to Hobsbawn (1983), numerous traditions rely on continuity and develop a link with the past that could be fictive. We have seen that the core values developed by the city marketing of

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79 Interview realised on 20/12/12.
80 A line separating two countries or other areas. Concise Oxford English Dictionary © 2008 Oxford University Press.
81 To go further: Hermes n° 63 « Murs et frontières », more on www.iscc.cnrs.fr (in French)
82 Perriaut, J., Hermes n°63, p. 158, our translation.
Amsterdam have been found according to that idea. Therefore, as city marketing usually found itself on historical values, the risk could be to freeze the perception or the image of the city\textsuperscript{83}.

Another reflexion on identity could be done on Habermas reflexion’s on public sphere and constitutional patriotism to build societies and sense of belongings. As citizenship and national identity are the result of the history and the empirical situations and ad multiculturalism is increasing, people, nations and cities face problems to live together under universal principles. One of the solutions could be to develop a shared project around common political principles. It could be a way to take into account cultural differences inside a community. If we look at the reasons of the implementation of a territorial marketing, we may think that a project shared at the size of a town or a medium sized territory represent a type of solution to solve that question.

\textit{A critical discourse on territorial marketing}

Amsterdam as well as other cities defined itself as a creative city where innovations are possible. For a certain type of citizens, it could become a reality or at least, a motivation to settle there. It is the key argument of the work of Richard Florida\textsuperscript{84}. Edward Glaser, in a recent book, has also such arguments\textsuperscript{85}. He focused on the liberal model of cities management, arguing that creativity and flows of ideas are better components than constructions and infrastructures. We would like to stress that this Anglo-Saxon liberal approach is the dominant one, as we have noticed in the ranking methodology. This guides us to criticize city marketing as it is only devoted to the creative class and as the other classes fall by the wayside.

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