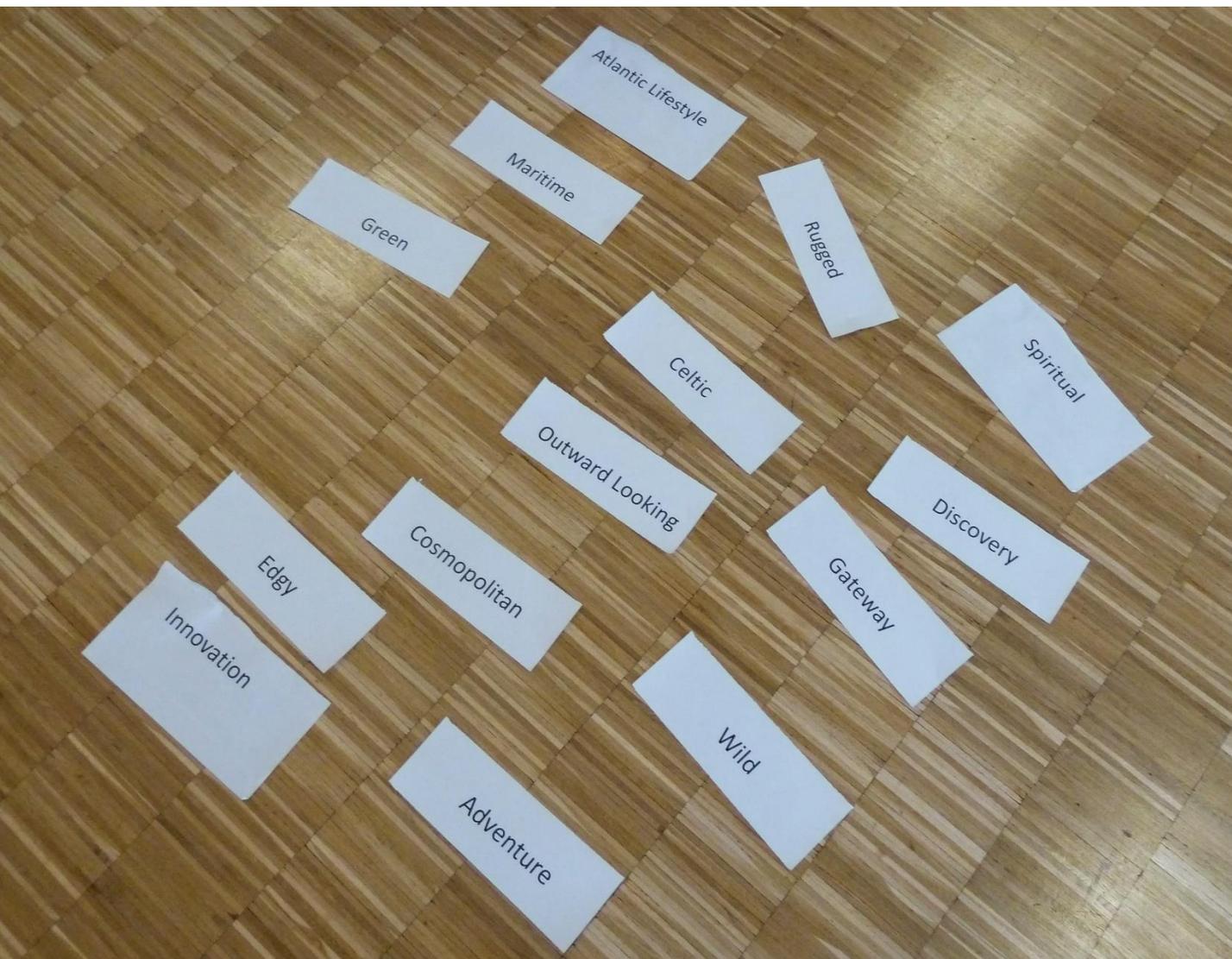


Assessment of the potential and options for the co-branding of cities and regions of the Atlantic Arc



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for the co-branding of cities and regions of the
Atlantic Arc

Final report

To Xavier Gizard in memoriam

Former Secretary General of the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities

This report has been coordinated by Roger Pride, Managing Partner at HEAVENLY Group Ltd. roger.pride@weareheavenly.com, in collaboration with Boris Lefebvre blefebvre@grupotaso.com and Miguel Rivas mrivas@grupotaso.com from Grupo TASO. Professor Nigel Morgan, from Surrey University, has also provided relevant inputs to this report.

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1. Executive summary

Geographical scale management is an issue to deal with in place branding, which leads to the question of multi-level governance. In relation to this, transnational coalitions or cross-border city alliances for co-branding and co-marketing might make sense to multiply city assets and attractiveness factors or just pooling resources to best competing globally. Nevertheless, it's a considerable challenge, in terms of both brand content and agenda, and only a few initiatives have come up in Europe so far, e.g. the Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai.

Precisely, one of the AT.Brand tasks is to explore whether the Atlantic area is a workable scale for co-branding. In this respect, many are sceptical on the possibility to get a sort of umbrella brand for the Atlantic Area given its extremely high diversity. But such an attempt makes sense coming from the EU Atlantic Programme. Anyhow, a systematic try of this kind has never been tried. That is, an attempt with method, by means of place branding concepts and techniques, in order to unveil commonalities within the macro-region and sketch a potential shared roadmap.

What is clear is that cities seem to be in a special position for co-branding, and actually recent experiences of cross-border co-branding have been mostly undertaken by cities. That is the case of the ONE-BSR project, by which a number of capitals such as Helsinki, Hamburg, Riga, Stockholm, Warsaw and St. Petersburg are prospecting to pool resources for jointly branding and marketing the Baltic Sea Region, although with uncertain results so far.

The Nordic Region provides a different scenario. National governments of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland, which have developed a strong inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary cooperation for the past 50 years, have recently decided to capitalize on the positive image of Scandinavia and further exploit and enrich it with a "strategy for International Branding of the Nordic Region for 2015-2018".

In this context, the question of potential co-branding of the Atlantic Area was addressed as an exploratory and honest exercise by all the cities and experts involved in the AT.Brand project. While a key element for successful city branding is to identify what makes a city special and different, the specific challenge in co-branding is to assess if there is value in identifying what links cities together. This means a huge difference with individual branding and involves a different approach.

The basic assumption for this exercise was posed by Roger Pride, who said that "at the heart of every great brand is Truth, not some fabricated marketing story, substance-free or forced because of circumstances. A truth you can throw rocks at, scratch deep below its surface, shake violently with both hands and it still remains intact. And in case that truth exists within the Atlantic Area, will individual cities find value and benefit from it?"

To find answers and perspectives to both questions, a wide consultation process was carried out with a variety of stakeholders in the macro-region, mainly local and regional

authorities, but also transnational networks, EU institutions and individual experts. Almost 50 stakeholders gave relevant feedback to this non easy exercise, along with the AT.Brand partners.

Other evidence to bear in mind is that there is no single nor indeed consistent interpretation of the Atlantic Façade and dimension ¹. It appears that perspectives vary not just from the geographical location of the cities consulted on this issue, but they also depend on the position and roles of the individuals interviewed. However, there is a range of key perspectives which can be grouped as follows:

- The Geo-Political Dimension.
- The Maritime Dimension.
- The Transatlantic Dimension.
- The Character Dimension.
- The Lifestyle Dimension.

The role of the Atlantic in current messaging and brand narratives ranges from being “central” for some cities and regions to being “non-existent” for other places. The key determinant of the degree of use of “the Atlantic” is the extent to which the place in question sees itself as being on the Atlantic Coast. Basically some places which are part of the Atlantic Arc, as defined in European political terms, do not always see themselves as being part of the Atlantic in terms of popular culture and everyday language ².

The second objective of the co-branding exploration was to consider a potential joint roadmap of initiatives in relation to branding and marketing the Atlantic Area, on a voluntary basis. In that context, the exercise to set up the basis for a common action plan at the scale of the Atlantic Arc had to be realistic and pragmatic.

The research carried out allowed to design a Framework Model for Transnational Co-Branding, which itself is an added value in the field of place branding. It is made up of 4 key elements: Facilitating Factors, Motivating Factors, Collaboration Outcomes and Inhibiting Factors – see the table below.

¹ On the diverse interpretations on the limits of the Atlantic area within the EU, see Guirao-Espiñera, Tamara (2014), The Atlantic Arc: New Translations for an Old Identity. In *Debater a Europa*, Nº 11, 2014: pp. 309 – 326.

² On this issue see Balbastre, Olivier (2010) De l'Arc a l'Espace Atlantique Europeen. Réflexions Methodologiques a Propos d'un Territoire en Construction. PhD thesis, Universite de Nantes. Based on a toponymical analysis, the author shows that, besides the French seashore, only West Ireland, Galicia in Spain and Lisboa and the Algarve region in Portugal have a relatively more intensive use of the term “Atlantic”. The UK case is remarkable, with only the strip Cornwall-Plymouth standing out.

Framework model for transnational co-branding

<p>Facilitating Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A common perception of interests & agencies with shared philosophies (shared benefits & responsibilities) • A common identity and/or geography (similar markets, complementary products) • A well-balanced cooperation method involving stakeholders (solid networks & good communication) • The involvement of the EU as trigger and facilitator 	<p>Collaboration Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy realisation (increased product portfolio, greater place competitiveness, formal marketing & brand management programmes, wider market research, cost efficiency) • Organisational learning (knowledge transfer, organisational innovation) • Social capital building (enhanced relationships and networks)
<p>Motivating Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing product offering • Leveraging each place's offerings • Recognising the significance of knowledge transfer • Cost reductions. 	<p>Inhibiting Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differing partner priorities • Different market directions • Lack of daring actions & focus • Resource constraints • Stakeholder risk • Conflicting stakeholder interests

Source: Nigel Morgan, Surrey University

Building on the previous considerations and findings, three main approaches have been identified as strategic options for transnational co-branding and co-marketing across the Atlantic Area. We mean pragmatic options, with some potential to add value and be translated into concrete working agendas.

- The Place Brand Approach: an attempt of conventional place-brand around the “Unbounded Spirit” idea and narrative.

Narrative

From Northern most tip of Scotland to the South of the Iberian Peninsula our region has been shaped by the Ocean.

The Atlantic winds greening our land and the sea bringing prospects to our cities. At times wild, often beautiful and always fascinating the Atlantic coast of Europe is one of the world's most absorbing regions.

For hundreds of years people left those shores in search of the new hope and new lives. Our cities were a door to the New World. A gateway to opportunity and discovery. That pioneering spirit and openness to the world lives on today.

But one thing has changed. No longer do people need to leave. They are drawn here. They chose to live here. Enticed by the Atlantic way of life, a mild climate and a wealth of prospects. Others simply visit us, they experience our culture, share our stories and taste our produce.

Our horizons have always been unrestricted and today our vision is unlimited and our ambition unbounded

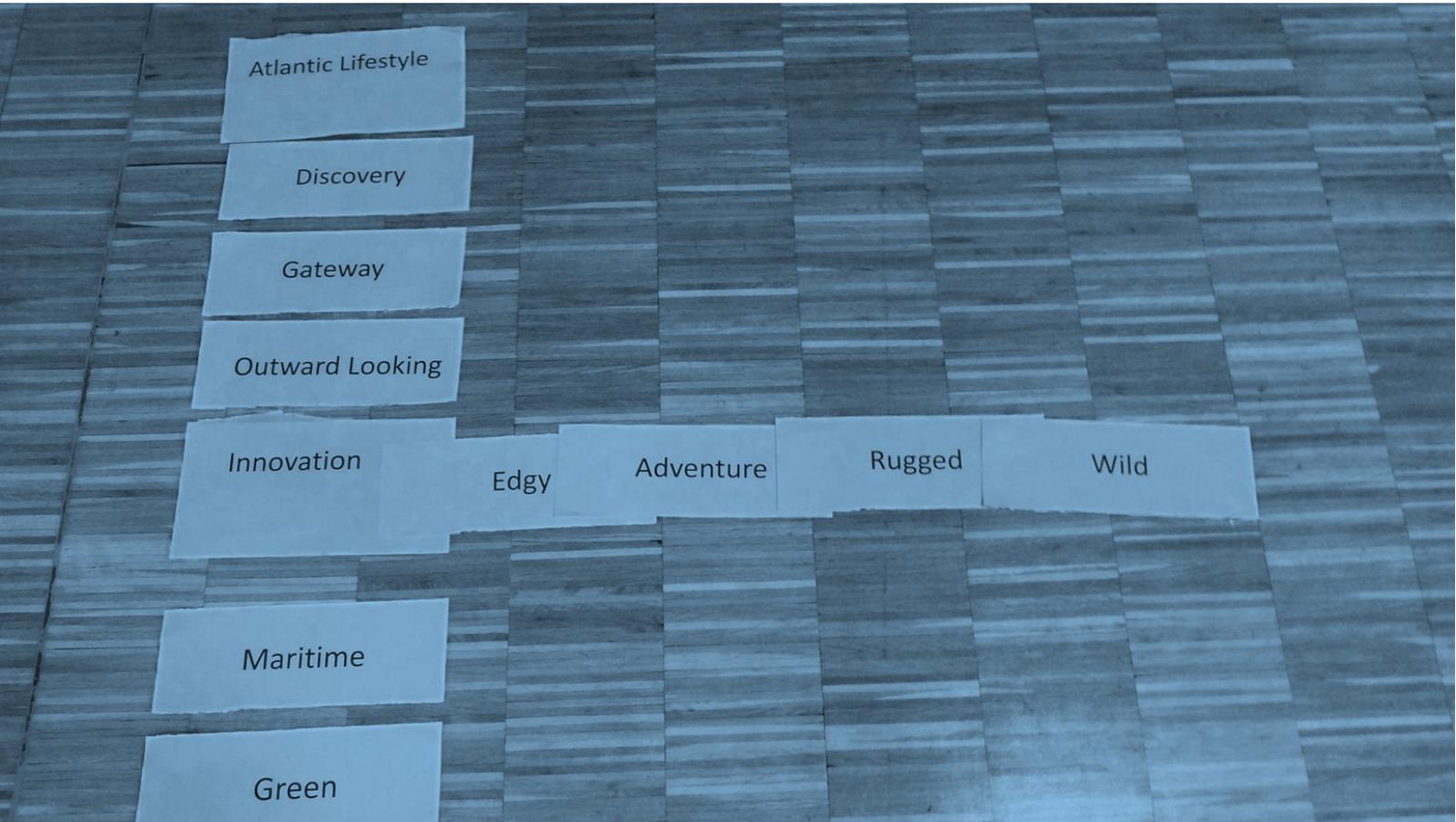
- The Cause Approach: an option focused on the potential to work together to promote projects (as a sort of “brand filter”) which improves our understanding of the threats to the (Atlantic) Ocean and of the opportunities it presents – namely the concept of blue growth.
- The Event approach: an initiative which would seek to elevate the status of major events organised within Atlantic cities and regions, with 3 possible options in turn:
 - Elevation. Under this option, criteria would be set to determine how an event could achieve “Atlantic” status, providing benefits, such as increased scale and impact, improved marketing reach, higher status and potential additional funding. The hosts of such Atlantic events would collaborate and share learnings and experience.
 - Selection. In this option, cities would be awarded the “Atlantic” title for a period of time, according to potential event categories – e.g. the Atlantic City of Food, the Atlantic City of Music or the Atlantic City of Sustainable Living.
 - Umbrella. This option would consist in organizing themed Atlantic Years – e.g. Atlantic Year of Water sports, Atlantic Year of Export, etc. All Atlantic Arc cities would be invited to develop initiatives in support of the designated theme. The cities involved would also act as a marketing network for the theme and the individual initiatives and themes.

The various experiences of place co-branding teach us that it takes time to engage stakeholders, effectively define the relevant scope of collaboration and build sufficient mutual trust. We inevitably deal with a painstaking and innovative process, which with no doubt should be progressive, on the basis of well-focused strategic areas, a “coalition of the willing” and successful landmarks.

More than pushing for a common strategy, the relevant steps forward should focus on generating new projects. Further initiatives will have to pay particular attention to the cross-cutting issue of participation, involvement and engagement and the necessity to deliver concrete and tangible outputs.

On the one hand, the 2014-2020 Atlantic Area provides the possibility of EU funding for further initiatives, which appears as an inevitable condition if we attend the views and opinions taken from the consultation process.

On the other hand, the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities, as established body, should take in principle on a leading role to build on the work achieved by the AT.Brand project and be a key interlocutor for the emergence of the new project(s). Another important asset in this respect, is the project idea around the “Cause Approach” presented by Bretagne Développement Innovation (BDI), one of the external stakeholders which actively participated in the AT.Brand consultation process.



2. Introduction

AT.Brand is a project on innovative city branding co-funded by the Interreg IVB-Atlantic Programme. It is led by Dublin City Council in collaboration with Liverpool, Cardiff, La Rochelle, San Sebastian, Faro and the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities. AT.Brand has been designed to tackle three main goals:

- A “learning by interacting” process for practitioners, policy decision makers and related stakeholders, on innovative place branding. It has included state-of-play reports on the partner cities, a toolkit on innovative city brand management and thematic workshops.
- A tangible, direct impact at local level by means of innovative actions in each of the partner cities, with high potential for transferability.
- An exploration of the potential for co-branding the Atlantic area, in terms of content and strategy.

From the very beginning, this last pillar proved to have a significant component of experimentation. It was a real challenge, aimed at exploring the ground for a long-term strategy for transnational co-branding, including both building an appealing narrative, suitable for the whole Atlantic façade, and basis for a potential joint roadmap.

Although creating a single strategy for co-branding the Atlantic Area can be seen a vain attempt given its high diversity (successful branding is essentially about clear differentiation)³, we have started trying to unveil some common values and attributes, available to those cities wishing to enrich their own local storytelling with the “Atlantic dimension”.

At this point, while a key element for successful city branding is to identify what makes a city special and different, the specific challenge in co-branding is to assess if there is value in identifying what links cities together. This means a huge difference with individual branding and involves a different approach.

Other basic assumption is that, according to Roger Pride, “at the heart of every great brand is Truth, not some fabricated marketing story, substance-free or forced because of circumstances. A truth you can throw rocks at, scratch deep below its surface, shake violently with both hands and it still remains intact”.

³ See Henningsen. Bernd (2011) On Identity – No Identity. An Essay on the Constructions, Possibilities and Necessities for Understanding a European Macro Region: The Baltic Sea. Baltic Development Forum. This attempt shows how difficult is to address the issue of identity when crossing political boundaries, even in contexts much more homogenous than the EU Atlantic façade, such the Baltic Sea Region .

And in case that truth exists within the Atlantic Area, will individual cities find value and benefit from it? If not, is there other ways that the Atlantic Arc Cities will benefit from collaboration in the field of strategic communication?

Accordingly, a process of this nature will request the following steps:

- Uncover real truths.
- Understand individual City perspectives on collaboration in the field of strategic communication and marketing.
- Assess the value and potential the Atlantic Arc story and proposition with a variety of audiences.
- Creatively imagine unifying ideas and narratives.
- Suggest concrete areas for collaboration ⁴

This challenge has been addressed with honesty and method. Many were, and still are, sceptical on the possibility to get a comprehensive place-brand for the Atlantic Area, given its extremely high diversity. But an attempt of this kind made sense coming from the EU Atlantic Programme. Anyway, it has never been tried before. That is, an attempt with method, by using place branding techniques in order to unveil a number of common attributes, values, assets and expectations that are common to the Atlantic façade.

As context, scale management is a rising question in place-branding, notably horizontal multi-governance in metropolitan areas. But also cross-border territorial alliances as a way to increase the power of city-based storytelling and pool resources in the battle to increase global visibility. Likewise, vertical multi-governance (metropolitan-regional-national articulations) is on the agenda in some contexts. What is clear is that cities seem to be in a special position for co-branding, and in fact recent experiences of cross-border co-branding have been mostly undertaken by cities.

In this framework, any initiative to set up the basis for a common action plan in place branding at the scale of Atlantic Arc, has to be realistic and pragmatic. Initially, this may mean a mix of icebreaking and tractor concrete measures to be prioritized, for then drafting paths for scaling up. At this point, the concept of family of brands might be useful to provide a framework for territorial alliances for co-branding.

But, above all, the role of any brand is to add value to product/place propositions. Therefore, the truths and linkages that we can identify for the Atlantic Arc must be seen by the individual cities as being both complementary to and capable of adding real value to their individual offers. Anyhow, the end line is to identify opportunities to develop

⁴ At this point, it is worth reminding the issue this report is dealing with is not about overall territorial cooperation. It's about opportunities for collaboration in strategic communications and marketing. That should be the AT.Brand contribution to the Atlantic Strategy.

synergies in order to build a more persuasive offer as well as potential to deliver cost efficiencies to make budgets and resources go further.

On this matter, the exploratory process organized by the AT.Brand project followed a number of steps:

- Literature review and desk research.
- Analysis of co-branding initiatives in Europe at different geographic scales.
- Consultation process to a broad spectrum of relevant entities and bodies from the Atlantic Area, mostly cities and regions, experts and scholars and transnational organisations.

The main findings of this process are reported here after according to the following sequence:

- Concept of co-branding, in particular as defined and put into practice in the corporate world.
- Comparative analysis of co-branding initiatives at metropolitan, regional, cross-border and transnational levels.
- Framework for the objective assessment of the potential for transnational place co-branding.
- Findings of the consultation process on Atlantic identity and the potential for co-branding the Atlantic Arc.
- Analysis of the strategic options considered for co-branding the Atlantic Arc.
- Basis for collaborative roadmap.

3. Meaning of co-branding

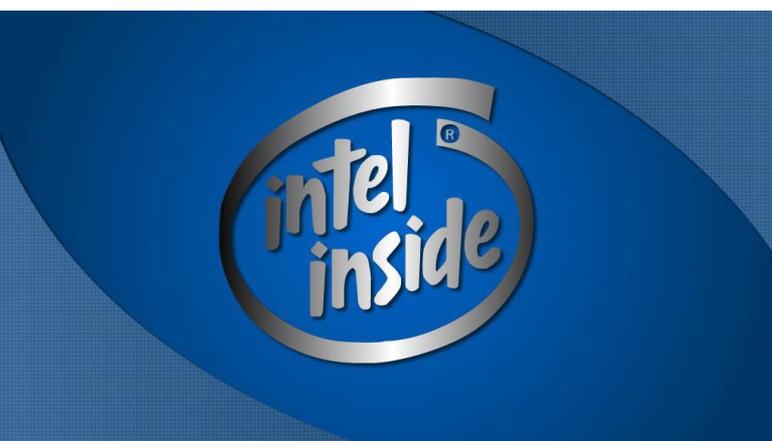
There is no universally accepted definition of co-branding or 'fusion marketing', whereby you can 'explode' your marketing efforts by allying with another place. In the marketing literature the term has been used interchangeably with labels such as 'brand alliance,' 'strategic alliances' and 'composite branding'.

Blackett and Russel define co-branding as "a form of co-operation between two or more brands with significant customer recognition, in which all the participants' brand names are retained" ⁵. Defined broadly, co-branding has been described as any pairing of two (or more) brands in a marketing context such as advertisements, products, product placements and distribution outlets. More narrowly defined, co-branding means the combination of two brands or more to create a single, unique offering.

When co-branding exists, it usually signals to customers that the partners are committed to a long-term relationship. Each partner must be adequately rewarded in order for the relationship to endure and must share target audiences. Without this, marketing efforts are wasted.

Getting knowledge of what happen in the corporate world in relation to co-branding, may lead to how it could work when applied to cities and places.

- Co-Branding is a powerful way of introducing one company's products and services to the loyalists of another, as an "ingredient brand". That is the example of Intel in their cooperation with computer manufacturers.



⁵ Blackett, T. & Russell, N. (1999) What is co-branding? In T. Blackett & B. Boad (Eds.) Co-branding: The science of alliance, 1-20, Hampshire: Macmillan Press.

- Co-branding enables one brand to benefit from the “halo of affection” that belongs to another - examples of Michel Jordan and Nike, and of airlines serving Starbucks coffee in their flights.
- Co-branding can generate costs savings - example of Taco Bell and KFC which often share facilities.
- Co-branding allows brands to be involved in caused-based marketing - example of supermarket brands collaborating with charity brands.

These principles can feed the reflection about place co-branding. For instance, one can contemplate the potential of an Atlantic brand as an ingredient brand, to be added to individual city brands. It can also be learnt from these experiences that one risk of co-branding is to loose clarity and control on one’s individual brand.

In addition to these examples of “one-to-one” co-branding, it is also worth looking at multiple brands coming together. The (Product RED) initiative, launched in 2006, offers an interesting case of cause-based marketing, where individual brands get together around a common set of values – the fight against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in the developing world – and are prepared to diminish the visibility of their own brand. All the partner companies involved in the initiative accept to create a product within their range, which proceeds are to go to a global fund.

The STAR Alliance is another relevant example. In the face of increased global competition, several airlines look to get competitive advantage through a global network, cost saving and passenger retention/loyalty. The Star Alliance is clearly focused on passenger benefits. The value to the end-users is an important factor to bear in mind.



Star Alliance: global network, cost savings, passenger retention and loyalty

4. Benchmarking experiences in the European context

We have selected a number of cases of collaborative place-branding with a significant component of multi-level governance, which have been here organized into four groups, namely:

- Co-branding at metropolitan or city-region level, which is a rising trend. As city branding is about pooling assets and resources to improve visibility and capacity for interaction at a global scale, the question of metropolitan coordination is particularly relevant. Today, most significant city brand strategies are working at metropolitan or city-region scale and it doesn't matter whether an overall metropolitan governance system exists or not.

That's the case in Lyon, Nantes and many other cities in France, what is related to the French tradition in metropolitan coordination. Amsterdam Marketing covers 36 municipalities of the Amsterdam metropolitan area and Stockholm Business Region AB, the entity behind the "Stockholm, The Capital of Scandinavia" serves a city-region of 53 municipalities and 3.7 million inhabitants. The Oslo branding project is also following that way, embracing the whole Oslo region (57 municipalities and 2.1 million people, of which 600,000 in the core city of Oslo). Even in the UK, with no tradition in horizontal multi-level governance at local level (maybe with today's exception of Manchester), cities like Birmingham are re-scaling their city brand strategies up to the city region level.

- Co-branding at regional level. It is much less frequent than co-branding at metropolitan or city-region level. For instance, that's the case in Germany of Ruhr Metropolis which brings together eleven metropolitan cities and four administrative districts, including cities of Essen and Dortmund, representing approximately 5.2 million inhabitants. In France, it is also a common practice, with relevant cases such as Alsace, Bretagne or Auvergne ⁶.
- Co-branding cross-border functional urban areas. The range of experiences here is very short, and they are consequence of the degree of maturity of those urban

⁶ Auvergne, which includes the cities of Clermont-Ferrand and Saint-Étienne, is a case of massive mobilization of stakeholders at regional level. Auvergne Nouveau Monde is a place-brand platform established in 2011 by the Conseil Régional d'Auvergne, along with the four public agencies in the region working on Tourism, Business development, Entrepreneurship and Culture. Furthermore, Auvergne Nouveau Monde has been extended to leading private companies, cluster organizations, Universities and other stakeholders. Today, there are over 700 entities associated, of which 12 make up a Bureau that meets once a month. www.auvergne-nouveau-monde.fr

areas in terms of multi-level governance and cohesion, like the Oresund and the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai ⁷.

- Branding transnational macro-regions. Very few experiences in this type of collaboration have emerged so far. That's the case of the ONE-BSR initiative, by which a number of capitals such as Helsinki, Hamburg, Riga, Stockholm, Warsaw and St. Petersburg have been prospecting to pool resources for jointly branding and marketing the Baltic Sea Region⁸, but still with uncertain results. Or the Nordic Region, as a political alliance of the five Scandinavian countries (including Iceland), now wanting to take a step ahead in the field of place branding ⁹.

As a matter of fact, can this lack of relevant experiences in this category be a signal of the existence of an "elephant in the room", which is the need for branding Europe as the real challenge to address?

Europe, and more properly the EU, is suffering a long triple crisis - economic, institutional and crisis of identity. As place branding is basically a matter of building up competitive identities, has anyone tried a systematic process to branding Europe, by means of the existing place branding methods and techniques? Some cities, in particular the most advanced practitioners in city branding, could take a step forward on this, with the support and leadership of the EU.

At this point, it is also worth to notice the relevance of the articulation to the national level, in particular in small countries, such as Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark, Switzerland of the Baltic Countries, where in general there is a significant performance gap. We mean making more effective bridges between nation branding/marketing and the different city strategies, an issue which deserves radical improvement in most of the cases ¹⁰.

⁷ www.eurometropolis.eu

⁸ <http://onebsr.eu>

⁹ To some extent it reminds the Benelux experience, in the past.

¹⁰ For instance, in Ireland, the main roles in terms of promotion and marketing are developed by a number of well-established State agencies, e.g. Enterprise Ireland and Irish Development Agency IDA in business and investment, Fáilte Ireland on tourism and Education in Ireland targeting international students and the academic community. That is fine, but it has also resulted in that the specific proposition of Dublin is blurred under the country narrative, in comparison to other city competitors around Europe.



Image of Europe: exhibition examining the representation of Europe, held in Brussels in 2004 under the Dutch presidency of the EU. Project commissioned to OMA/Rem Koolhaas.

“...as the EU grows in size and importance, the ineffectiveness of its communication is proving to be a serious political liability that weakens its external manifestations and has unnecessarily eroded its internal support” <http://www.oma.eu/projects/2004/image-of-europe>

4.1. Co-branding at metropolitan or city-region level

Nantes-Saint Nazaire, co-branding in the Loire estuary

The French cities of Nantes and Saint-Nazaire make up the two ends of the Loire estuary and the “city centres” of two urban agglomerations, where inter-municipal collaboration has been driven by State-promoted institutional formulas. *Nantes Métropole* brings together 24 municipalities and 590,000 inhabitants, while *Saint-Nazaire Agglomération* (CARENE) counts 10 municipalities and 118,000 residents.

Collaboration between both entities, and other public authorities, has been taking place for more than 20 years, especially for spatial planning purposes. The Nantes Saint-

Nazaire Metropolitan Pole promotes a common strategic spatial planning framework, involving the 6 inter-municipal institutions of the estuary area. As its two main poles, in the face of multiple initiatives taking place, Nantes Métropole and CARENE signed in 2009 a cooperation charter entitled “Prepare Together our Tomorrow Attractiveness”, a comprehensive strategic approach where international visibility is one the main gaps to be addressed.

Since 2008, a specific reflection process started about this issue, involving decision makers, key stakeholders and local personalities in a series of forums:

- A strategic committee composed of the Presidents of both agglomerations and the President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Nantes Saint Nazaire.
- A technical committee with representatives of Saint Nazaire’s Port, Nantes Congress centre, University, technology parks and tourism agencies.
- An advisory board which brought together local personalities with international expertise, from university leaders to media experts, from politicians to enterprises’ professionals.

In 2011, the three promoters of the initiative created a single international marketing agency called *Agence Internationale Nantes Saint-Nazaire*. The initial mandate of this non-profit organization (French *association*) was to develop international reputation of the metropolis, with four operational objectives: to prospect investors, researchers, students and talents; to strengthen international economic promotion; to increase international visibility; and to enhance international professional events.

A small staff – 4 people at the end of 2012 – capitalized on the findings of the consultation process about common identity and values, in order to produce a unifying city proposition for a varied international audience of investors and business leaders, tourists, students and researchers, under the claim “Nantes, Just Imagine”. It is worth noting that the signature does not include the name of Saint Nazaire, which was the result of a political consensus on the need to keep it simple (and pronounceable for foreigners) and on the greater reputation of Nantes abroad.

The “Nantes, Just Imagine” website¹¹ and social media were placed at the heart of the strategy. The access to contents on the website is organized according to 7 possible needs of the various target groups.

In each of these sections, main assets and key stakeholders are introduced, with links to their own websites. A media centre gathers the metropolis’ stories and related imagery and videos, while a blog area is being fed by a community manager (also in charge of Facebook and Twitter accounts), along with local and foreign bloggers. A more singular section is to be found under the name of “The Nantes Saint-Nazaire community abroad”,

¹¹ <http://www.nantes-justimagine.com>

which displays a map of international networks of key stakeholders such as higher education entities, clusters, congress centres and cultural institutions.

The notions of partnerships and networks have been another strong feature of the agency's strategy over the 2011-2014 period. Collaboration is part of the DNA of the Nantes-Saint Nazaire metropolis, allowing in the past the emergence of landmark initiatives in areas such as culture – a central driver of Nantes' redevelopment and visibility - and cluster development. The agency has endeavoured to make these initiatives more visible. It coordinated the participation of local stakeholders in real estate and trade fairs and co-organized international events in the metropolis or abroad¹².

Other developments have included the organization of social events for newcomers to the metropolis and a reflection around the lobbying potential of high-level local researchers to attract scientific events to Nantes Saint-Nazaire. The agency also started to work around the potential of the diaspora, appointing Nantes' correspondents in Tokyo, Shanghai, Quebec and Montreal. These volunteers have been helpful with their knowledge of the local contexts for potential PR events. Another objective was to have them promote "clubs of the Nantes diaspora".



¹² Initiatives such as the "Rencontres Internationales" event (second edition held in 2015) or "Nantes Shanghai", an annual promotional event organized in the Chinese city in partnership with the Design School Nantes Atlantic around Nantes' savoir faire as an innovative city (fifth year of collaboration in 2014).

In 2014, the co-branding initiative somewhat slowed down, as ending an experimental phase with things to be improved – engagement with the creative milieu, for instance – and pending of political and institutional changes. Local elections in March brought new Mayors and new metropolitan governments and assemblies. A new stage of Nantes Saint-Nazaire collaboration on international attractiveness started in January 2015. *Nantes Saint-Nazaire Développement* came into being as the fusion of the *Agence Internationale Nantes Saint-Nazaire* and *Nantes Métropole Développement*, the metropolitan economic development agency. Under the association formula, the new entity comes up with a new governance, as the regional and provincial governments and the Chamber of Crafts join the three initial promoters as “statutory members” in the board. The association’s statutes foresee the approval of additional members in a larger assembly and the possibility to set up committees of partners.

In the new organisation’s mission statement, three main targets are clearly identified for the work of the 23 staff (an annual budget of €2.8 million was announced for 2015): local, national and international companies, investors and talents, whether on the prospecting field or to offer guidance and support. As far as promotional activities are concerned, the new agency’s road map focuses on the coordination and development of business marketing initiatives and on the marketing of the metropolitan area as a host for professional events. By summer 2015, more decisions were to be made regarding the next years’ strategy.

Meanwhile, Nantes and Saint-Nazaire are at the heart of evolving multi-level collaboration trends, with initiatives such as the aforementioned Nantes-Saint Nazaire Metropolitan Pole, the Loire Bretagne Metropolitan Pole and Nantes Tech, to name of few:

- Loire Bretagne Metropolitan Pole is a strategic partnership between the urban agglomerations of Nantes, Saint Nazaire, Angers, Brest and Rennes, for the attractiveness of the French “Great West”. The collaboration process started in the 1990s and culminated with the creation of the Metropolitan Pole’s *syndicat mixte* (inter-municipal cooperation entity) in 2012, as part of a State policy to enhance metropolises able to compete at European and international levels.

One of the issues on the shared work agenda deals with territorial branding and marketing: common participation to national and international trade fairs, exploring the collaboration potential in terms of international promotion tools and identifying common tourism and event initiatives.

- Designated “European Green Capital” in 2013, Nantes was more recently appointed as one of the “French Tech” metropolis, under a governmental initiative to promote through a common brand French tech/digital start-ups ecosystems¹³. One of the axes of the strategy, launched at the end of 2013, is to enhance an international promotional agenda.

¹³ More information about these initiatives can be found at <http://www.nantestech.com/en/> and <http://en.lafrenchtech.com/>

Lyon, French benchmark in integrated city-branding

OnlyLyon¹⁴ is the robust city brand & marketing strategy of the French metropolis, dealing with international targets related to business and tourism. It has engaged a wide range of mainly public entities into the same brand platform, which is placed at ADERLY, the existing economic development agency for the metropolitan area, yet the brand platform has its own independent budget and funding scheme and decision-making system.

That brand platform comprises three types of stakeholders:

- **Local authorities:** the City of Lyon, Greater Lyon, which in turn brings together 59 municipalities of the area, and the Rhone County.
- **Key institutional tourism stakeholders:** Lyon Tourism and Conventions, Eurexpo Exhibition Centre, Lyon Convention Centre and Lyon Airports.
- **Key economic development organisations,** such as ADERLY as Invest-in-Lyon agency, Lyon's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Rhône county 's main employers' associations, University of Lyon Council and the Chamber of Skilled Trades.

In addition to this, a special sponsorship programme has been subscribed by a number of flagship private companies like EDF, Renault, KPMG or Emirates.

Within ADERLY, which employs approximately 50 members, the OnlyLyon team is around 7 full-time positions for tasks such as communications, networks management, press and public relations, relations with the partnerships and community engagement.



¹⁴ <http://www.onlylyon.org>

Greater Manchester, a long-standing metropolitan governance committed to regeneration and building a global brand

For more than 30 years, Marketing Manchester¹⁵ has worked on the promotion of what is known as Greater Manchester, one of the largest functional urban areas in the UK, located in the North West of England.

The issues of governance there have been addressed long time ago, prompted by the Local Government Act of 1972, which established a system of “two-tier” counties and districts throughout England and Wales. The Greater Manchester City Council (GMCC) was created in 1974, bringing together the local authorities of Manchester, Salford, Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. They did not drop the collaboration when the Local Government Act of 1986 abolished the GMCC. They created the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA), which still underpins the current governance system.

AGMA’s track record includes achievements such as the construction of the Manchester airport on a co-funding and joint-ownership model, a range of regeneration projects and cultural investments and the organization of the Commonwealth Games in 2002. Strong political leadership, the common vision of public authorities on the main area’s challenges – regeneration and economic development – and the strong involvement of the private sector are often cited as the key factors for these successes. The IRA bombing in central Manchester in 1996 also acted as a catalyst for renewed and deepened cooperation projects.

In 1996, AGMA and Manchester Airport set up Marketing Manchester as a private agency in charge of promoting Greater Manchester on national and international stages, especially to communicate the current changes and modify the perceptions about the city and the region. The agency’s main focus has been the coordination of collective marketing initiatives and presence in international events, without neglecting the importance of international media coverage and online presence, and a variety of promotional material. A specific investment agency, Manchester Investment Development Agency Service (MIDAS)¹⁶ was established to deal with attracting investments and companies.

These two agencies are still operating nowadays, although it is necessary to mention recent changes at the top of Greater Manchester’s governance system.

- The designation of Greater Manchester as one of the two pilot “city-regions” (along with Leeds) by the Government in 2009 allowed to set up a formal metropolitan government (so far only London had it) to deal with the coordination of a number of policy areas, mainly transport, spatial planning and economic

¹⁵ <http://www.marketingmanchester.com/>

¹⁶ <http://www.investinmanchester.com/>

development. From 2011, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) plays this role, reinforcing the partnership initiated by AGMA.

- To fully understand the current complex governance system, it is also necessary to mention the dissolution of regional development agencies in England in 2012 and the subsequent establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships, meant to enhance the participation of the private sector in economic strategy definition and delivery. The Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (GMLEP) is one of the 39 LEPs set up in England.

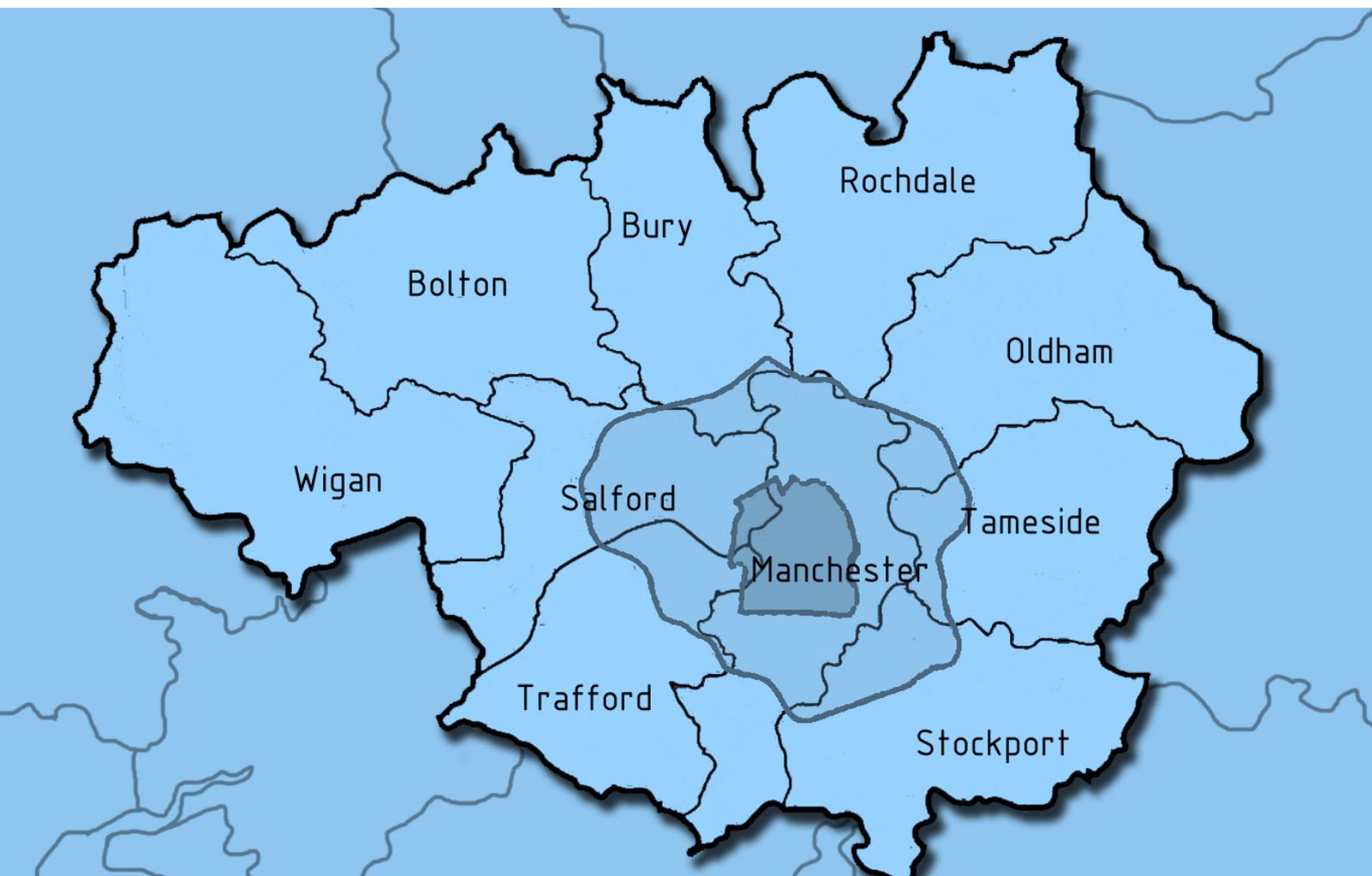
The Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS) is the roadmap for the economic development of the area for the 2013-2020 period. Growth and Reform are the two overarching goals of the strategy. One of the objectives of the “Growth” part consists in “building our global brand” so as to attract talent, investment and visitors. The strategy recognizes the expertise and leading role of the Marketing Manchester team while stressing the need to also “create” distinctive elements of offer. While the GMS is “owned” by both the GMCA and the GMLEP, it is to be implemented by the Manchester Growth Company, a corporate group created in 2013 in order to “deliver the GMS priorities in relation to employment, skills, business support, inward investment, international marketing, the visitor economy, policy development and research”. Marketing Manchester and MIDAS have been incorporated as specific agencies within the 1,200-staff group.

The partnership between the 10 local authorities and the private sector is a cross-cutting feature of the whole governance system and of the place-branding initiatives.

- While both AGMA and GMCA decision-making bodies strictly consist of councillors from the 10 metropolitan boroughs – and other public executives in the case of GMCA – the boards of GMLEP, Manchester Growth Company, Marketing Manchester and MIDAS are predominantly private sector-led, but always include a number of councillors.
- In 2004, Marketing Manchester created a tourist board for Greater Manchester, Visit Manchester. Visit Manchester operates as a membership fee-based organization offering marketing benefits to hotels, conference venues, restaurants, tourist attractions and support services – there are currently over 400 members. Visit Manchester website acts as the main hub for the visitor economy.

Marketing Manchester coordinates the Greater Manchester Destination Management Plan 2014-2017, which derives from ‘The Greater Manchester Strategy for the Visitor Economy 2014 - 2020’ and integrates the roles of the various concerned stakeholders. The Plan was approved after consulting the Manchester Visitor Economy Forum, which comprises senior executives of the local industry and that will also monitor its delivery.

More recently, Marketing Manchester designed two ambassador programmes. On the one hand, the Global Ambassador Programme¹⁷ appears as a rather classical one. It currently focuses on the recruitment of influential personalities from the digital and creative sectors, life sciences and advanced manufacturing. On the other hand, the Conference Ambassador Programme¹⁸ is more singular. Marketing Manchester has partnered with the University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Salford and Manchester Central Convention Centre to involve academics and industry leaders to help attract prestigious national and international conferences.



Greater Manchester area

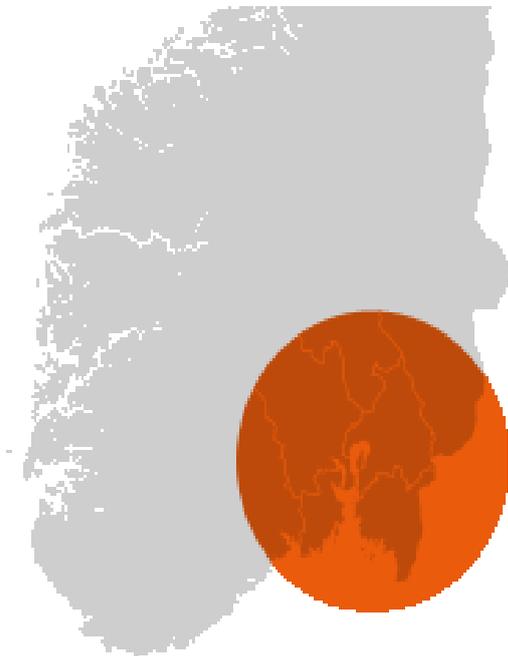
¹⁷ <http://mbassador.com/>

¹⁸ <http://conferences.visitmanchester.com/plan-an-event/ambassadors>

Setting up a brand platform for the Oslo region

The Norwegian capital benefits from an impressive bunch of strengths and positive dynamics. The city is simultaneously managing two large-scale waterfront redevelopment projects. It's home of competitive clusters in maritime industries, energy and life sciences, and is among the world's most eco-friendly cities. However, local authorities felt Oslo's capacity to "buzz" its strengths and great momentum and perspectives is low. To face that challenge, it was initiated at the end of 2012 a large-scale process of city brand building called "Project Oslo Region", where three aspects can be highlighted¹⁹:

- Metropolitan scale of the initiative, covering 57 municipalities and 2 million people, of which 600,000 in the core city of Oslo.
- Emphasis on the need to more cohesive narrative - "uniting stakeholders behind a limited number of values and concepts than can be used to tell the stories about Oslo" in words of Øyvind Såtvedt, director of the Oslo Region Alliance.
- And the establishment of the Oslo Brand Alliance as brand platform.



Scaling city branding up to the metropolitan level: Stockholm, 53 municipalities, 3,7 million inhabitants; Oslo, 57 municipalities, 2 million.

¹⁹ For further information on the Oslo case see the report of the AT.Brand international workshop "City brand governance: shaping the collaboration model", La Rochelle, December 2014.

The Oslo Brand Alliance brings together three key existing organizations: The Oslo Region Alliance, in charge of inter-municipal cooperation in the city region, Oslo Business Region, in charge of promoting Oslo as business place and VisitOslo the partnership operating in the local visitor economy.

Furthermore, the new management system for the Oslo brand will be completed with the following figures:

- The Oslo Brand Partners, as second-tier key stakeholders, ranging from Universities and main cultural facilities to airports and technology parks. With all of them, concrete engagements will be negotiated case by case, on a project-by-project basis.
- Oslo Brand Leadership Arena, as a consultative body comprises of a dozen of key opinion leaders.
- Oslo Brand Ambassadors, as appointed highly visible citizens in the arts, sport, business, creative industry, science and diplomacy.

Other initiatives included in the Oslo brand strategy are the establishment of an “on-brand/off-brand advice service”, coordination of the Oslo’s story to the international press and development of a detailed communications strategy in cooperation with the stakeholders.

Anyhow, the main challenge now in Oslo is to move from participation to co-management. That is, from a bottom-up approach to work mainly with a short range of selected stakeholders. This stage for shaping a brand platform should be based on negotiation, agreement and commitment, leaving the option to “opt out”. It is about building a “coalition of the willing”, according to Øyvind, who was participating in some of the AT.Brand activities.

4.2. Co-branding at regional level

In France, over the last 7 years, a number of regions have adopted an integrated branding approach, all characterized by a carefully planned and participatory elaboration, with the technical assistance of a consultancy firm, CoManaging, which provides place-branding and stakeholder management approaches. We will present here two of them, maybe cases of regions with a quite strong regional identity and reputation, especially at national level.

The case for Marque Bretagne

The project for branding Brittany, the emblematical territory in the Northern part of the French Atlantic coast, was initiated in 2008 by the Regional Government (*Conseil Régional de Bretagne*) and designed in collaboration with *Bretagne Développement Innovation* (BDI, Brittany's innovation and development agency) and the Regional Tourism Committee.

The initiative started as an attempt to update perceptions of the region and increase its reputation in France and abroad. There was also the ambition to engage companies, NGOs and public institutions and have them refer to the brand in their marketing or communication activities, towards a coherent message, the pooling of resources and the coordination of prospecting and promotional initiatives. The assumption is that the reference to Bretagne's identity, values and elements of excellence is to provide stakeholders with an element of pride and added value, of competitive positioning.

The participatory process has led to the development of a comprehensive and thoroughly explained brand toolkit, which was launched in January 2011:

- Brand proposition – «*Le pays qui crée du lien, transforme et donne la force*» – and a set of associated values to be conveyed: sense of individual and collective engagement, openness and imagination.
- Visual identity: the «Bretagne» word, with the typography of the Es echoing to the regional historical flag, with black & white as primary colours; plus a range of additional colours for visual material. The use of the logo is restricted and subject to authorization by a brand committee composed of partners and regional marketing/design experts. It cannot be used directly on products and local authorities can only use the logo in their communications related to place promotion and attractiveness.
- A number of potential verbal or visual expression modes to be used in communications: the positive force, the concept of linkages (between people, generations, tradition and modernity, etc), black and white, will and responsibility, humor, living symbols, magic and poetry.
- Brand vocabulary, consisting of suggestions of key words, typographies, photo shooting approaches and including “Breton” quotation marks.

While a web platform for the brand toolkit²⁰ targets appointed and potential users, a six-language tourism website²¹ is managed by the Regional Tourism Committee in partnership with provincial tourism entities and BDI has developed a land page for

²⁰ <http://www.marque-bretagne.fr/>

²¹ <http://www.brittanytourism.com/>

investors²², in line with its economic development and innovation strategy, which sits on the 6 regional clusters.

Four years after its launch, the Bretagne branding policy can bold a number of achievements:

- It has enrolled 587 partners: 288 companies; 160 NGOs (professional associations, culture, tourism and sport entities, research and training centres and also three associations of the Breton diaspora) and 139 public entities, e.g. local authorities including the provincial governments and the Brest and Lorient agglomerations, local tourism and development agencies, cluster management entities, technology centres, consular chambers, airports, sports and events facilities, Universities.
- Organisation or participation in 42 national and international professional events, under the umbrella of Bretagne brand and the leadership of BDI or Bretagne Commerce International (BCI), the regional business internationalization agency.
- 2.9 million visits on the tourism website in 2012, a 48% increase over 2011, and more than 125,000 followers on Facebook.



²² <http://www.invest-in-bretagne.org/>

- The Regional Tourism Committee has successfully built an online community of residents and visitors, who share photos, testimonials and tips about the region. To this day, more than 9,000 people have joined ²³.

A number of factors can be underlined to explain this positive balance:

- The participatory approach along the preparation phase: during three years, around 4,600 persons participated in 85 public meetings on the analysis of the “portrait” and attractiveness of the region.
- A deep-rooted regional identity and strong previous culture of networks throughout the region, along with a shared ambition to refer to a modern and innovative place brand strategy.
- Strong and wide political commitment, including the top political hierarchy – the very President of the Regional Government was a convinced promoter – and the allocation of significant resources for the launch of the brand.
- The operational management and governance of the brand strategy.
 - While there is good articulation of institutional communication and the place-marketing strategy, the daily management of the brand is run by BDI, in close collaboration with the Regional Tourism Committee and BCI.
 - The branding policy lays also on a Brand Committee, which meets 3 or 4 times a year for strategic monitoring and the selection of partnership applications. It brings together 20 members: representatives from BDI and BCI, the academy, the chambers of commerce and industry, tourism and cultural agencies, facilities and events, but also industry executives, consultants and brand specialists.
 - Regular workshops have been held to inform about the brand and the application process.

According to BDI ²⁴, the right way forward now is to adequately deal with the facilitation of the growing partner network (digitally and through events) and to promote the emergence of cross-sector initiatives in a context of limited resources.

They are currently working on a model of enlarged governance, enriched brand code and a roadmap for the next 3 years.

²³ <http://www.fans-of-brittany.com>

²⁴ A fruitful dialogue was opened with the organization following their participation in the co-branding consultation process promoted by the AT.Brand project.

Alsace, content first, governing model later on

In the Alsace region, content was first and the governing model arrived later. The process was initiated in 2011 involving the tourism sector, business promotion and other stakeholders. It resulted in the definition of a compelling regional identity (a consultation that involved almost 5,000 people at the time), brand strategy and visual identity, which was launched in 2012 ²⁵.

Later on, the Alsace Agency for Attractiveness, *Agence d'Attractivité d'Alsace*, was born in 2014 as cross-sector body to work on strategic communication of the French region, embracing tourism, business location, education and research, culture and creativity, sports and events ²⁶. Some specific features can be highlighted:

- An online magazine meant to inform about excellence and innovation in Alsace, with news, stories and testimonials.
- A strong network over 3,000 ambassadors. Although the impulse of Alsace Ambassadors dates back to 2008, before the branding initiative started, it is now articulated to the integrated initiative.
- Stronger focus on the engagement of companies. While businesses make up the vast majority of the 320 or so brand partners, the Alsace Agency for Attractiveness launched in 2015 the Alsace Excellence label for the accreditation of companies. Sub brands are to be promoted for food products.



²⁵ <http://www.marque-alsace.fr/>, <http://lemag.imaginalalsace.com/en/>

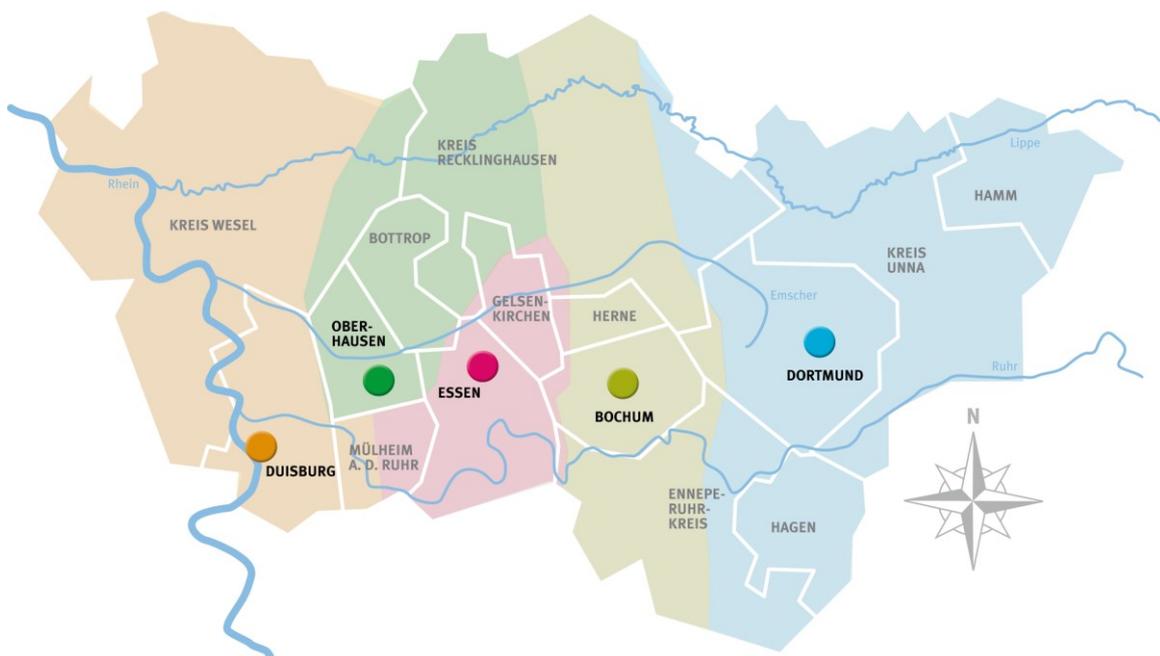
²⁶ The Regional Tourism Committee and Alsace International and the agency for the internationalization of the regional economy were merged into the new Agency.

Concerning the sustainability of the initiative, there is a quite serious problem at this time. Unlike Brittany, Alsace is concerned by the redrawing of French regions as part of the territorial reform being carried out by the French government since 2014. By January 2016, Alsace will be merged with the neighbour Champagne-Ardenne and Lorraine regions. This is no likely to jeopardize Alsace's identity but the main question concerns the funding of the branding policy, as the main promoter is bound to disappear. To this day, the horizon is unclear in this respect.

Ruhr Metropolis as co-branding initiative too

The Ruhr Regional Association, RVR, brings together eleven metropolitan cities and four administrative districts, including cities of Essen and Dortmund, representing approximately 5.2 million inhabitants concentrated in the heart of the North Rhine-Westphalia region.

Nowadays, the RVR holds responsibilities in relation to key development activities of the metropolis, including regional planning, environmental protection, business and tourism development and public relations. The delegation of competencies is accompanied by the representation of the involved cities and districts in the Ruhr parliament of the RVR (70 members). In this context, the association carries out marketing activities for the metropolitan area, under the brand of Ruhr Metropolis. The brand is connected to an image of successful change from a steel and coal-mining based economy to a post-industrial urban economy based on technology, knowledge and creativity.



4.3. Co-branding cross-border functional urban areas

Øresund: rise and decline of a visionary initiative

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the building and promotion of the Danish-Swedish cross-border region of Øresund – a historical passage between the Baltic Sea and the North Sea – emerged as a promising initiative, towards the creation of a functional region of around 3.5 million inhabitants. The process was initially driven by a political vision shared by both national governments. This vision was based on the relevant complementarities and strong assets related to the knowledge and innovation economy in the face of international competition. It was also enhanced by the construction of the emblematic Øresund Bridge, finished in 2000, and other investments in infrastructure, increasing its internal and external accessibility. Not least important has been the programming of an EU Interreg cross-border programme at the scale of the Øresund region since 1996.

Although the first public authorities' councils and forums appeared in the 1960s, key collaboration bodies and projects marked the 1990s and 2000s around a triple-helix model:

- The *Øresundskomiteen* was established in 1992 as the institutionalized collaboration body between regional and local public authorities. The 10-staff Secretariat has been given quite significant responsibilities, including the function of secretariat for the Interreg cross-border programme. In 2010, the Committee adopted its regional development strategy, ORUS, with a vision: “the Øresund Region will stand out as the most attractive and climate-smart region in Europe”. The strategy identified a range of challenges relating to the branding issue: attracting foreign researchers and specialists, public-private cooperation in global marketing initiatives in the context of the international competition for events and tourists.
- As far as the private sector is concerned, a number of initiatives have allowed to enhance networking and mutual knowledge between businesses. The Øresund Chamber of Commerce, and the Øresund Business Council are the most significant ones. However, their involvement in strategy and policy development has been limited.
- Collaboration between the universities in the area has been taking place for a long time, reaching a formal dimension in 1997 with the Øresund University, a consortium of 14 universities and university colleges.

The alliance was the key promoter of the Øresund Science Region, an ambitious project which included the building of cross-border clusters initiatives, namely Medicon Valley Academy, Øresund IT, Øresund Food Network and Øresund Environment. The Interreg Øresund Science project (2009-2012) represented a

momentum for the initiative. However, the Øresund University collaboration reached its limits and ended in 2012. Universities still collaborate, but competition regarding attraction of students and research resources appears as an insuperable obstacle. As far as cross-border clusters are concerned, only Medicon Valley still exists today.

These initiatives clearly demonstrate a will to build up a functional cross-border region. Nevertheless, the project is somewhat stalled after having reached a peak before the financial crisis for a number of reasons:

- Relatively poor articulation or coordination between the various collaboration forums and bodies, what the OECD has called “a governance without government”²⁷ and weak involvement of NGOs and citizens – the civil society.
- Hardships regarding genuine policy commitment. The Øresund Regional Development Strategy (ORUS) does not set out concrete goals or action planning. Since 2006, national governments do not participate in the *Øresundskomiteen* anymore – they did so as observers.
- In the Danish political debate, the further development of the Øresund region is seen as potentially harmful for the development of the rest of Danish regions and consequently limits additional support by the government. On the Swedish side, where there is a general consensus that integration is necessary to survive global competition, there is not the same level of enthusiasm in the whole Skåne region as in the Malmö-Lund area, where most of the economic potential is located.
- Partly a consequence of it, financial sustainability is a major issue. European funding was decisive for the emergence of many of the initiatives, but it has no long-term funding vocation. The *Øresundskomiteen* is kept afloat thanks to structural funding by its members and the Nordic Council.

As far as global positioning is concerned, one can point out that the Øresund cross-border region has gained a certain level of international visibility without having implemented a co-branding policy as such – as said before, the ORUS strategy does mention related challenges but fails to roll out an action plan. There are two dimensions in that current positioning of the region:

- A cross-border region “in the making”, made visible by an initial shared political vision, an ad-hoc Interreg programme, collaborative platforms, and its own condition as international case study regarding innovative spatial development.

²⁷ Nauwelaers, C., K. Maguire and G. Ajmone Marsan (2013), “The case of Oresund (Denmark-Sweden) – Regions and Innovation: Collaborating Across Borders”, *OECD Regional Development Working Papers*, 2013/21, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k3xv0lk8knn-en>



- An outstanding science and innovation region, recently further strengthened by the development of edge science infrastructures (MAX IV and European Spallation Source in Lünd). The cluster initiatives, whose early activities focused on regional and international marketing also helped to attract attention to the area.

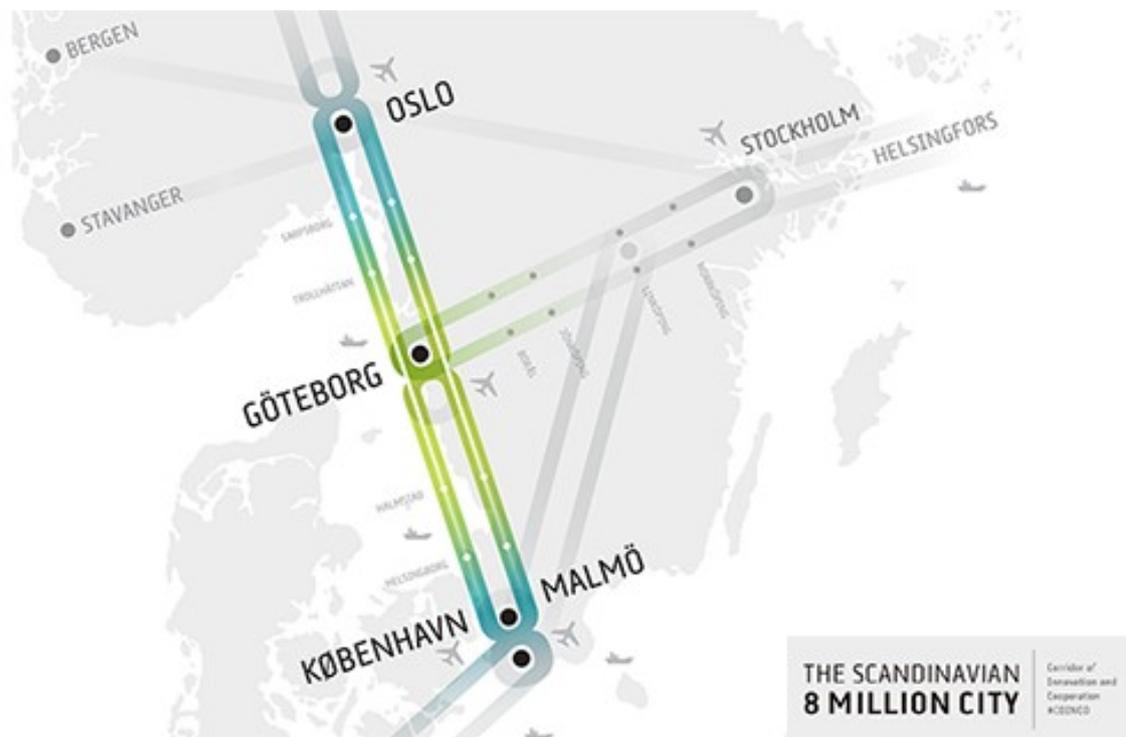
Today, the strength and influence of the Øresund, as an outstanding, visionary initiative of cross-border cooperation, is a bit eroded. Two additional aspects are also working in that direction:

- Debates on the name of the cross-border region. Copenhagen remains as the strongest brand in the area and voices on the Danish side – including the very Mayor of Copenhagen²⁸ – call for renaming the region around the name of the Danish capital: “Greater Copenhagen”, “Copenhagen Greater Region” or “Copenhagen Circle City”. This idea does not find many supporters in the Skåne region and Malmö, where the “Scandinavian Bay Area” sounds as a better formula.
- The “Scandinavian 8 Million City”²⁹, an initiative gathering local and regional authorities along a 600-km transnational corridor between Oslo, Gothenburg and Malmö. At this stage, the purpose is to build a high-speed rail connection along this corridor, which would certainly be promoted internationally as a world-class green and multimodal transport system.

The project is also intended to enhance a functional region able to compete globally for jobs and investments. Such a region would include about half of all of Scandinavia's population, two main international airports and seaport and 29 colleges and universities, among other assets. The “8 Million City” vision might certainly move the gravity center out of Copenhagen and to the Swedish side.

²⁸ Crouch D. (2015, March 5). “Denmark wants to rebrand part of Sweden as 'Greater Copenhagen'”. The Guardian. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/>

²⁹ <http://www.8millioncity.com/>



The Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai: giant steps on co-branding the cross-border city-region

The Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai spans 147 municipalities across the French-Belgian border with a 2.1 million population, three communities and two languages. It stands out as a compelling case of multi-level governance encompassing 4 levels of public administration: national, regional, provincial and inter-municipal. Collaboration across the border in this area started as early as 1991 and accelerated during the 2000s, becoming the first European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)³⁰ in 2008, with the mandate to build a real cross-border metropolis visible and competitive at international level. Cooperation is focused on fields such as public services, tourism, culture, accessibility and mobility, land use planning and economic development.

The EGTC is founded by 14 institutions, representing the different scales of government. On the French side, they are the State, the regional and provincial authorities (*Région Nord-Pas-de-Calais* and *Département du Nord*) and the *Métropole européenne de Lille*,

³⁰ The EGTC is an instrument made available in 2006 in application of a new EU regulation, providing an opportunity for national, regional and local authorities and other public entities involved in cross-border cooperation to join forces under a single legal personality.

a metropolitan government around the regional capital, which brings together 85 municipalities. On the Belgian side, the partners are the Federal State, the Flemish and Walloon Regions, the Flemish Community and Wallonia-Brussels Communities, the Provinces of Western Flanders and Hainaut, as well as 5 municipal cooperation groupings.

All these institutions sit in a common assembly, choose the grouping's President and Bureau, while a 10 staff-agency acts as the executive arm of the EGTC, in charge of the delivery of the strategy through collaborative projects. Another task of the agency is to manage an appropriate governance scheme, which is one of the 6 "challenges" of the Eurometropolis. In addition to the general assembly, the objective is to involve the municipalities and civil society in a number of working groups, the annual celebration of the conference of Mayors and a civil society forum, which is to act as the euro-metropolis's consultative assembly.

The agency defines itself as a "hub for all cross-border information, activities and services for institutions, companies, artists, associations and clubs, etc" ³¹.

The current strategy of the metropolis, "Eurométropole 2014-2020"³² was adopted in November 2013, after a consultation process with the 14 founding partners and the organization of working groups. One of the strategy's 11 "ambitions" explicitly relates to international visibility and promotion: "Make the region more attractive on the basis of the assets that set us apart".

- On the one hand, the strategy suggests focusing investment attraction and business creation on four priority cross-border clusters, namely: logistics, ITC/image, innovative materials/textile/design and agrifood/health.

The Interreg project "Invest in Eurometropolis" brought together between 2011 and 2014 the area's inter-municipal institutions, the economic development agencies of Lille Métropole and West Flanders and the Grand Lille Chamber of Commerce to work on a common agenda for international economic promotion. The project has resulted in a range of sustainable outputs:

- The motto, "Invest In Eurometropolis –Bringing Capitals within Reach", referring to a positioning focused on the proximity to three capitals: London, Paris and Brussels.
- Common narrative and set of promotional materials, including an investment promotion web portal ³³, launched in December 2014. The site, consisting of static information, includes an interactive map

³¹ <http://www.eurometropolis.eu/who-are-we/overview.html>

³² A short version of the strategy is available in English:
http://fr.eurometropolis.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Divers/Documentation/EN_strategie2014-2020.pdf

³³ www.investineurometropolis.eu

highlighting the area's business and technology parks, congress centres and research and innovation centres.

- The project team also collaborated for a joint participation under the Eurometropolis umbrella in the MIPIM editions over the project period. The initiative was repeated in the 2015 edition of the event, this time without the support of the EU.
- On the other hand, the ambition is to develop culture and tourism as drivers of attractiveness. The strategy identifies lines of collaboration such as enhancing the skills of tourism entities and offer, the further development of cultural events and their use for economic promotion, and vice-versa.

While the EGTC's website includes an English version and a specific section about "Life in the Eurometropolis"³⁴, the Eurometropolis is since 2012 equipped with a destination website³⁵. The site offers quite complete information about the area's assets, including accommodation, foods and beverages and events. More recently, additional material has been developed, available for download or in print version: a Lonely Planet guide, available in French, Dutch and English (2013) and a free comprehensive trilingual guide (September 2014).

As far as the cultural events are concerned, stakeholders are working towards a greater number of cross-border events, such as the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the establishment of the French-Belgian border in 2013 or the "cross-border upgrade" of existing events, as Lille 3000 or Fantastic 2012. However, the main focus is to give more visibility to cultural events, through their accreditation with the Eurometropolis label (on the ground of a range of criteria) or further initiating partnerships with the initiative.

This policy, started in 2010, does not only concern cultural events and networks. By the end of 2013, 46 initiatives had been granted the label, about half of them being dedicated to employment and business, sports and leisure, etc.

Interestingly, during the elaboration of the 2014-2020 strategy, the Eurometropolis agency also held a two-day international workshop, with local and international experts, to identify the challenges for an integrated territorial development of the metropolis. Experts came up with three main recommendations to be further worked: one of them being to "elaborate a strong common narrative", shared by the partners, local stakeholders and residents.

Three main initiatives were defined into the strategy for that: the organization of the "Debates of the Eurometropolis", the establishment of the "2030 Workshop" to contribute

³⁴ This section includes 6 subsections: "Getting around" (internal and external accessibility options), "Working", "Studying", "Speaking French and Dutch", "Time off" (tourism information) and "Keeping up to date" (local and regional media).

³⁵ www.visiteurometropolis.eu

with prospecting works and the <http://www.visualiseeurometropolis.eu/> platform with its range of associated social network accounts. Here, the residents are the main target, and it is mainly about both enhancing the “sense of belonging” and crowd-sourcing pictures, sounds, videos, archives and other elements contributing to the narrative.

The platform currently offers an interactive map which includes these items and three “itineraries”:

- “Your view of the border”, reflecting the contest organized in 2013 as part of celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the settlement of the frontiers;
- “Making giant steps”, a narrative centered on the emblematic figure of processional Giants, which is present in the traditions of the whole area
- “Silent mutations”, the story of the painstaking and optimistic process of regeneration of an area heavily affected by deindustrialisation.

MENTIONS LÉGALES

VISUALISE EUROMETROPOLIS

VISUALISE EUROMETROPOLIS

Les résultats du concours “La frontière a 300 ans” sont disponibles ! Cliquez ici pour les découvrir

> Pour en savoir plus

> Inscrivez-vous à notre newsletter

PARCOURS

Frontières, paysage et réseaux sont des caractéristiques majeures du territoire. Pour chacune de ces caractéristiques un parcours est ici suggéré.

CARTE INTERACTIVE

Explorer l'Eurométropole



RECHERCHE

Chercher

- Oeuvres d'art
- Documents
- Cartes
- Objets
- Photos
- Cartes postales
- Sons
- Vidéos



Promoting a common visuality of the cross-border region, <http://www.visualiseeurometropolis.eu>

North of Portugal and Galicia, building the Euroregion's cohesiveness

Cross-border cooperation between North of Portugal and the North-Western Spanish region of Galicia began in the early 1980s and, at a large extent, it was boosted by the increasing spatial influence of the cities of Porto (Oporto) in the Portuguese side and Vigo in the Spanish side.

On the one hand, historically, the favorable topographical context and a clear cultural affinity set the ground for the development of human flows and exchanges across the border. On the other hand, the process of European integration, the bilateral agreements between Spain and Portugal and the decisive role of a number of regional politicians acted as political facilitating factors.

In 1991, the process reached an institutionalized dimension with the creation of a Working Community (Comunidade de Traballo Galicia-Norte de Portugal) between both regional authorities, a body which lives up to this day. One year later, 13 local authorities of the area created the Eixo Atlántico do Noroeste Peninsular, including the main cities of the area such as Porto, Braga, Vigo and Coruña.

Since 2000, these separate entities have been articulated in order to enhance complementarities and the coordination of initiatives. The Eixo Atlántico was incorporated to the Working Community as a specific commission within the organizational chart, which includes 4 sub-territorial commissions and 4 thematic commissions (sustainable development and planning; economic development and tourism; innovation and energy efficiency; citizenship). These commissions have allowed to engage local authorities, beyond the member cities of the Eixo Atlántico, especially the border cities and the Spanish provinces of Pontevedra and Ourense.

During the late 2000s, the scope of cooperation was deepened through, on the one hand, a substantial increase of Eixo Atlántico's members reaching 34 cities and, on the other hand, the creation by both regional authorities of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (GNP-AECT). GNP-AECT is to act as an executive agency of the Working Community, able to overcome administrative barriers and enhance the capacity to get European funding.

To this day, the Euroregion has not made significant steps towards a co-branding policy beyond the lobbying dimension. However, over the last 20 years, the Eixo Atlántico has carried out a number of initiatives to increase the internal "sense of belonging" to the cross-border community through cultural and sport events ³⁶, and to promote internal tourism. The most recent ones are the following:

³⁶ Those lessons on the power of events to increase sense of place will be taken into account here after in this report when considering the "product approach" as a strategic option to transnational co-branding. That is, it is basically considered as an event-based approach.

- In 2004, the Eixo Atlantico and the Working Community collaborated for the organization of an exhibition entitled “Two Regions, One Euroregion” which travelled to Eixo Atlantico’s member cities in order to raise awareness on the building of the Euroregion.
- In 2007, the city network launched a “Culture Capital” initiative, with the objective to strengthen common values and promote artists of the area. The Portuguese city of Matosinhos, in Porto metro area, has been designated the 4th Capital of Culture for 2016.
- Since 2013, the organization celebrates a yearly tourism fair entitled “Expocidades” with the “Two Countries, One Destination” slogan.

In the years to come, the Galicia-Norte de Portugal Euroregion may make some relevant steps towards an increased international visibility. In its “Plan for Joint Investments 2014-2020”, one of the 4 strategic objectives deals with the enhancement of economic internationalization. Various programmes are announced, including a coordinated programme of international economic promotion, based on the shared interests in the maritime, agro-food and tourism sectors. The document highlights the relevance to move ahead in relation to a common tourism brand, built upon the “Two Countries One Destination” strapline, the common natural and cultural heritage and successful existing brands such as St. James’ way and Oporto’s wines. Another claimed challenge is to build up and strengthen cross-border business clusters.

4.4. Branding transnational macro-regions

Some cross-country regions may be destinations or place ‘clusters,’ which have powerful gestalt images based on perceptions of a shared culture and tradition. For example Scandinavia (design, innovation, no-code society, egalitarianism), the Caribbean (relaxing culture, tourism paradise) or the Mediterranean (lifestyle, culture, cuisine). Those regions are perceived by a range of audiences as sharing common characteristics and whilst they may not necessarily have a formal place brand and marketing strategy. They simply have an overarching image.

In some cases, areas with gestalt images are large enough to be termed ‘macro-regions’, defined by Joseph Nye (2009) as a limited number of states linked by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence. They can be created by geography (e.g. the Black Sea Region, the Alps Region), politics (Benelux), etc.

Looking for transnational co-branding initiatives at macro-region level, the Baltic and Scandinavia (the Nordic Region) have emerged as one of the few relevant initiatives. In an attempt to complete the European picture, the research carried out as part of this

report, analysed the existing transnational EGTCs and screened the projects supported by the different programmes under the 2007-2013 European Territorial Cooperation policy (ETC). No initiative was found beyond the objective of transnational tourism or cluster development.

Both the Baltic Sea States and the Nordic countries are often depicted as regions with harsh weather, located 'off the beaten track' in the corner of Europe and both are newcomers as international tourism destinations by comparison with Europe's cultural cities or its Southern warm weather destinations ³⁷. As such, they have been keen to integrate, at some extent, into common values and qualifications, and to position themselves differently in the mind-set of potential investors and tourists.



One recognizable image of Scandinavia. Source NN – norden.org, <http://www.norden.org/en>

³⁷ Therkelsen, A. & Gram, M. (2010) Branding Europe – Between nations, regions and continents, *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 10 (2), 107-128.

Co-branding the Baltic Sea Region, a painstaking exploratory initiative with uncertain future ³⁸

Last year saw the ending of a 5-year journey towards a common marketing platform at the scale of the Baltic Sea Region ³⁹, which targeted visitors and talents and investors, along with an exploration on the marco-regional identity.

That journey has consisted of two successive Interreg BSR projects: BaltMet Promo (2009-2011) and One BSR (September 2012 – September 2014). After several pilots in relation to each of the aforementioned audiences, BaltMet Promo delivered a set of policy recommendations (the Policy Action Plan for the Marketing of the Baltic Sea Region), which inspired the One BSR project. The Policy Action Plan put forward 4 arguments in favour of more BSR-level marketing, while recognizing difficulties for a single and coherent brand image: market size argument; image transfer argument; economies of scale argument; and product development argument.

The origin of these projects is to be found in an active and motivated team of individuals in the Baltic metropolises network, who “happened to be at the same spot at the same time, sharing the same vision” – as explained by Jenni Jäänheimo, currently Project Planning Officer at the City of Helsinki Environment Centre –, as well as the leadership of Helsinki in the network in recent years. Thus, significantly, cities were the engine of this attempt of transnational co-branding.

It is though important to mention that the idea to market and brand the Baltic Sea Region as a whole came up at the beginning of the 2000s during meetings of the Baltic Development Forum (BDF), a high-level networking and think-tank organization, which further promoted it during the decade. To be added to the background is the emergence during the 1990s and 2000s of a number of transnational and Pan-Baltic projects, networks and forums related to tourism, investment promotion and culture ⁴⁰. Finally, the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), acted as an additional incentive, as it was seen by public and private stakeholders as a strong indicator of European support ⁴¹.

³⁸ The study of the BSR case has combined desk research and interviews with a few of the individuals involved in the BaltMet Promo and One BSR projects: Jenny Antonen, Director of marketing & communications at Helsinki Business Hub; Jenni Jäänheimo, Project Planning Officer at the City of Helsinki Environment Centre; and Adrian Solitander, Consultant at Tendensor AB.

³⁹ The Baltic Sea Region includes EU member states Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden and Northern parts of Germany, as well as Norway, North-west regions of Russia and Belarus.

⁴⁰ More information about this gradual process can be found in *Place-branding and Place-Promotion Efforts in the Baltic Sea Region – A situation analysis*, a report by Marcus Andersson. Go to the chapter “Transnational Baltic Sea Region efforts and actors”.

⁴¹ The strategy included a Horizontal Action inviting stakeholders to coordinate and support activities to boost joint promotion and regional identity building (HA Promo).

A strong feature of the initiative is the endeavor to build a partnership and further engage stakeholders according to a triple-helix and multi-level governance model.

- BaltMet Promo brought together 9 partners: the Cities of Helsinki, Riga, Vilnius and Warsaw, plus Berlin Partner for Business and Technology (the German capital marketing company), Greater Helsinki Promotion Ltd, Finnish Aalto University School of Economics, the Research Institute of the Finnish Economy and BDF. Beyond the partnership, a number of national promotion agencies, regional and city governments, pan-Baltic organizations, academia and business entities participated in four Policy Roundtables.
- ONE BSR showcased a larger and more diverse partnership (17): 6 metropolitan cities⁴², 6 national/regional development companies⁴³, 3 research institutions⁴⁴ and 3 transnational networks⁴⁵.

The following is a highlight of the main achievements of both BaltMet Promo and ONE BSR projects⁴⁶.

- **Baltic identity - brand and “we-feeling”.** From the start, it was assumed that the region does not have a unique identity nor a strongly recognized image. Activities around this issue in BaltMet Promo focused on research. On the one hand, there was an analysis of the state-of-the-art of place-branding in the Baltic Sea Region. On the other hand, “On Identity–No Identity”⁴⁷ was a theoretical and intellectual effort on the issues of common identity, common culture and history, produced by an academic.

ONE BSR delivered an additional report, a portfolio of Baltic Sea Region images and stories, which includes “anti-stories” that nuanced the elements of the narrative. Interestingly, it also developed activities around the building of a “we-feeling” – a term coined by the project – through a kind of identity dialogue involving 19 bloggers and a number of social media users and the creation of a region-wide digital social media tool called *NewsWave*.

⁴² Stockholm, Hamburg and Saint-Petersburg joined Helsinki, project leader once again, Riga and Warsaw.

⁴³ The Swedish Institute, Tallinn-based Business Support and Credit Management Foundation, Helsinki Region’s Culminatium Innovation Oy Ltd, Greater Helsinki Promotion, Forum Virium Helsinki, Gdansk Economic Development Agency.

⁴⁴ The University of Helsinki, Estonian think-tank Praxis and Latvian Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences.

⁴⁵ BDF plus cultural network ARS BALTICA and ScanBalt, an association which promotes the development of a BioRegion.

⁴⁶ Both project outputs are available at the ONE BSR website: <http://onebsr.eu/>

⁴⁷ Henningsen B., *On Identity – No Identity, An Essay on the Constructions, Possibilities and Necessities for Understanding a European Macro Region: The Baltic Sea*, 2011.

- **Investment promotion.** The main output of BaltMet Promo was the design of an investor's guide, presenting assets, areas of business opportunities and investment promotion agencies (IPAs). The report addressed both the BSR as a whole and Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Northern Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, North-Western Russia and Sweden individually. The various IPAs, 6 national and 3 operating at metropolitan or regional level, were involved in the drafting of the report. ONE BSR developed a digital tool, <http://www.investinbsr.com>, which consists of an interactive map, allowing to identify IPAs and business clusters geographically – Hamburg, Berlin and Norway were added to the previous areas.

Beyond these tools, the overarching main goal was to move towards concrete cooperation between IPAs. In this perspective, trust building was the first necessary step. In a context of favourable general will to collaborate, ONE BSR organized seven meetings between 11 IPAs. They allowed the exchange of experiences and good practices, but also the analysis of potential fields of collaboration. An important step was taken with the design of a business plan on cross-border cooperation in investment promotion, which provides a comprehensive list of possible cooperation activities.

- **Talent attraction.** The issue was first addressed in BaltMet Promo by a pilot around the idea of attracting foreign talents in the film industry, with a special focus on Japan. A 3-day Baltic Sea Region–Japan Coproduction Forum was arranged, inviting 9 young Japanese filmmakers to share experiences and consider collaboration opportunities with fellows from the BSR (they were also taken on a study visit across the region). Additionally, a virtual guidebook was created on coproduction possibilities and information on film industries in the region.

The main output on talent attraction in ONE BSR was a toolkit on talent attraction, which provides a set of local and regional best practices and national policy recommendations about varied issues such as migration policies, language barriers, housing issues, etc. However, no suggestion regarding further collaboration at transnational level was provided.

- **Tourist attraction.** BaltMet Promo developed a pilot on the marketing of BSR as single tourist destination. Again, Japan was the target market – tourists and tourism operators. The idea was to design and test a transnational tourism concept. The first step was to achieve a demand/supply research, which led to come up with the “Live like locals” concept. A competition was then organized between Japanese bloggers, as this media has a huge importance in the country, with the most talented bloggers being influential prescribers. The 3 selected winners were offered a trip to the Baltic Sea Region. Additional activities to promote the new concept included the organization of a tourism seminar in Tokyo

and the dissemination of brochures and material during the event and further matchmaking initiatives.

The development of this tourism concept was further developed as part of ONE BSR, with activation activities on the demand and supply sides and further marketing activities. The ambition was that this concrete experience could help to inspire the development of new tourism products. The project also investigated the potential of the US as a target market and produced a destination guide of a range of Baltic cities - Hamburg, Helsinki, Riga, St.Petersburg and Warsaw.



Participating cities at the ONE BSR project - One Baltic Sea Region

Since the ONE BSR project ended, there has been a lot of uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the initiative. While the projects outputs are being kept available on the project website, the investor website news section is no longer fed, for instance; NewsWave, which seems to have raised positive attention and was regularly followed, is currently in “sleeping mode”. The termination of the EU-funding comes first to mind, but there are a number of other reasons:

- Concerning leadership, it is unlikely that any city will take on the role, although the tradition of city collaboration is an important asset which shall not be abandoned. The Baltic Metropolises Network’s future has been in question for some time. The Baltic Development Forum appears as a relevant body but it has limited resources and depends on competitive funding. The Council of Baltic Sea

States – a forum for regional inter-governmental cooperation between Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden – could be a legitimate leader. Furthermore, unlike the activities on investment promotion, the work carried out on tourism did not really involve key tourism stakeholders, such as national tourism boards or other umbrella organization such as the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum. The lesson is that, at some point, though initially promoted and led by cities, transnational co-branding need to be also supported by the State level.

- As far as the cooperation on investment promotion is concerned, the ONE BSR project has been successful in establishing bold contacts between some of the participant IPAs. A new meeting, organized by the Baltic Development Forum, took place last January 2015. They agreed to a number of follow-up activities and practical cooperation tools, for example on competence development. It appears that there is room for further collaboration.

Getting commitment on funding from the IPAs is another challenge. According to Jenny Antonen, the director of marketing & communications at Helsinki Business Hub, if real business interest is found, cooperation should go on with or without EU funding. She thinks there is clear cost saving potential, a vision which is however not fully shared. Another significant limitation, as a lesson to be taken into account, is that the dialogue between IPAs has mostly involved technical staff but few top decision-makers.

- Place branding, at any scale, demands a huge effort to build up a solid and unifying main narrative (to be then developed into detail storytelling to each audience), and it should be a collective effort. It cannot be constrained in time and resources to only an EU-funded project and, over all, it demands clear political backing. Adrian Solitander from the consultancy firm Tendensor AB, which supported the partnership on the topic of Baltic identity dialogue, pointed out: “those persons who had been involved in BSR cooperation before usually were the ones with the most elaborate narratives to tell. Locals and talents who were less used to this context usually had a hard time finding more deep ways of expressing anything about the BSR (positive or negative). Their feedback usually lacked reasoning on why a narrative element was or wasn’t relevant for the BSR.”
- Finally, there is also a general issue of cohesion of the Baltic Sea and different expectations within the region. The new Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – which are the core of the area, are highly motivated. Then, the level of enthusiasm or conviction for collaboration at the BSR level varies among the rest of the countries – some of them with clear global positioning like Germany. Some of these countries also belong to other strong cultural spheres, with accurate identities, such as the Scandinavian/Nordic countries.

Nordic Countries, intergovernmental commitment to coordinate place branding activities

It is likely not a bold assumption. The Nordic Countries usually evokes a kind of unity in many foreign individuals' minds, fuelled by the notoriety of their welfare systems and top positions in most of the global rankings about quality of life, openness, social wellbeing and innovation. Another singular feature of this transnational area, consisting of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, is the pioneer and long-standing inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary cooperation, with the Helsinki Treaty – the founding act of institutionalized partnership and culmination of a formal dialogue which started at the beginning of the 20th century – having celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2012.

The Nordic cooperation nowadays stands on:

- High-level political bodies where national representatives from the five countries and the self-governing Denmark's Greenland and Faroe Islands and Finland's Åland, get together on a regular basis: the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council (composed of the national Prime Ministers).
- Nordic Committee for Co-operation: senior officials from Ministries, executive committee of the Council of Ministers' Secretariat, dealing with the day-to-day.
- A large number of consultative bodies and common initiatives, including the Culture Fund, Nordic Culture Point, Nordic Innovation Centre, NordForsk (a funding agency on research cooperation and infrastructure), the Nordic Investment Bank, the Federation of Norden Associations (FNF) and 12 cross-border cooperation bodies.

The coordination of place branding activities has emerged in the political agenda recently, in 2013, with declarations from the Nordic Council of Ministers and Nordic Council which pointed out the opportunity to be seized in the face of two main positive circumstances:

- The financial crisis and the subsequent responses from Nordic countries have increased the attention on global positioning and visibility.
- The success of "Nordic Cool 2013", a series of cultural events held in Washington D.C which featured parallel promotional activities. Beyond its positive outcomes, the initiative also allowed to realize that joint initiatives require time, resources and strategic approach.

"At the moment there is great interest and curiosity in the Region internationally. This does not just apply to literature, film and design, but also our social structures and the values on which they are based. There is a perception that we seem to have the answers for some of the questions being posed all over

the world just now (...) We should use this curiosity - both to inspire others but also to strengthen our society" ⁴⁸

After a pilot study carried out in previous months, which highlighted broad support from the public and private sectors, the "Strategy for International Branding of the Nordic Region for 2015-2018" was adopted by the Nordic Council of Ministers in October 2014. Designed to "brand the Nordic countries under a single and unified concept" in order to increase both competitiveness and international influence, the strategy is seen as a first step towards a long-term initiative that should bring together stakeholders around guidelines and further on tangible tools and support.

The document identifies a strong ground of commonalities in geography, society, history, culture which summing up make up the "Nordic perspective" and values. It claims that "the Nordic region can be described as a brand, i.e the overall image of associations, feelings, experiences and expectations aroused in the recipient". Another important element of the approach is the recognition that "nothing, neither a country nor a region, really controls its image, especially in today's transparent, fast-moving and increasingly digital communication landscape. The image is earned (...) as you have to be what you claim to be and want to be".

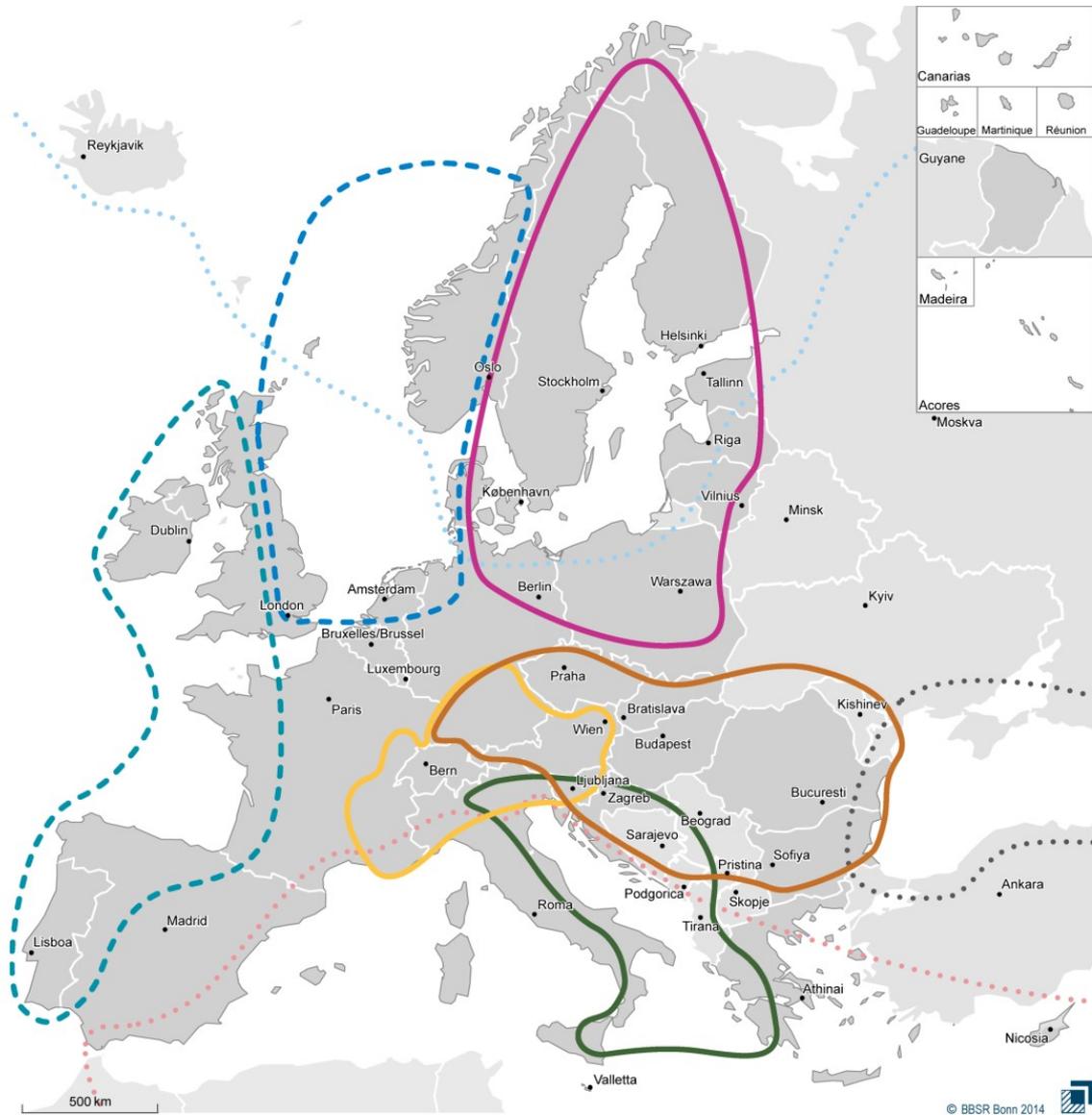
Aware of the need to clarify common messages and focus on areas where collaboration is likely to create added value, also taking into account the current political priorities of Nordic cooperation and countries, the strategy identifies four main "branding areas": the Nordic social model; the Nordic Region as a knowledge society; Nordic creativity and innovation; Nordic culture and nature ⁴⁹.

The strategy also sets out priorities in terms of geographic markets. On the one hand, "regional neighbours": EU countries, Baltic Sea area and Northern America. On the other hand, "remote markets", with a special interest in Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa because of their increasing global influence. "The greater the distance from the Nordic region, the less is known about each Nordic country. This makes the Nordic region a more relevant concept, and joint Nordic initiatives will produce greater benefit".

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat has been entrusted to implement a set of tools and monitor the initiative -"tools that will inspire, help and facilitate the branding work for all stakeholders", such as brand platform, guidelines for the identification of target groups and checklist for evaluation. Workshops for engagement and the preparation of implementation were to be held from mid-2015. The Nordic Council of Ministers has pledged to allocate from 2016 budget to its Secretariat to identify, prepare and coordinate major initiatives. The main lesson of the Nordic Countries case regarding transnational co-branding is that political backing is a crucial factor to make things go forward.

⁴⁸ Eygló Harðardóttir, Iceland's Minister for Nordic Co-operation, Nordic Council, Stockholm, 28-30 October 2014.

⁴⁹ See the video <http://www.norden.org/en/news-and-events/videos/the-nordic-perspective>



Core areas of macro-regional strategies

EU strategies of new type

- Danube Region Strategy
- Baltic Sea Region Strategy
- Alpine Region Strategy*
- Adriatic and Ionian Region Strategy

Other EU strategies

- Mediterranean Strategy
- Northern Dimension
- Black Sea Synergy

Strategies at macro-regional level

- North Sea
- Atlantic Arc

Data basis: Spatial Monitoring System Europe, European Commission
Geometric basis: GfK GeoMarketing, NUTS 2 regions
Authors: T. Panwinkler, W. Görmar

*EU strategy for the Alpine Region currently in preparation
Core areas of macro-regional strategies are schematically displayed and do not match actual borders.

Macro-regions in the European Territorial Cooperation

5. A model to determine the feasibility of transnational co-branding

Working in collaboration with Professor Nigel Morgan of Surrey University, we conducted a literature review of transnational branding theory and practice. In this respect, macro-regional cooperation has not attracted much attention from researchers. One of the few such papers was published by Salines in 2010, who argues that macro-regions can offer higher problem-solving capacity than individual EU member states in a number of fields such as innovation policy or environmental protection, as it might be easier to achieve common understanding and mutual trust at this level ⁵⁰.

Whilst one of the AT.Brand goals is to explore if a coherent place brand for the European Atlantic Façade makes sense or not, it is necessary to create the right framework for the objective assessment of the potential for an Atlantic Arc brand. At this point, we will highlight some of Professor Morgan's key findings in this respect, and we will then apply those principles to the Atlantic Arc.

For co-branding to have real potential, several of the following critical success factors need to be present:

- **Common interest** – To what extent do the constituent parts of the macro region believe there is value and potential in co-branding? And importantly are the reasons for collaboration consistent across the macro-region?
- **Common identity** – Is there a common identity, or any significant commonalities at least, in the minds of potential audiences? A certain sense of common belonging seems necessary for the long-term viability of cooperation and from a branding perspective, this has probably to be underpinned by a common identity/narrative.
- **Collaboration and decision making mechanism** – Is there an efficient and cost effective governance model? Long-term success requires the effective involvement of stakeholders and grassroots participants in the macro-region. This means that cooperation is not only an elite-driven process, which will evaporate as soon as the reason for initially coming together fades. It has to be more deeply rooted.
- **A catalyst** - Is there a powerful catalyst to bring the constituent parts together? In the case of macro-regions within the EU, the Commission's involvement as a

⁵⁰ Salines, M. (2010) Success Factors of Macro-Regional Cooperation: The Example of the Baltic Sea Region, Bruges Political Research Papers/Cahiers de recherche politique de Bruges, 12, College of Europe/Collège d'Europe.

facilitator of cooperation has been important. In this respect, the benchmarking analysis shows how important is getting clear political backing at top level.

- **Sustainability** – Can the partnership and collaboration process be sustained over time? Can the motivations for coming together endure? Are there marketing efficiencies or is there funding available to allow the collaboration to continue over the ground?

At this time, it is worth to distinguish between overall transnational territorial cooperation and transnational co-branding. The former may work without the need for co-branding, but for co-branding to be successful collaboration is vital.

For co-branding to be meaningful, and not just rhetoric, there must be potential benefits in terms of upgrading competitive identities (e.g. by increasing the number of assets to be exhibited) or pooling resources to reach common goals/targets. However, territorial collaboration which does not involve co-branding can also create substantial benefits indeed, as it is already in the Atlantic area. Anyhow, at a large extent, integrated place branding is a sophisticated policy, and consequently not every institutional framework is ready for that challenge.

All in all, in order to objectively assess the real potential for co-branding the Atlantic Arc, we have used a model where Facilitating Factors, Motivating Factors, Collaboration Outcomes and Inhibiting Factors are taking into consideration.

Framework Model for Transnational Co-Branding

Facilitating Factors	Collaboration Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A common perception of interests & agencies with shared philosophies (shared benefits & responsibilities) • A common identity and/or geography (similar markets, complementary products) • A well-balanced cooperation method involving stakeholders (solid networks & good communication) • The involvement of the EU as trigger and facilitator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy realisation (increased product portfolio, greater place competitiveness, formal marketing & brand management programmes, wider market research, cost efficiency) • Organisational learning (knowledge transfer, organisational innovation) • Social capital building (enhanced relationships and networks)
Motivating Factors	Inhibiting Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing product offering • Leveraging each place's offerings • Recognising the significance of knowledge transfer • Cost reductions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differing partner priorities • Different market directions • Lack of daring actions & focus • Resource constraints • Stakeholder risk • Conflicting stakeholder interests

Source: Nigel Morgan, Surrey University

6. Understanding the Atlantic dimension

Between November 2014 and March 2015, Taso-Heavenly contacted 343 Atlantic stakeholders and experts, principally via email, in order to collect views and opinions about the place of the Atlantic dimension in city or region identities and brands, and the collaboration potential in the macro-region. The breakdown was the following:

- 67 local authorities/development agencies;
- 17 regional authorities/development agencies;
- 24 researchers/experts;
- 11 transnational networks;
- 4 EU institutions;
- 33 other stakeholders;
- 92 “Atlantic” members of the Committee of the Regions;
- 97 “Atlantic” members of the European Parliament.

In total, visions and opinions were received from 50 representatives through a mix of face to face and telephone interviews (32) and written responses to an online survey (18), including AT.Brand partners. Contributions came from the various countries belonging to the Atlantic Area in equal proportions (9-10 from France, Spain, UK, Ireland), with however an inferior representation of Portugal (5). The majority of these contributions came from representatives of local authorities or development agencies (32), followed by representatives of regional authorities, development agencies or associated stakeholders (5), experts or academics (5). Atlantic and European stakeholders completed the list of participants, including European Commission’s DG MARE and DG REGIO, along with Leading Cities, an international network of urban policy practitioners based in the US.⁵¹

The engagement process also involved a number of interactive exercises during the AT.Brand workshop in La Rochelle. In these exercises, representatives from the AT Brand partner cities explored the motivating and inhibiting factors associated with the Atlantic Arc, discussed prospective positioning ideas and prioritised candidate shared values and behaviours associated with potential co-branding for the Atlantic Arc.

⁵¹ The annex to this report includes the complete list of contributors, the interview guide and written questionnaire, as well as the complete answers of contributors.

6.1. Interpretation of the Atlantic Arc dimension

Unsurprisingly, given the diverse nature of the cities and regions consulted, there was a wide range of thoughts and opinions on the meaning and understanding of the Atlantic dimension. Some verbatim quotes to the question “What does the Atlantic dimension mean to you?” are included below:

A European territory which shares the Atlantic coast and therefore share common resources. It is therefore potentially a region where we can create economic partnerships.

An opportunity to be truly international. To respect and reflect the diversity of all of those who are involved and who can work together to achieve joint aims.

An opportunity for cooperation on a broad canvas amongst culturally compatible but different communities facing similar opportunities and challenges.

Atlantic gives us some definition in distant markets. It helps put us on the map in markets like China.

The maritime dimension, the Western Coast, the challenges and opportunities related to the Ocean, in line with the focus of the EC strategy for the area

The Atlantic evokes the great discoveries to America, the new world..... The Atlantic Arc evokes the periphery of Europe, medium and large cities that are far from the European backbone, which however display quite satisfactory development.

We are enthusiastic about collaborating with other European Cities. However to a certain extent the “Atlantic Dimension” is an abstract concept.

Atlantic dimension represents an opportunity as a natural resource to exploit for local development: a sea of opportunities". Sea-related activities: navigation, nautical sports.

It is evident that there is no single nor indeed consistent interpretation of the European Atlantic façade as cross-sector concept or idea. It appears that perspectives vary not just from the geographical location of the cities consulted on this issue, but they also depend on the position and roles of the individuals interviewed. However, there is a range of key perspectives which can be grouped as follows:

- **The Geo-Political dimension** - For some the Atlantic represents a sort of geo-political region located on the periphery of Europe. This in turn is interpreted as an area of potential common interest to encourage collaboration with a view to increasing political influence within the EU. Others see it in practical terms as a potential source of additional EU funding.

“A European territory which shares the Atlantic coast and therefore share common resources. It is therefore potentially a region where we can create economic partnerships”

“An opportunity for cooperation on a broad canvas amongst culturally compatible but different communities facing similar opportunities and challenges”

“An opportunity to be truly international. To respect and reflect the diversity of all of those who are involved and who can work together to achieve joint aims”

“We are enthusiastic about collaborating with other European Cities. However to a certain extent the “Atlantic Dimension” is an abstract concept”

“Cities use it when applying for grants and certain trenches of European funds. So it can have a very practical and tangible benefit”

“Europe and cooperation are the key words which come to my mind. It represents a strong axis of European geography, quite relevant in geopolitical terms”

“In the context of the EU maritime policy, the Atlantic dimension refers to any kind of maritime activity that provides job opportunities to the surrounding communities of the Atlantic Ocean and tackles common challenges”

- **The Maritime dimension** - Many clearly linked the Atlantic with its coastal location and physical geography, which results in clear associations with the Ocean and related industries and activities.

“A sea of opportunities...sea-related activities, navigation, nautical sports”

“Shared maritime space, the dynamic feature of the ocean, sports, nature and wild spaces“

“Life styles related to the sea, the tough climate and sea conditions, the struggle against elements of ships”

“The Sea and maritime associations are vital”

“It's is about the North Atlantic not the Atlantic as a whole, Africa has also shores on the Atlantic as does North and South America but here we are talking about one part”

“Nautical tourism, natural heritage, port cities, the Ocean, a specific climate, seafood...”

“The maritime dimension, the Western Coast, the challenges and opportunities related to the Ocean”

- **The Transatlantic dimension** – For several mention of the Atlantic conjured up associations and links with the countries on the other side of the Atlantic, in particular the United States. Allied to this were associations with migration and trading with other countries.

“... Spanish emigration at the beginning of the 19th century... migrations and mobility”

“Proximity to North America, link between Europe and North America”

“From Lisbon came in the 15th century the explorers of the New World, leading to the discovery of Brazil, the sea route to India, etc.”

“The Atlantic evokes the great discoveries to America, the new world...”

“When I think of Atlantic I think transatlantic I think of outbound not inbound. I think of going to America”

“The Atlantic is analogous to historical relationships, tradition longstanding connections and partnership”

“The USA – when I think of the Atlantic I immediately think of the main nation on the other side. I guess the phrase Transatlantic is what I am talking about”

- **The Character dimension** – Several respondents delved deeper into the character or spirit associated with the Atlantic. For them, the Atlantic represents an idea or a way of thinking which results from being on the edge of a vast ocean and on the edge of Europe. This dimension is often closely associated with the Transatlantic dimension. It is particularly interesting in the context of developing a coherent brand personality and will be explored in more detail here after.

“A certain idea of cosmopolitanism, Vigo is the most cosmopolitan city of Galicia”

“In a European perspective, the Atlantic Area is the open door to the world, opposed to the Mediterranean Area, a closed space”

“The struggle against elements of ships, the challenge to go as far as possible. This feature can be used to draw a continuity with the new challenges faced by cities”

“Starting point to the other, the elsewhere”

*“It’s the end of something – Lands End, Cape Finisterre. Working at the Edge.
Being on the edge. Independent innovative quirky on the edge”*

“The Sea has shaped the resilience and character of the people”

*“Non-Conformism – being at the Edge makes you think different and
reject conventional ways of doing things”*

*“A Heritage of working and self-made people, who have always looked for
opportunities and had to overcome inclement natural conditions”*

*“The climate has “shaped the men”: an Atlantic character, adventurous, mild
(compared to the exuberant feature of the Mediterraneans)”*



Image courtesy of Marketing Liverpool

- **The Lifestyle dimension** – A number of respondents saw the Atlantic dimension in terms of lifestyle. This was particularly prevalent amongst respondents from France. Thus, La Rochelle and San Sebastian are both paradigm of a lifestyle with a strong personality, different to the Cote d’Azur or French Riviera’s. This is non-glamorous and more affordable, more connected to nature (surf, navigation in the high sea...) and adventurous spirit.

“...quality of life, pleasant mild climate – clearly the climate is dominated by the prevailing winds from the Atlantic”

“It’s an escape – it’s calmer than the city”

“The Mediterranean is more superficial. The Atlantic is really authentic lifestyle”

At this point, it is perhaps important to consider the understanding and interpretation of the Atlantic dimension in the US, as the US is often regarded as the natural counterpart of the European Atlantic façade.

Although there has not been extensive research in the US there is some evidence that it is difficult for people in the US to clearly distinguish between an Atlantic dimension and a European dimension. Answers to questions often referred Europe as a whole rather than the Atlantic region. Moreover, perception of Atlantic values could be quite different in the US compared to Europe. Whereas in Europe there is a sense of adventure, discovery and even risk-taking, in the US the associations are more based on heritage and tradition.

“Atlantic is analogous to historical relationships, tradition, longstanding connections and partnership”

“The level of risk increases the further west you head. The Wild West for us is the Pacific Coast. Atlantic is safe, and comfortable”

6.2. Associated key words and values



Once again, respondents offered a wide variety of words and values which they associated with the Atlantic. Some of the most consistent themes were as follows:

- **Discovery** – Linked to the historical role of many of the cities as ports of embarkation on voyages of discovery. Particularly their links with the Americas and the notion of a new life in the new world. Related words include “pioneering” “outward looking”, “gateway” and “international”.
- **Wild** – part of a group of words formed from images of the physical nature of the Atlantic coastline. Other words in this group might include, “rugged” and “rough”.
- **Authentic** – a sense that Atlantic is perhaps more real than other parts of constituent countries. Words which could be group with authentic include “unspoiled” and “natural”.
- **Innovative** – perhaps associated again with the notion of “discovery” and the trading and mercantile role played by Atlantic Cities. But not only. Along with the Ruhr basin, most impressive productive transitions in the last decades from fordism to post-industrialism has taken place in the urban Atlantic façade. In their respective countries, cities like Oporto, Gijón, Bilbao, San Sebastian, Nantes, Bristol, Cardiff, Liverpool, Manchester or Glasgow are now synonymous of creativity, urban excellence and constant innovation. Linked words in the group include “opportunity” and “entrepreneurial spirit”.
- **Non-Conformist** – possibly resulting from the state of mind or character following-on from not being central within constituent countries and in Europe. The word “Quirky” might be another take on this. As is “Unbounded” reflecting the notion thinking and ideas not being bound by conventional wisdom.
- **Celtic** – almost all of the nations within the Atlantic region have elements of Celtic heritage, although the extent of Celtic associations varies considerably with some cities and regions having little or no Celtic references. As a matter of fact, the term Celtic could be translated here as Spiritual, also laying upon emblematic Christian elements like the St. James’ Way.
- **Vast** – a direct reference to the scale of the Atlantic Ocean and its significance in world terms.
- **Peripheral** – A direct reference to the geographical location of the macro-region in European terms. “The Edge” results from similar thinking.

6.3. Role of the Atlantic in existing messaging and brand narratives

The role of the Atlantic in current messaging and brand narratives ranges from being “central” for some Cities and regions to being “non-existent” for other places. The key determinant of the degree of use of “the Atlantic” is the extent to which the place in question sees itself as being on the Atlantic Coast.

Basically some places which are part of the Atlantic Arc, as defined in European political terms, do not always see themselves as being part of the Atlantic in terms of popular culture and everyday language.

Perhaps the best example of this is found on the island of Ireland. Major cities on the eastern coast such as Belfast and Dublin do not use the term “Atlantic” to any significant extent. This is because they see themselves as being part of the Irish Sea as opposed to the Atlantic Ocean – they face east rather than west. Compare this to the west coast of Ireland where the Atlantic plays a much more significant role. Perhaps the primary example of this is the development of the “Wild Atlantic Way” tourism trail, which runs along much of Ireland’s west coast. It is interesting that even a City like Derry/ Londonderry, despite being in the west of Northern Ireland, makes very little reference to the Atlantic because although it is less than 10 miles from the open sea, it is technically of the banks of Lough Foyle.

“Being based on the Atlantic seaboard is a source of pride as the location offers a multitude of quality of life experiences that can have an urban and rural dimension” County Mayo –Ireland

*“Atlantic per se does not feature in the narrative at present”
Dún Laoghaire – Ireland*

“...not a great deal. We generally do not regard ourselves as being on the Atlantic coast” Belfast, Northern Ireland

“Wouldn’t play a significant part. Wild Atlantic Way is important for Ireland as a whole. Although the Irish Sea is technically part of the Atlantic – it is mostly perceived as the wild west coast” Dublin, Ireland

In Great Britain, the extent in which Atlantic references are used varies considerably. Cities like Cardiff, Liverpool, Swansea and Glasgow have a very strong maritime heritage but the use of the term Atlantic in brand narratives is extremely limited. This, despite several references to the Atlantic in place names within the cities, such as “Atlantic Wharf” in Cardiff, “Atlantic Tower” in Liverpool, or “Atlantic Quay” in Glasgow.

It is important to distinguish between maritime references and the Atlantic, and this distinction will be explored more fully in the next section of this report. The part of the UK in which the Atlantic plays a most prominent role is South West England. The brand for

the City of Plymouth is “Britain’s Ocean City” whilst in Cornwall the A39 trunk road is known as the “Atlantic Highway”.

“The Atlantic does not come into the way we market Blackpool. We are basically a seaside resort”

“Our “Britain’s Ocean City” branding reflects the importance of the Atlantic Ocean on our past, present and future” – Plymouth, England.

“Not specifically in terms of Atlantic Region. However Liverpool’s historical links with the US do play an important part in the narrative and messaging” – Liverpool, England

“Nothing really. We never say the Atlantic. We say the Irish Sea or perhaps the Bristol Channel” Swansea, Wales

However the Atlantic plays far more prominent role in many of the cities in Portugal, Spain and particularly France, especially where they are western facing and they directly front the Atlantic Ocean. In these cities the Atlantic dimension is much more real and pervasive and has usage in popular culture. As mentioned previously, in these countries there is a much clearer sense of an Atlantic lifestyle or character.

*“The Atlantic has a very strong link to our brand narrative... the particular colour (called Glas in the Breton language) we use in our marketing and the promotion of our economic strategy refer to the light emitted from the Breton sea and sky”
Rennes, France*

“The Ocean is omnipresent” Brest, France

*“The Atlantic in San Sebastian implies a cosmopolitan and open culture”
San Sebastian, Spain*

“Loire-Atlantique is the name of the Department so it is directly associated with the Atlantic” Saint- Nazaire, France

“The history of Viana and the sea, since medieval times, their relationship with the sea economy have led to the promotion of the concept of “nautical city of the Atlantic” Viana do Castelo, Portugal

Maritime references

Given the fact that most of the places interviewed were either port cities or coastal regions, it comes as no surprise that the maritime dimension and aspects of maritime heritage play an important part in current messaging. Virtually all the places retain a very strong interest in the sea and this comes through in wide variety of ways:

- Ship/Boat Building – e.g. Belfast, Saint Nazaire, La Rochelle,
- Export and Trade – e.g. Cardiff, Liverpool, Swansea, Lisbon, Cork
- Tourism – e.g. Santander, Blackpool, La Rochelle, Belfast, West of Ireland
- Sport and Activities – e.g. Rennes, La Rochelle, Swansea, Cornwall
- Culture – e.g. Belfast, Liverpool
- Energy and Science – e.g. Brest, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
- Ecology – e.g. Faro, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
- Gastronomy/Food – e.g. Santander, Gijon, West of Ireland
- Adventure and Discovery – e.g. Plymouth, Lisbon
- Cruising – e.g. Dublin, Lisbon, Saint-Nazaire
- Naval – e.g. Plymouth, Brest, Viana do Castelo
- Migration – e.g. Dublin, Liverpool, Vigo

*“From San Sebastian’s point of view, being located next to the sea plays an important role in our high quality of life and beauty of our environment”
San Sebastian, Spain*

“Expressions of the maritime heritage are to be found in the shipbuilding industry and in gastronomy” County Roscommon, Ireland

“Maritime heritage and resources are central aspects of strategy and communication” Brest, France

“The Sea is a constant element of the narrative” Vigo, Spain

“Developing culture as a tourism product, as well as nautical tourism, our maritime heritage always emerges as a key message” Faro, Portugal

“Yes through ship building. We talk about our engineering heritage, our capacity to make things. Our traditional role as the industrial capital of the Island of Ireland. The Titanic specifically is now our lead story from a visitor perspective and through the Titanic we tell the story of the history of Belfast” Belfast, Northern Ireland

“The maritime heritage has also influenced the built environment and played a large part in the World heritage site declaration. Liverpool was a city of global influence” Liverpool, England.

In terms of co-branding potential it is important to assess whether there is a particular aspect of maritime culture and heritage which is particular to the Atlantic arc or whether they are shared characteristics with coastal regions and ports all over the world.



Port of Gijón © Javier Perez Rodríguez

7. Assessment of the potential of Co-Branding the Atlantic Arc

In this section we will consider in more depth the true potential for a cohesive and consistent “Atlantic brand”, able to add value to cities and regions in the area in terms of strategic communication. To that aim we will use two main techniques.

Firstly, we will consider the situation of the Atlantic Arc in relation to the framework model for transnational co-Branding. Secondly, we will apply some tests to determine whether potential brand values here emerged offer a real potential for a credible brand proposition for the macro-region.

7.1. Applying the framework model for transnational co-branding

Facilitating Factors

- A common perception of interests and agencies with shared philosophies.

The cities within the AT.Brand partnership have displayed an enthusiasm to explore the potential for co-branding the Atlantic Arc region. However, at present there are varying degrees of conviction and belief that the Atlantic dimension can add true value other than through tactical usage in certain scenarios. When you extend this to cities which are not directly within the AT.Brand project, the understanding of the potential and role of the Atlantic brand becomes vaguer. To some extent, the options need to be made more tangible to allow a clearer and more consistent understanding.

It is probably true to say that the initial motivation of partner cities to participate in AT.Brand was the potential to access funding to facilitate innovative branding initiatives within each city. A very real and important factor when one considers the resource constraint issues faced by most destinations.

With no doubt, cities appreciate the development of shared learning amongst partners and there is general interest to give continuity to this collaboration beyond the project timeline. But also this interest is conditioned to deliver tangible outputs and benefits as a result from this collaboration.

- A common identity and/or geography (similar markets, complementary products).

The extent to which there is a common identity will be explored in more detail in the following section. But it is hard to state with conviction that there is common identity covering cities as diverse as Dublin and Faro. There are geographical factors in common most obvious coastal location bordering one of the world’s great oceans. There is also the common factor of a climate dominated by the

influence of the Atlantic Ocean and the prevailing westerly winds⁵². However most people would concede that the physical geography of the Northern half of the region is very different to the more southerly parts of the Iberian Peninsula. There is some evidence that there are elements of character and culture which are shared throughout the region, but the extent to which this would be understood within potential markets is debateable.

The following quotes from the engagement process emphasises this point:

"I do not think the Atlantic positioning is relevant for the development of a brand. A brand must be based on a solid concept, which shall prove attractive to all. Now, evocations around the Atlantic are insufficient to me"

"... the existence of an Atlantic identity is not obvious, beyond sharing the Ocean"

- A well-balanced cooperation method involving stakeholders (solid networks & good communication)

The AT.Brand project and other Interreg-funded projects have acted as a catalyst and enabler for cities to come together. This builds upon a history of collaboration projects across the region. There are also a number of informal collaborations within subsets of cities and areas within the region because of specific shared interests amongst certain places.

And of course the Conference of the Atlantic Arc Cities is a well-established network for collaboration. Although the membership is still weak, especially in the northern part of the macro-region, no doubt motivation for membership would be increased if there was a specific project or initiative which galvanised interest.

- The involvement of the EU as trigger and facilitator

The involvement of the EU was key not just in terms of supporting the AT.Brand project but in creating the policy framework around the Atlantic Arc and the overall Atlantic cooperation.

Motivating Factors

The motivating factors for collaboration are clear but the potential motivation for co-branding at least within the individual cities are less clear.

- Cost reductions.

Cost savings can only be achieved if the Atlantic dimension somehow replaces some activities which are currently done on an individual city basis. It is feasible that individual marketing efforts in more distant markets could be more cost

⁵² It is the Oceanic Climate zone, which does not cover the South of Portugal which belongs to the Mediterranean domain from the climate point of view.

efficient if a number of Atlantic Arc Cities marketed together⁵³, but by now this type of actions is not very common (Liverpool is doing occasional things in the USA and China, like Nantes-Saint Nazaire, for instance). In Ireland or Portugal, most activity is undertaken by national organisations. Anyway, pooling resources and synchronising agendas in this field require a high degree of maturity, and above all, a common narrative to communicate.

- Knowledge transfer.

The potential for shared learning and knowledge transfer is a significant motivating factor. However co-branding is not a prerequisite to achieve the conditions to encourage knowledge transfer.

- Enhancing the product offering.

There are potentially two ways that the Atlantic dimension can enhance the product. The first is based in the principle that by co-branding and co-marketing it is possible to overcome any product gaps within individual locations and increase the appeal of the region against competitors. A good example would be an Atlantic Coast Cruising initiative to attract more cruise ships and enhance attractiveness of the region versus the more established Mediterranean itineraries. The second is a situation where the inclusion of the Atlantic dimension might enhance the status and add value to an existing brand. An example might be in connection with events and festivals. This will be explored in more depth later.

Collaboration Outcomes

- Strategy realisation.

It is essential that there is a clear strategic outcome and benefit resulting from co-branding. The intention to co-brand cannot be driven solely by political pressures or because there are potential sources of funding. There must be a clear focus on whether co-branding seeks to achieve competitive identities and competitive positionings. That clear focus is not there yet so any recommendations would need to create that focus and clarity.

- Organisational learning.

Knowledge transfer and organisational innovation are important component parts of the AT.Brand initiative. As it is the opportunity to build social capital through enhanced relationships and networks. There is considerable evidence that there is the willingness and potential to continue and extend partnership working

⁵³ As the Baltic Sea Region did when approached Japanese talent for the video game industry.

between Atlantic Arc cities. However, as stated earlier, they are not dependent upon co-branding.

Inhibiting Factors

- Differing partner priorities.

It is clear that although all partners have positive intentions, there are differences in priorities when it comes to the importance of an Atlantic Arc brand as a component part of their brand architecture. For some the focus has to be on establishing credible place brands for their individual cities.

- Different market directions.

It is not surprising that given such a wide variety of cities there are differences in terms of their market focus. Co-branding will have the most value if it possible to identify specific market segments or product niches where the benefits of co-branding are clear.

- Lack of daring actions & focus.

The main issue for each individual city is the need to remain focused when there are many competing demands on their time and budget. There is an understanding of the need to be innovative and to sometimes take risks but this has to be done in the context of a clear business focus. The relevance of the Atlantic dimension in terms of that focus differs widely amongst Atlantic Arc Cities.

- Resource constraints.

This is closely linked to the point above. There is little resource available in most cities and this limits the potential for speculative or experimental activity.

- Stakeholder considerations.

The private sector within the partner cities demand to see relevance and tangible returns from destination and place marketing activity. In some cities most notable those in the North of the region the stakeholders would require a clear and evidence based rationale for Atlantic brand focused activity and for inclusion of the Atlantic within existing messaging. Another important consideration is the active role played by national or regional authorities in fields such as tourism or investment attraction.

In applying the framework model for transnational co-branding to the Atlantic Arc situation, it is clear that there are significant obstacles to overcome. It is far from clear that there is a consistent identity and the degree of difference varies within various parts of the region and different Member States. This has a direct influence on the relevance

of the Atlantic dimension to partner cities, in terms of co-branding and co-marketing. Competing priorities and resource constraints add further complexity.

There is however much clearer support and evidence for continued collaboration. The potential and case for co-branding will increase if there is a **clearer focus in terms of market, product or purpose**.

7.2. Applying tests of relevance and credibility

When Heavenly develop a place brand, they apply a series of tests to determine whether a potential positioning is fit for purpose – to a large degree, it links to the most common gaps in place branding identified by Taso⁵⁴. Although this project is different in that it is about co-branding and is trans-national, we see no reason why these tests should not apply.

- The Differentiation test

Every place in the world is different. Even in the age of increasing homogenisation, there is always something about a place's location, culture, history or personality which makes it special. The specialness of a place is found in its stories, its people, its character and all of these are shaped by its location.

A compelling place brand builds a narrative around these aspects and creates an idea; that little bit of magic that can bring the brand to life. However, the challenge in the Atlantic Arc is even greater because it is not a single place. It is a region extending across many countries with different climates, different people and different languages. So not only do we need to identify a point of difference versus competing regions but ideally that difference should apply equally across the region. So can the Atlantic Arc really express why it is special? Do other regions have a stronger claim?

- The Longevity test

There are many reasons why a place brand positioning doesn't last. Perhaps it was designed around a major event - then when the event is over, the positioning just doesn't seem right any more. Perhaps it's because the brand is associated with a particular political administration and when the administration changes, the brand changes. In this case we would have to build something which is compelling enough to endure if and when there is no European money to support it. Whilst brands need to evolve and adapt in a changing world, when creating a place brand we have to take steps to future-proof it as much as possible.

⁵⁴ See Rivas, Miguel (2015) Reviewing Practices in City Branding, 130 Piece Model Kit. AT.Brand project, Atlantic Programme.

- The People test

Unless the people, businesses and other stakeholders within the place support what is being said and done on their behalf, the foundations of the brand will inevitably be weak. Their full support is needed to build a compelling and distinctive reputation. Very few, if any places can change reputation through conventional advertising spend. The people who live and work there will create content and will be part of the narrative. If the brand for the Atlantic Arc motivates external target audiences, but does not resonate with internal stakeholders ultimately it will fail.

- The Honesty test

When visitors or potential investors actually experience a place they'll soon know the truth. And now social media allows consumers to challenge places and answer back in an instant. We think that social media has given the world a welcome dose of honesty that we need to embrace. In this new age of authenticity, brands need to be fit-for-purpose to thrive. They must be true in what they say and how they behave. The real challenge in this region is that it has to be true across this diverse area. Can the whole region deliver on its promise?

- The Influence test

Arguably, a place is not a brand. It's an experience or rather a collection of experiences. And it is people's personal encounters with the place that directly affect their opinion of the place. Together these opinions shape that place's reputation. Logos, design and communication are important, but the most successful place brands go further. They directly influence strategy and behaviours. They help shape the way a place develops and interacts with its 'customers'. To be truly effective the Atlantic Arc brand should influence policy, but this is incredibly difficult given the wide range of administrations within the region. As well as the above we need to be convinced that the positioning truly adds value to the cities individual messaging. In considering some of the potential positioning territories below, we will use these tests to assess the true potential.

7.3 Potential brand positionings

Earlier in this document we have discussed some of the words, values and assets identified through our engagement activity. We will now consider their potential directly in the context of a potential territory for the Atlantic Arc brand. The territory has to have relevant and rich potential to flex across the key sectors of tourism, business, education and learning, and living.

At the workshop in La Rochelle, partner cities and other invited practitioners participated in an exercise where they ranked a series of 14 words and values related to the Atlantic dimension. For in-depth discussion, those participants were split into five small groups. The top 5 values from each group were the following:

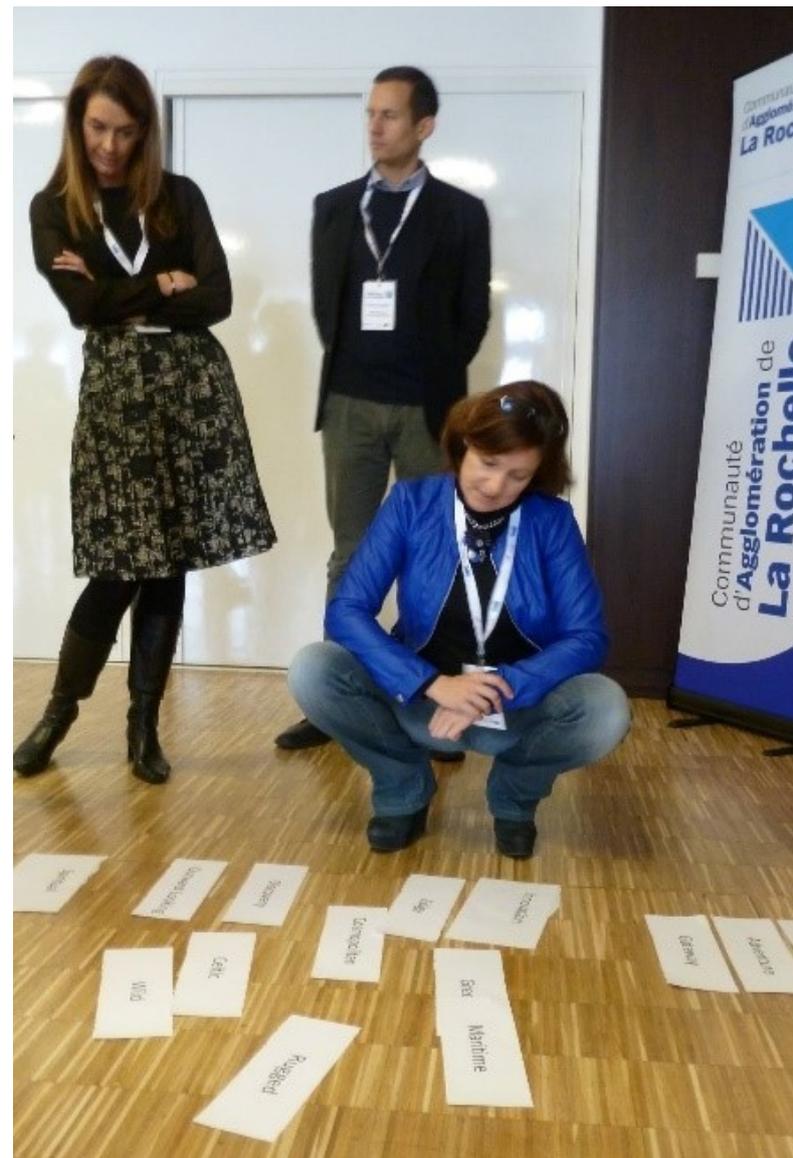
<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
Adventure	Gateway	Adventure	Atlantic Lifestyle
Discovery	Maritime	Discovery	Discovery
Maritime	Adventure	Atlantic Lifestyle	Gateway
Gateway	Atlantic Lifestyle	Green	Outward Looking
Outward Looking	Discovery	Outward Looking	Innovation

There was a surprising degree of consistency across all of the groups. Let us briefly discuss the words either rejected by the groups or which received a very limited degree of support.

- Celtic – this was not felt to be true for all of the region. Whilst a Celtic heritage is true for much of the UK and Ireland, there is very little relevance to the South of the Iberian Peninsula.
- Spiritual – there was little support and enthusiasm for this.
- Cosmopolitan – There was a strong view that cosmopolitan was a generic character for most port cities. Moreover it was not true for all parts of the region.
- Rugged/Wild – It was felt to be true and an appropriate descriptor for some of the Atlantic coastline and the ocean itself. However, it was not a descriptor that could be applied to the Cities within the region.
- Green – A very generic thought. In a physical sense it is probably true for most of the region, due to the prevailing winds and the climatic influence of

the ocean. It could also be applied in a more specific sense around the importance of the ecology of the ocean and the marine environment ⁵⁵.

- Innovation – Different variations of the idea of innovation are some of the most overused thoughts in the field of place branding. It would be very difficult to create a truly differentiating proposition around innovation.



⁵⁵ The “maritime translation” of the concept of green growth and greening economy, which is the term of “blue growth” can reasonably be appropriated or led by the European Atlantic Arc.

Now let's apply the Heavenly tests to some of the core values which received more support in the workshops.

Discovery/Adventure	
The Differentiation Test	The idea of discovery and adventure has been used extensively in place branding, particularly from a tourism perspective. If we are to use this sentiment, we need to use a form expression which creates further differentiation.
The Honesty Test	There is truth in this and it is a truth which can be applied for many of the Cities and areas. The region has been associated with voyages of discovery and adventure and it is reasonable to apply this sense of adventure to the spirit and character of the place.
The People Test	Notwithstanding the overall difficulty in getting enthusiastic buy-in from such a disparate group of people, it is a positive sentiment that should garner support.
The Longevity Test	As the positioning would be based on a longstanding historical truth about the area, there is no reason why a positioning based on this should not last.
The Influence Test	The positioning could be used to directly influence the development of tourism in the region. It could also be interpreted as discovery in a wider sense covering scientific, social and business discovery.
Maritime	
The Differentiation Test	This potential positioning fails this test. It is difficult to argue that the maritime characteristics of the area are any different to maritime locations the world over.
The Honesty Test	It is certainly true for the vast majority of cities and locations within the region. Maritime components are contained within the narratives and messaging of most cities interviewed.
The People Test	Again notwithstanding the overall difficulty in getting enthusiastic buy-in from such a disparate group of people, it is a positive sentiment that

	should garner support.
The Longevity Test	Again as the positioning would be based on a longstanding historical truth about the area, there is no reason why a positioning based on this territory should not last.
The Influence Test	It is difficult to see how such a positioning could influence strategy and policy further than it is already celebrated in cities within the region ⁵⁶ .
Atlantic Lifestyle	
The Differentiation Test	It is possible to build a compelling narrative around the benefits of the Atlantic lifestyle and there is enough evidence to suggest that it is substantially different to other coastal regions such as the Mediterranean.
The Honesty Test	The sense of an Atlantic Lifestyle is primarily confined to the Atlantic coast in France, Northern Spain and Portugal. There is much less of a sense of Atlantic lifestyle in the North of the macro-region. The climate in the North dictates this. It would be stretching the truth to suggest that there is a consistent notion of what an Atlantic Lifestyle is in the European context.
The People Test	Whilst it would be supported in parts of the macro-region it very unlikely to gain enthusiastic support in cities such as Cardiff, Liverpool and Belfast.
The Longevity Test	This positioning would not be time limited.
The Influence Test	With imagination this positioning could be used to influence policy and strategy.

⁵⁶ Otherwise, in the context of the EU policies the so-called Atlantic Strategy and the associated Atlantic Action Plan is basically a “maritime strategy for the Atlantic Ocean area”. This strong focus on maritime affairs is good, but at the same time downplays other areas for potential collaboration.

Gateway	
The Differentiation Test	The idea of a place being a gateway to other things has been extensively used in destination marketing. However it would be possible to build a differentiated narrative which reflects the heritage of the region and its potential to be positioned as a gateway into Europe – a reversal of its traditional role.
The Honesty Test	There is certainly truth in the heritage of the area being a gateway to “the new world”.
The People Test	The idea of gateway is not an emotionally based positioning and so it would be harder to gain enthusiastic popular support.
The Longevity Test	The historical aspects of the gateway idea suggests it has longevity but it is less certain whether the idea of a gateway into Europe could last over time.
The Influence Test	The positioning could influence business policy in areas such as trade and digitalisation. But it is less easy to imagine how it might work in areas such as living and tourism.
Outward Looking	
The Differentiation Test	Clearly there are other places in the world which because of their location could claim to be outward looking. To be differentiating it would require some creative interpretation.
The Honesty Test	The idea would be true for many places in the region but perhaps not all.
The People Test	Again the positioning would need clever creative interpretation to achieve popular appeal.
The Longevity Test	This would largely depend on the imagination applied to the positioning.
The Influence Test	It could be used to influence an internationalisation agenda and perhaps interpretation of the tourism offer.

Before summarizing and concluding on the discussion above, at this point we should discuss one additional important consideration – the need to provide a focus for co-branding and collaboration in the field of strategic communication. Possibly the most successful example of an Atlantic focused brand we found was the Wild Atlantic Way project ⁵⁷.

“The central proposition of the Wild Atlantic Way is a coastal touring route between Kinsale on the southern end to the Inishowen Peninsula on the northern end. The Wild Atlantic Way proposition offers prospective visitors opportunities to discover an intriguing convergence of land and sea along 2,500kms of magnificent West of Ireland coastline. The longest defined coastal drive in the world, its wild and rugged natural beauty, unique ancient heritage, defiant settlements, creative locals and unique array of cultural events promise the visitor the journey of a lifetime”

The Wild Atlantic Way Project Update.

The brand essence is “Wildness” with the values of natural, surprising, challenging, vibrant, authentic, and caring. The key brand attributes are: the wild landscape & seascapes, the roads on the edge of the Atlantic, the heritage & history of the places on the wild coast.

Clearly there are some important differences between the AT.Brand challenge and the Wild Atlantic Way project. Firstly, the Wild Atlantic Way is tourism focused and secondly it is not transnational. But we need to understand why this project has a lot of traction and appears to be very successful. We believe that some of the key relevant factors are:

- There is a very clear focus which encourages and enables collaboration.
- It has been initiated by the national tourism agency (which means clear political backing at top level) and there is a commitment to promote the route in national marketing.
- There is a consistent physical geography and climate on the route.
- It offers a genuine experience with interpretation and signage along the route.

In concluding this section of the report, we believe that there are some very important barriers which make the task of creating a compelling Atlantic Arc brand very challenging. They are:

- The lack of a consistent identity in the minds of important target market and amongst partners and stakeholders.

⁵⁷ <http://www.failteireland.ie/Wild-Atlantic-Way.aspx>, <http://www.wildatlanticway.com>

- The wide range of partners in several different nations, which turns the issue of co-branding into a titanic challenge from the organisation point of view.
- The potential absence of a clear focus for collaboration in the field of strategic communication and global positioning.
- The need to find a brand essence which works across a range of different sectors.

In developing options in the next section we will seek to **overcome some of these barriers**.



Atlantic Area Programme 2014-2020

8. Strategic options for co-branding in the Atlantic Arc

In this section, three 3 options are considered for creating a brand focused approach in the macro-region: the place brand approach, the cause brand approach and the product brand approach.

8.1. The place brand approach

Notwithstanding the obstacles we outlined earlier, we have considered what might be the most effective place brand for the region. One which takes account of tests we discussed above and builds on the values and attributes identified through our research and engagement. There is no doubt that the diversity of the region makes it hard to create a compelling narrative based on the geographical/physical aspects of place. It is also difficult to directly focus on the people given the rich variety of languages and cultures evident. However, it is reasonable to believe that there is a common spirit or character which has been defined by the proximity to the Atlantic.

The place brand idea is “Unbounded”.

The idea combines the spirit of adventure and discovery which is in the DNA of the area with the physical and environmental benefits of being on the edge of one of the world’s great oceans. It reflects the vastness of the Atlantic. It also references the impression of greater originality and enterprise required to succeed on the periphery of Europe.

Evidence

“...The challenge to go as far as possible” - San Sebastian

“In a European perspective, the Atlantic Area is the open door to the world, opposed to the Mediterranean Area, a closed space” - Brest

“...associates the Atlantic dimension with migrations and mobility (...) A vocation to be a gateway for people, ideas, etc” - Vigo

“The Atlantic coast is associated with a vast and rich imagination” - Toulouse

“Starting point to “the other”, “the elsewhere”” - La Rochelle

“Being at the Edge makes you think different and reject conventional ways of doing things” - Cornwall

“We all have Bounded Vision, particularly if you live in Cities – but horizons on the Atlantic Coast are unbounded” - Cornwall

“I think of vastness of a big space”- Swansea

“The Gateway concept is fundamental. “Gateway to the world”- CAAC

“Fresh and healthy, space wide open space” - Derry/Londonderry

“We are in a corner of Europe. But we are also in the centre of the World if you think of the sea/Ocean that connects Continents and civilizations” – A Coruña

Brand Idea			
Unbounded			
Brand Values			
Open , Adventurous, Authentic, Pioneering			
Brand Attributes			
Heritage of trading and discovery. Links with the “new world”. Rugged Beauty			
Brand Framework			
Business: Unbounded Opportunity	Tourism: Unbounded Experiences	Education: Unbounded Thinking	Lifestyle: Unbounded Living

Narrative

From Northern most tip of Scotland to the South of the Iberian peninsula our region has been shaped by the Ocean.

The Atlantic winds greening our land and the sea bringing prospects to our cities. At times wild, often beautiful and always fascinating the Atlantic coast of Europe is one of the world's most absorbing regions.

For hundreds of years people left those shores in search of the new hope and new lives. Our cities were a door to the New World. A gateway to opportunity and discovery. That pioneering spirit and openness to the world lives on today.

But one thing has changed. No longer do people need to leave. They are drawn here. They chose to live here. Enticed by the Atlantic way of life, a mild climate and a wealth of prospects. Others simply visit us, they experience our culture, share our stories and taste our produce.

Our horizons have always been unrestricted and today our vision is unlimited and our ambition unbounded.

8.2. The cause approach

There has been a fundamental shift in how the world's leading companies use cause associations to position their organizations and brands for the future. Today's pioneers are turning a concern for causes into long-term brand equity. At companies such as Timberland, Patagonia or Innocent, social commitments have become an integral way to conduct business and a core component of corporate reputation, brand personality and organizational identity.

Can this approach be transferred to collaboration between places as a new form of place marketing and branding? Such an approach could reflect the "unbounded" ethos of the European Atlantic region. Not bounded by the conventions of place branding, the Atlantic Arc could turn to a cause to create an additional dimension to place narrative which adds value rather than competes with individual place brands.

One thing which indisputably links the region is a shared history in how the ocean has helped build prosperity and the critical importance of ensuring the sea continues to be a source of opportunity rather than a threat to the future. The marine eco-systems are sensitive and are under threat from issues such as climate change, pollution and overfishing. In some areas rising sea levels threaten coastal regions. But the sea is also a potential source of new resources and energy. For instance, many of the cities in the region are devoting resources to explore the potential of the oceans in generating renewable energy.

Under this approach the cities would develop partnerships with a purpose. The purpose to work together to promote projects and science which improves our understanding of the threats to our oceans and of the opportunities they present. Elements of this approach could include:

- Joint projects between Universities in the region.
- Major Atlantic Arc Conferences exploring specific marine issues.
- Collaboration with an agreed marine charity.
- Bilateral agreements to share promote joint research.

It would build on existing initiatives such as the Project of International Campus of the Sea and Coastal environment - a partnership involving research institutions and public partners along the French Atlantic coast and the Channel. The EU is also promoting the development of an integrated maritime strategy for the Atlantic Arc which would be instrumental in helping to meet the major challenges faced by Atlantic territories in terms of accessibility, maritime safety, climate change and energy, etc.

Elevating these initiatives under a cause related brand idea could take such activity to a new level.

Evidence

“The University of Ulster is developing a sustainable energy department – collaborating with the Letterkenny institute” – Northern Ireland

The "International Maritime Exhibition", aimed at stimulating the "blue economy" - Las Palmas

“We could share a lot of research on renewables” – Saint Nazaire

“I can envisage a series of Maritime related Conferences” – Belfast

“On the West coast we see many opportunities around aqua culture and marine energy” – Shannon

“Smart Santander (pollution, waste and water smart management)” – Santander

Narrative

The Atlantic Arc – For the Oceans

The Atlantic is our Ocean.

It has helped to shape the places we are today.

It has brought prosperity and opportunity.

It provides food, and been a route to trade with the world.

It offers pleasure and leisure and all of the associated economic opportunities.

The ocean has been good to us and we want to ensure to it continues to provide for us.

But all the oceans face threats.

Global warming, rising sea levels, over fishing and threats to habitats and species.

Just some of the challenges we need to overcome.

The cities and regions within the Atlantic Arc will work together to help protect our oceans.

And together we will discover new sources of opportunity.

New sources of energy, sustainable food sources and tourism prospects.

For the oceans. For our Future.

8.3. The product approach

We discovered earlier that a product or initiative focus makes it much easier for a range of disparate partners to corral around an idea. It also makes the brand much more tangible for different markets and stakeholders. There are lots of examples of Atlantic Arc cities collaborating around a specific focus, for example the “Know Cities” initiative, and some of these collaborations have a specific product focus - the "Cultural Atlantic Road" project might be a good example.

We believe that there is scope for the development of product based niche brands and initiatives in the Atlantic Arc area. Thus, some of the areas where such a brand might have value is around cruising, water-sports and even golf.

If we reconsider the Framework Model for Transnational Co-Branding, we understand that it is critical that there is a sustainable source of funding to allow the brand initiative to continue. We know that resources are very limited for many administrations within the region. So we considered the potential for a product focused initiative which would make the most of resources which are already being spent within cities.

So this approach/option is an events based initiative, which would seek to elevate the status of major events already being organised within partner cities. The key arguments to support such an initiative are:

- The term Atlantic has status. Most people in the developed world know the term. It suggests scale, prestige and importance. We believe that an event with an Atlantic or Atlantic Arc designation would add considerable value e.g. The Atlantic Food Festival, The Atlantic Music Festival, The Atlantic Film Festival. It may also be possible to include exhibitions and conferences in the initiative.
- The Atlantic Arc cities would provide a ready-made network of potential suppliers and contributors to the event. Indeed depending on the nature of the event, partner cities might be responsible for coordinating delegations or participants who would represent their area at different Atlantic Events.
- Depending on how the initiative is structured, existing spend on major events could be used to attract additional funding stimulated by the Atlantic status.
- It may be possible to create an EU initiative which supports a programme of designated events and offers match-funding. The initiative would need to be shaped to reflect EU priorities in the region.

If a critical mass of promoters feel that there is value in such an approach, there would need to be a lot more work to determine the structure and feasibility of such an initiative. However potential strategic options could include:

- **Option 1 – Elevation.** Under this option, criteria would be set to determine how an event could achieve “Atlantic” status. Elevating an event to the Atlantic level

would need to have obvious benefits, such as increased scale and impact, improved marketing reach, higher status and potential additional funding. The event categories would probably need to be agreed in advance. Successful events would have the Atlantic designation for an agreed period, say 3 years. For example – the Liverpool Music Festival could become the Liverpool Atlantic Festival of Music. Cities hosting different Atlantic events would collaborate and share learnings and experience.

- **Option 2 – Selection.** In this option event categories which support the aims of the region would be agreed in advance. E.g. the Atlantic City of Food, the Atlantic City of Music, or the Atlantic City of Sustainable Living. The event would be peripatetic and move around various cities annually or bi-annually. Existing activity could be contained within the event. The disadvantage of this approach is perhaps that it would require additional work and resources within a City but it would also have more of a catalytic impact.
- **Option 3 – Umbrella.** In this option there would be themed Atlantic Years – e.g. Atlantic Year of Water sports, Atlantic Year of Export, etc. All Atlantic Arc Cities would be invited to develop initiatives in support of the designated theme. There would need to be sources of funding and support for individual city initiatives. All the cities involved would act as a marketing network for the theme and the individual initiatives and themes.

8.4. First feedback on the strategic options

The three strategic options above described on co-branding the Atlantic macro-region were discussed with all the AT.Brand partners at the AT.Brand international workshop in San Sebastian, held in April 2015. Then after, those same partners produced written feedbacks, while additional reactions and comments on this issue were gathered thanks to AT.Brand consultation which was organized to get visions, ideas and comments from a number of stakeholders, experts and third interested parties.

Comments about the Place Brand approach and the “Unbounded Spirit” narrative

For most partners “Unbounded Spirit” was felt to be a good articulation of a conventional place brand for the Atlantic Arc region. Even those who ultimately favoured an alternative approach felt the narrative had some potential.

“The ‘Unbounded’ concept is an interesting and potentially imaginative way of connecting and positioning the Atlantic Arc region to European and global target

markets. It conveys the adventurous and maverick characteristics of the region in a subtle and appealing way.” – Liverpool

Even though it’s clearly difficult to find a key idea that would be truly honest, differential and make sense for all the Atlantic Arc Cities, we believe in the idea of “unbounded” – San Sebastian

“Unbounded Spirit” as an idea is probably the best translation of our collective aim though At.Brand” – La Rochelle

“The Unbounded Spirit as a place Brand is very relevant as it best describes the area in question.” – County Mayo, Ireland

In particular, there was a feeling that the values which supported the brand proposal were strong and appropriate for the whole macro-region.

“...these qualifying adjectives are implicitly contained in “Unbounded spirit” and are appropriate, more likely linked to history and geography legacy than from a volunteered men made construction. This sounds particularly true for the adjectives “adventurous” and “pioneering” referring to the great discoveries and the western attitude of pioneer.” – La Rochelle

“We believe those values are appropriate because they take further the idea of unbounded and they match with the Atlantic spirit and history” San Sebastian

“The values outlined distinctively highlight the innovation and creative nature this region has always had. Using these values we are able to progress with a more open yet balanced approach to explaining the Atlantic arc” – Dublin

Some cities suggested constructive ideas for further improving the “Unbounded” idea.

*“Other ideas like unlimited, innovative or discovery could also be added”
San Sebastian*

“Please joint [interpreted as add] Entrepreneur and Innovative”- Faro

*“I like this approach very much. Perhaps I would stress more the values of innovation and entrepreneurship linked to an unbounded spirit”
Universidad de Cantabria*

“Our only comment is that they should not be used as a ‘shopping list’ but as shared values that represent us collectively. They should also be articulated more imaginatively in the narrative form as discovered during the consultation with Atlantic cities e.g. Starting point to ‘the other, ‘the elsewhere’ (La Rochelle), “Being at the edge makes you think differently and reject conventional ways of doing things” (Cornwall) – Liverpool

“The narrative could be improved on the scope of “exchanges” and “integration” which are both implicit but also real and differentiating features for the Atlantic Coast, people and cities. It could be improved, as well by the related idea of boundlessness of possible scopes, the release of initiatives” – La Rochelle

"I feel like the narrative needs a human touch. Francis Drake (and Maria Pita, the impossible love story), Henry the Navigator, Mary Stuart, Joyce, Stoker, The Beatles, Pessoa, Salvador de Madariaga, Kenneth Branagh, etc" – CAAC

"It is nice, but may be it sounds historical, epic; the text does not reflect the state of art of the societies in the 21th Century" – Gijón

"The major challenge, as outlined in the paper, is capturing the diversity and major cultural differences of the region with a single proposition" – Liverpool

However, as suggested earlier for several cities, there were a number of fundamental problems with this approach. For some the narrative and values did not appear to be relevant enough for their cities, others felt that the approach was too generic or too backward-looking and it was less easy to see how it could be made relevant in a strictly contemporary sense.

"The place brand is our least preferred option. It is the least tangible of the concepts proposed and is most likely to be considered 'just another marketing strapline', which could devalue the excellent work undertaken during the AT Brand Project." – Liverpool

"Pretty generic. This approach doesn't differentiate from other destinations (...) Unbounded works well for sport struggle with other areas. (...) Adventurous - not sure if there is any evidence of this in modern Cardiff even historic adventurer" – Cardiff

"They are appropriate for so many cities, those of the Atlantic Arc and many others. Maybe not specific enough" – ICD Business School Toulouse

"The term Unbounded is in fact too much unbounded, even if we recognize that the words Open, Authentic and Pioneering can be used as ours. It is in fact "nothing" and "everything" so, it would be "anything" and not automatically recognized as our common brand, neither by politicians and opinion leaders nor by the media and project/event managers" – Faro

"You are trying to define a brand identity for cities that are very different BUT can share common strategy because of the Atlantic Ocean. But what is the link between "unbounded" and the Atlantic Arc in 2015? The gateway story is one of the past." ICD Business School – Toulouse

One of the complications of the Atlantic Arc Area is that there is a wide variety of different languages in everyday use across the region. It is unsurprising therefore that there may be complications linked to translation and interpretation.

"We globally find this place brand interesting, especially the sense of movement and action implied. However, "Unbounded Spirit" does not have a natural or clear translation in French. This may also be the issue with other languages" - Bretagne

It was also recognised by some that whatever the selected narrative for a conventional place brand approach there would be real difficulties when it comes to implementation.

“If enough investment put behind it could work but I am not sure the Cardiff and Wales deliver on this ... The Welsh government would need to be engaged in this to help unlock additional money and to sweat the positioning from a South Wales perspective” - Cardiff

“But for what purpose, when and how would we use this place brand. Where and for whom would it be of added value?”- La Rochelle

In short, the suggested narrative was seen as a worthwhile attempt to create an idea which could be unifying and relevant to all parts of the Atlantic Arc macro-region. However, it is clearly acknowledged that it is very difficult to create an idea which is equally relevant to all cities. Furthermore most cities have spent a lot of time and made a great effort to develop their own city brand strategies or to engage in co-branding initiatives at regional and national scale.

Finding a way of aligning a variety of existing initiatives could be troublesome. It is challenging enough to introduce a bold place brand strategy to a single city – to achieve buy-in and to encourage use of the brand content by stakeholders and partners. Those difficulties are multiplied when spread across a range of different cities in varying states. Even if it gains some traction, it is likely to be used primarily as a communications tool without the ability to directly impact on customer, visitor or resident experiences.

Comments about the Cause Approach

Those cities which favoured the cause-based option did so because it was seen to have the potential to be truly differentiating, as it is a novel approach to place branding. It was also seen as offering the additionally to existing city brand initiatives within member cities.

“Cause based approach, based on tidal power, tidal energy and capturing the power of the sea, this is something all partners can embrace” – Cardiff

“The cause approach sounds like offering the most potential as it is deeply rooted in actual opportunities and concerns already tackled by public authorities and universities all along the Atlantic Coast, via European or national partnerships” – La Rochelle

“This approach appealed more than ‘place brand’ option mainly because it provides a more tangible, and potentially valuable, way of connecting cities within the Atlantic Arc region. The possibility of joint research projects between universities and cultural organisations (Liverpool has a dedicated Maritime Museum and Oceanography Research Institute) has value beyond the promotional dimension of place branding” – Liverpool

“The Cause, will be for significantly and easy used over a significant variety of projects, and initiatives, and will be more used by the different partners, and institutions from the Atlantic Arc” – Faro

“Capturing the power of the tides could have huge commercial potential and stand out in light of key investment priorities of South Wales. This also differentiates the Atlantic cities from Mediterranean cities in Europe” – Swansea

*The marine issues (ecology, science, energy and so on) is a great strategic theme! Why are not the values based on something like that?”
ICD Business School Toulouse*

However those cities which were not convinced by this approach had strong and clear reservations about its potential. Moreover, it was pointed out that some cities in the Atlantic Arc are not coastal cities and that the marine issues are not specific to them.

“This would be my least favourite option. There are merits as it is a relatively new idea in linking these ideas together to form an overall position for the region. However, I can’t see it gathering much traction unless we develop extremely strong linkages between organizations, which as we know getting 100% commitment to develop such linkages proves difficult. Also, for the size and differences between partner cities, I think this could be too restrictive in an approach compared to the conventional place brand idea” – Dublin

“We find it difficult to work on a cause approach, at least from a city level perspective, because every city in the Atlantic Arc might want to foster a specific area and it would be difficult to agree in a common cause for all participants” – San Sebastian

It seems that for those cities which were not in favour of this approach, the key challenge was to get consensus on the themes to be linked to the power and protection of the seas. It was felt that cities would want a keep their own focus on this.

However this could potentially be turned into an advantage with groups of cities collaborating around specific themes but under an overarching banner. Although not expressly highlighted by the cities this option offers clear opportunities to generate content and get the Atlantic Arc cities may spread their visions throughout the media and social networks. Most importantly, it also aligns neatly with wider developments and economic strategies within the macro-region, such as the “blue growth” concept, which is being broadly promoted by the European Commission.



The Beyond the Sea project, Yves Parlier <http://www.beyond-the-sea.com>

Comments about the Product Approach

The Product Approach advocated in the proposal of strategic choices was in fact an events-based approach. It was acknowledged that there may be potential for individual partner cities to collaborate around specific products, such as golf or sailing, and to create an “Atlantic brand” to bind them together. However such opportunities fall short of an overarching co-branding initiative. An event based product initiative could however be a platform on which to build a more coherent Atlantic Arc brand.

Moreover, events have always had great potential to be capitalized in terms of communication and positioning for the city, as symbolic actions. They are a must-do type of initiative in the portfolio for communications serving a city brand strategy. For instance, they have been the cornerstone of Liverpool’s communications for years, beyond their intrinsic cultural value and benefits to the visitor economy⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ See what the AT.Brand toolkit for innovative city branding says about the event as communication tool - Rivas, M. (2015) Reviewing Practices in City Branding, 130 Piece Model Kit. AT.Brand project, Atlantic

The product-based approach generated a significant support during the consultation and engagement process.

“The product approach is probably the most concrete and commercially viable of the options presented. The themes of food, film music all have existing and significant markets, which could attract EU funding/commercial sponsorship. Furthermore, much of the required infrastructure and IP already exists amongst Atlantic Arc cities” – Liverpool

“We believe an event-based approach could be powerful and tangible” – La Rochelle

“An events-based initiative would be very beneficial” – County Mayo

“We very much agree with the project based approach” – Bretagne

Some however could not easily see the link between the product-related approach and a place brand strategy.

“Only concentrated and used on major events or project it is, from our point of view the opposite effect that we would like to see in an international common strategy on image and communication, a brand for territorial marketing” – Faro

The product option also suggested three different types of approach. They were termed “Elevation” “Selection” and “Umbrella”. It has been difficult to identify a clear favoured route out of these three options. Some contributors did highlight one preferred option but others find relevant various or all of them.

Some liked the umbrella approach as it does not promote competition among cities and places and would allow the cities to participate under a range of potential themes. It would also enable cities to take advantage of any existing events and initiatives based on the chosen theme. The “Selection” option was also considered as interesting in some cases, in spite of doubts regarding the feasibility to change the name of existing events.

Programme. “Certainly, this multi-purpose view of the event (as both cultural activity and communication tool for the host city) requires a clear vision and strong cooperation between different departments and teams in the city. In fact, the entity in charge of the cultural and event agenda in Liverpool, Culture Liverpool, represents a valuable instrument for branding Liverpool. They are frequent users of the city brand toolkit and work hand in hand with Marketing Liverpool”.

“The communication strength of the event is unlocked when it is leveraged upon existing city values, as in Liverpool with Music and Music Festivals (...). But the event can be also smartly approached in a way that it may create new value for the city. That’s the case of San Sebastian European Capital of Culture 2016 that will be dedicated to the theme of coexistence, after decades of bloody conflict and painful violence in the Basque Country, happily overcome. So, as a mix of learning from the recent past and prospect for the future, San Sebastian tries to build up a new attribute for the city on the concept of Coexistence and Conflict Resolution. This big cultural event has been approached as a channel for that purpose” (Rivas, 2015).

“The most interesting option(“umbrella”)....because there are more themes tackled and probably as a consequence, more territories if there is every year 2 to 3 themes per city” – La Rochelle

“If we look at San Sebastian's festivals (International Film Festival, Jazz Festival etc.), it would be very complicated to change their name to gain an “Atlantic” status. That is why we think that particularly the “umbrella” approach would be easier to implement in every city. San Sebastian could definitely take part on a themed “Atlantic Year” with different activities, rising its visibility through the Atlantic network” – San Sebastian

“The “umbrella” option is our preferred option since it would encourage collaboration within different Atlantic regions and allow for shared funds and resources. It also would allow the Atlantic to focus on key topics and promote these in a clear way.” – Bretagne Développement Innovation

“We do not think the “Selection” option is a good idea since the cities will be in competition with each other and therefore it would not encourage collaboration. Furthermore, the term “city” doesn't fully represent the Atlantic Arc since it is made up of more than its cities.” – Bretagne Développement Innovation

Others suggested that a combination of the options presented might be relevant.

“I do not think that we should choose just one: the Atlantic Arc is quite wide so the strategy should correspond to this feature. In the same sense, I'd discard the “Selection” option. It somewhat overlaps with the “Elevation” option (Atlantic events might be varied) and weakens the brand (Atlantic) that we want to enhance (dispersion)” - CAAC

*“I think Selection and Umbrella are interesting variants of each other. The Selection option might create more interest for the audience. If the themes rotate and you have flexibility to them (perhaps a few extra themes so a city isn't stuck with one they don't want) as a concept I'd be more interest to know what other cities are covering as themes that I would be to see there take on the theme”
Dublin Chamber of Commerce*

“I think that the start point is not really good. For that reason, I think we must combine the three options. We have to be very selective with the events. In some cases we can create “Atlantic City of ...” but we have to be very serious with this kind of denominations. On the other hand, the idea of umbrella is not bad. In that case is very important the European funds and the marketing and collaboration” – Gijón

In summary, there is potential interest in the option based on events. It is tangible and one can see relatively easily how it might create additional funding opportunities and build on the resources and initiatives already committed by individual cities and regions. It is understandable that a few feel that an event-based strategy in itself does not

constitute a place brand strategy, although events are frequent in the mix of communication actions in most of place brand strategies. However, in branding an area as diverse as the Atlantic arc, it could be argued that the very process itself demands a new approach. Indeed due to the challenges involved in this process, an events programme could be the only realistic way of creating the necessary focus and impetus to establish any form of conventional place brand at this Atlantic scale.

Preferred options

Perhaps given the different perspectives and priorities of the partner cities and other stakeholders, it is unsurprising that there is little consensus on the preferred strategic option to pave the way of place co-branding at the Atlantic scale. Just concerning the AT.Brand partners, the choices are as follow:

- Dublin – their preference is for the place-brand approach based around the idea of “gateway”. They felt this could be merged with the “Unbounded” idea. But they also believe that a product-related approach could underpin such narrative.
- Cardiff – their preference goes for the cause-related approach. Their least preferred option is the place-brand approach as they felt that “Unbounded” does not fit well to the capital of Wales.
- Liverpool – for Liverpool it is a choice between the Cause approach and the Product approach. On balance they preferred the product-based approach because they see it more feasible. With no doubt, their least preferred option is the place-brand approach as they recognise the difficulty in identifying something which was both unifying and relevant enough for the whole macro-region.
- Faro – the capital of the Algarve region has a strong preference for the cause related approach. Their least liked option was the place-brand approach, since the “Unbounded” big narrative and other cross-region values that have been unveiled seem to be too generic to them.
- La Rochelle – their preferred option is the cause approach, albeit they also trust in the potential of the events-based option. They reject the conventional place-brand approach.
- San Sebastian – The Basque city’s choice goes for a combination of the product and place-brand approaches. They did not support the cause-based option as they felt it would be difficult to implement in a city with a good handful of major and well established international events.

If we attend the opinions of the representatives of AT.Brand partner cities (that is, those with a deeper engagement in the discussions on co-branding the Atlantic Area and also

in the cross-learning on innovative city branding), the place-brand approach is the strategic choice which gets less support – four out of the six partner cities place it as the least preferred option. Otherwise, the events-based approach does not attract much enthusiasm (only Liverpool chooses this option as its favourite) but never is assessed as the least preferred option by this group of cities.

If we consider the opinions of other stakeholders in the macro-region (non-AT.Brand partners, some of them not familiar yet with place branding), we see a relative significant support to the place-brand option and a clear lack of interest for the cause approach, which is interestingly just the opposite of the AT.Brand partners' choice. However, like in the AT.Brand group, here the events-based approach is never assessed as the least liked option as well. Even more, the events-related approach is the first option for a significant number of interviewees.

At this point, it is also worth to highlight that Dublin, San Sebastian and the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities suggested to combine in some way the place-brand approach (or the main narrative which has emerged as a result of this report) with an event approach.

“I think this area could be merged into the unbounded positioning for the region. It would be interesting to see it as a supporting structure which planned properly could be a catalyst to develop the unbounded ideal” – Dublin

“A combination of both the place-brand and the event-related approaches could be interesting to explore. The “unbounded” concept makes sense for both the Atlantic area and San Sebastian, and it could be an inspiring concept to develop when branding the city and the Atlantic Arc. In addition, if we combine it with the event approach, it could increase the visibility and media exposure of the cities that integrate the Atlantic Arc at an international scale” - San Sebastian

This idea is strengthened by the massive positive opinions of external stakeholders, who, as part of the online questionnaire, were asked about the idea to use the “Unbounded” narrative as a platform for the development of the product approach.

8.5. Applying the framework model for transnational co-branding

The place brand approach

Facilitating Factors

- **Common Identity.** Arguably, a cohesive and compelling conventional place brand depends above all on the need for a common identity and/or narrative. As discussed previously it is difficult to state with real credibility that a common identity (or a high level of commonalities) exists throughout the Atlantic arc region. Whilst we have identified some common characteristics, it is difficult to imagine a common identity in the minds of various audiences. The common geography is the relationship to the Atlantic although this is also stronger for some cities and regions than others.
- **Common Interest.** As the responses to each strategic option has shown there are a range of different interests represented, even within the AT.Brand partnership. It is difficult to find a place brand, in the conventional sense, which will benefit partners equally.
- **Cooperation Method.** The AT.Brand initiative has proven the ability of cities and regions to work together. Even beyond the core partners, other cities and regions have shown an interest in the project. A network is being strengthened and there is also the established CAAC partnership, although its membership is still weak.
- **EU Involvement.** The EU has funded this project and will be interested in the outcomes. But presumably they will want to see tangible benefits for continued involvement. A common perception of interests & agencies with shared philosophies.

Motivating Factors

- **Enhancing the product offer.** The primary role of a place brand is to enhance the product offer within a place. In other words its added value. The key question is whether a conventional place brand would truly add value to the offers within each individual place.
- **Leveraging other place offerings.** It is difficult to see how this can be directly achieved through a conventional place approach. Though it may be possible through a focus on a more product orientated approach, where the combined product offering creates a stronger and more compelling offer in the minds of various audiences.

- Knowledge Transfer. This is undoubtedly an important factor for cities in the AT.Brand project. Understanding the successes and the pitfalls of place branding through the sharing of experiences is a good thing. It should help each city to avoid the same mistakes and to focus limited resources in a more effective way. However this is different from the creation of a common or shared place brand across the region.
- Cost Reduction. It is difficult to imagine how a shared place brand leads to cost reductions per se. Real cost reductions in a place brand context would only come about if a common place brand replaced the individual city brands and of course this will not happen. However there may be opportunities for shared costs in the future if cities collaborate in certain market channels or specific new markets. Having a common shared umbrella place brand would clearly help in this respect.

Collaboration Outcomes

- Strategy Realisation. The key question is whether a common or shared place brand enhances competitiveness. This would in part be for each city and area to determine. An Atlantic Place brand initiative might strengthen formal marketing and brand programmes in those cities where such practices are not well established.
- Organisational Learning. A traditional place brand approach could increase organisational learning because of the cross working which would be required.
- Social Capital Building. All the options offers opportunities for enhanced relationships and stronger networks. Arguably those opportunities are even greater in the other options.

Inhibiting Factors

- Different Partner Priorities. As evidenced in the different partner feedback there is a wide range of different priorities within the AT.Brand partner cities. This is understandable given their different stages of place brand development and different circumstances. When this is extended to the wider cities within the Atlantic region these differences become even more exaggerated.
- Different Market Directions. Considering current developments in the partner cities, there is a wide range of different priorities and segmentation strategies underway. This of itself however need not be an inhibiting factor as different groups of cities could work together where there is a common market interest.
- Lack of daring actions and focus. A conventional place brand approach is not particularly daring so that of itself should not be a problem. What is more of an issue is that cities may not be sufficiently focused on promoting the Atlantic brand preferring instead to concentrate on individual city brands or other collective

initiatives. Even in some cities, like Liverpool or Cardiff, the Atlantic means little in their respective narratives.

- **Resource Constraints.** This is possibly the biggest inhibiting factor. In order for an Atlantic co-branding initiative to have a real chance of succeeding there must be resources available to sustain the brand and to create an incentive for partners to get involved. It is difficult to see how the conventional approach will generate additional resources from within each partner city. There are usually insufficient within cities to promote the agreed city brand so it will be difficult to release resources to support the Atlantic brand. And without a tangible project to focus on there is less chance of a funding source from the EU.
- **Stakeholder Factors.** The case for participating in an Atlantic place branding initiative would need to be made clearly in terms of the stakeholder benefits. Arguably this is harder to achieve unless there is a tangible focus.

The cause approach

Facilitating Factors

- **Common Identity.** As discussed under the place brand option. However the cause option puts the Atlantic and the seas in general front and centre as the reason for collaboration. A wide range of common characteristics is less important for this option.
- **Common Interest.** It is undeniably true that the role of the ocean has played a key part in the history and prosperity of each of the cities, albeit in slightly different ways. Protecting and possibly enhancing this “resource” should therefore be a common interest to the cities but also be of relevance to key challenges faced across the world.
- **Cooperation Method.** As discussed previously collaboration methods exist. However a “common cause” would literally create a greater focus for collaboration. That focus could make use of the networks already in existence but could draw in a wider range of stakeholders involved in technology and research.
- **EU Involvement.** The Cause model ties in very closely and in a more tangible way to other EU priorities and to EU sponsored strategies for the Atlantic Arc region.

Motivating Factors

- Enhancing the product offer. The “cause” approach does not directly enhance the product offer. However an initiative would be used to focus attention on the maritime aspects of each city offer (sea clusters, logistics, research, tourism and leisure, etc).
- Leveraging other place offerings. Again this is not directly relevant in the case of the cause approach. However it would create linkages in each city offering through the focus on specific themes within the overall cause of protection and enhancement of the oceans.
- Knowledge Transfer. This is one of the key motivating factors for this approach. The knowledge transfer extends way beyond place branding. It creates a focus for collaboration and draws in research and technology partners across the region, for instance around the new powerful concept of “blue growth”, which has been delivered by the European Commission.
- Cost Reductions. Again there are no direct cost reductions but it would ensure shared costs in terms of future research and initiatives.

Collaboration Outcomes

- Strategy Realisation. Aside from the very real wider strategic benefits of a cause which focuses on the well-being of the seas, this option is intended to work above individual city brand approaches. As such it is intended in a marketing sense to create content and additional focus on the Atlantic Arc region and the individual cities.
- Organisational Learning. The learning benefits of this approach extend well beyond the lead organisation as of necessity it demands collaborative working within each wider city community. It should also stimulate innovation and is of itself a truly innovative approach to place co-branding.
- Social Capital Building. This approach not only encourages network building between cities it demands the broadening of networks within each city. It facilitates collaboration between those responsible for marketing the city and wider strategic interests within the city particularly in the areas of science, technology, education and the voluntary sector.

Inhibiting Factors

- Different Partner Priorities. Once again, it is unlikely that there will be a convergence of partner priorities. However, as stated elsewhere within the overall

initiative there will be opportunities for partners to focus on individual themes. This should help to create partner buy-in and relevance.

- **Different Market Directions.** Given the nature of this option there should be less concern over different existing market priorities. This is because the “Cause” related brand sits above and is additional to existing marketing initiatives. In theory it should complement existing work and create new reasons to generate awareness and publicity.
- **Lack of daring actions and focus.** This is a potential issue because this is a very innovative approach and the benefits will need to be clearly articulated.
- **Resource Constraints.** The issues regarding scarcity of resources still apply. However it is reasonable to assume that this approach would be capable of generating additional resources through the EU. This is because of the potential alignment with other EU strategies for the Atlantic Arc. There is also the potential to use resources from a wider range of potential partners from within each partner city.
- **Stakeholder Factors.** Once again the benefits to stakeholders would need to be clearly articulated. But there is the potential to engage with stakeholders who would not normally have a direct interest in place branding.

The product approach

Facilitating Factors

- **Common Identity.** The product option can overcome the issues of a lack of a consistent common narrative by focussing selectively on those themes and characteristic which can bind the region together. Or at least the themes can bind specific cities and areas within the region together. A variety of themes would allow cities to get involved around those themes.
- **Common Interest.** The adoption of specific themes allows the creation of a variety of common interests.
- **Cooperation Method.** Again the focus on events can create a focus and a tangible reason to build on the existing collaboration methods.
- **EU Involvement.** The product can help create a focus to encourage the on-going involvement of the EU

Motivating Factors

- **Enhancing the Product Offer.** We know that there are a number of benefits of an event-led place strategy. It creates reasons to visit, enhances experiences, generates visibility and talkability, reinforces key brand attributes and can create enhanced awareness of key products. Depending on the preferred sub option chosen the event led brand can help achieve all of the above but in particular elevation to the “Atlantic” level can build prestige around existing events whereas the “selection” and “umbrella” approaches can create and/or promote products.
- **Leveraging other place offerings.** One of the key benefits of the umbrella approach is that certain cities will work together under the “Atlantic” banner. As a result the status and impact of activities taking place in one city will be enhanced because of association with the other participating cities. Moreover depending on the chosen “theme” cities with weaker or less well known offers within that theme will benefit from association with “stronger” cities within that theme.
- **Knowledge Transfer.** There are real opportunities to create cross learning opportunities within this approach. For example within the “Umbrella” approach cities would no doubt meet on a regular basis to plan and coordinate activity. This would inevitable create learning networks from which all cities would benefit. Even this option could be helpful to reinvigorate the agenda of the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities.

Collaboration Outcomes

- **Strategy Realisation.** This approach enables greater competitiveness. It would form a key component element of each cities event and marketing strategies. For those cities with existing signature events it is an opportunity to enhance the profile and status of specific events through the achievement of “Atlantic” status. It would encourage the upscaling and advancement of strategies by tapping into the resources and networks of the partner cities. They would help to promote the vents and could be used to source suppliers, exhibitors etc.
- **Organisational Learning.** The nature of the approach demands collaboration. There will be real opportunities to learn from partner cities experiences and boost event management capacities within each individual city.

Inhibiting Factors

- **Different Partner Priorities.** The advantage of this approach is that it does not require every city to participate to be credible. This applies to each of the event options. Cities can get involved as they wish.

- **Different Market Directions.** Different market priorities do not present an insurmountable problem. The events will be themed and product led. There would also be a range of potential categories.
- **Lack of daring actions or focus.** Most cities have an event strategy. This option allows them to build on or utilise existing events. So such an initiative should not be seen as risky, rather it builds upon current strategies. The tangible nature of this approach also helps to create a focus.
- **Resource Constraints.** Whilst scarcity of resources is an issue for all options, this should be capable of using existing activity, or certainly re-focusing it. Moreover it would appear to be capable of attracting EU resources. There would be tangible measurable outcomes and it should be possible to build an EU scheme at the Atlantic Arc level. It might be that such a scheme could attract additional resource using existing activity for match funding. The partnership across cities would also enable cities to tap into a wider skills and knowledge base as well as networks.
- **Stakeholder Factors.** An events-based initiative should be easier to sell to stakeholder networks. It is tangible and should also deliver clear short term economic benefits as well as help to build brand awareness.

8.6. Conclusion and recommendations

Ultimately, it will be for the individual future partners to determine which of the presented options should be taken forward. However the comments below represent an objective assessment of what has been learnt through this process and built upon the established good practice around place branding.

It is important to go back to the fundamental question – why would you want to co-brand the Atlantic Arc? Although there may be some political benefit in the process in terms of strengthening this region in the eyes of EU administrators, surely the primary reason must be that it creates some kind of competitive advantage.

Essentially the role of any brand is to add value. In this case “adding value” means enhancing the competitiveness of the individual city and region offers within the Atlantic Arc region, or at least enriching the individual city narratives. So above all any future branding initiative must be able demonstrate how it will achieve this.

It is difficult to overstate the challenge that any city or region faces in seeking to achieve consensus adoption and enthusiastic usage of a new place brand – when it comes to the

Atlantic Arc dimension this challenge is multiplied ⁵⁹. As we have seen through the relatively small number of partners in the AT.Brand programme, each city has a different perspective, they are all at different stages of developing a place-brand strategy and most are quite different from one another.

The following comment from Marketing Liverpool was sharp about the relevance of a new place brand:

“The place brand is our least preferred option. It is the least tangible of the concepts proposed and is most likely to be considered ‘just another marketing strapline’, which could devalue the excellent work undertaken during the AT Brand Project”

This comes from a city with a relatively mature place brand model which understands the challenges around effective place branding. We are to strongly agree with the point that it would be a shame to recommend a solution which of itself feel into the trap of becoming a superficial communications initiative with weak support across the region.

There is little merit in pursuing a conventional place brand approach. There may however be value in establishing a set of core values which come to life through a more focussed initiative. This brings us to consideration of the Product [event] option.

Even most of the enthusiastic advocates of the “Unbounded” narrative recognised that it would need to have a focal point in order to bring it to life. An Atlantic Arc wide events initiative could achieve this. Although some voices say that an events strategy does not constitute a branding initiative, one may rather view this as an innovative way of establishing a brand in a very practical way.

An events programme has a lot a merit. It is likely to attract additional sources of funding [one of the key requirements for effective place co-branding]. It can take advantage of exiting event initiatives within cities and regions. And it creates a tangible product or experience. If the partnership agrees a set of values and behaviours which help to define the “Unbounded” essence and help to bring it to life, they could be used to underpin the events programme. They can help to define the themes for the programme and the evaluation criteria within those themes. Moreover the events themselves will be the stage to launch the visual and verbal elements of the brand such a logos and straplines if this is what is desired. In that sense they are adopted in a very focused and practical way. The brand values begin to live in a very real sense.

If however future partners were to opt for a single initiative, it would also be relevant to build a cause related brand tied to protecting and promoting the potential of the Oceans, and in particular making the most of the “Blue Growth” concept that is broadly being

⁵⁹ This high complexity also remains to a large extent whether the issue is addressed as a complementary Atlantic narrative called to enrich the different place brand contents across the macro-region.

promoted by the European Commission ⁶⁰. Such a programme has merit in its own right and indeed many cities, regions, universities, enterprises and other stakeholders are already involved in projects and initiatives related to this cause, which could be seen as part of a place brand programme. The elements which however would elevate this to a brand initiative would be the way in which it brought an agreed set of values and beliefs to life and how the programme is managed in order to create content economic opportunities for partner cities and regions.



⁶⁰ The vision is that the Atlantic Area, as it is formulated in terms of ETC (European Territorial Cooperation) is now positioned in a way to lead the most significant developments in Europe related to the Blue Growth concept.

9. Basis for a roadmap

At this point, given the conclusions resulting from this systematic exploration into the purpose and feasibility to co-branding the Atlantic Arc, it makes little sense trying to go forward in what respect action planning or working agenda, due the obvious limitations of AT.Brand as framework for that purpose, in terms of timeline and representativeness of the partnership. Otherwise, such an attempt would be a mere speculative exercise.

Hence, this section just pretends to highlight some key questions and preliminary steps in case a number enough of decision-makers agree to move forward on co-branding the Atlantic Area. Summing up the aforementioned conclusions, both the events-based initiative and the caused-based approach are worth more development work and experimentation, without giving up the place-brand main narrative coined by Roger Pride.

The various experiences of place co-branding teach us that it takes time to effectively define the relevant scope of collaboration and build sufficient mutual trust. We inevitably deal with a painstaking and innovative process, which with no doubt should be progressive, on the basis of well-focused themes, a “coalition of the willing” and successful landmarks.

More than pushing for an ambitious strategy in a so sophisticated field as transnational co-branding, the relevant steps forward should focus on generating a sequence of little but tangible achievements in short and medium term. Moreover, further initiatives will have to pay particular attention to the issue of stakeholder participation and engagement.

Obviously, the issue of funding is crucial. Any further step on this theme will have a clear transnational orientation, which makes the Atlantic Area Programme the source of co-funding *par excellence*. The still experimental dimension of transnational co-branding in the Atlantic area will be a key argument to get EU funds indeed. But, it is well known that the possibilities for a project proposal to be granted will depend on the capability to offer tangible outputs, convincing results and sufficient level of committed partners.

The Atlantic Area Programme 2014-2020 features a more concentrated strategy compared with previous programming periods, aligned with the Atlantic Maritime Strategy. As part of Axis 4, the second one in terms of fund allocation (39.5 million Euros for the whole period), the specific objective 4.2 reads quite friendly for the prospects of post AT.Brand co-branding initiatives. The Programme offers a very attractive co-funding rate of 75%, while some simplification of the administrative procedure is to be expected. One pending question concerns the availability of instruments for the participation of private companies.

INTERREG Atlantic Area Programme 2014-2020

Specific objective 4.2 - Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development.

“The main change sought is an improved cooperation framework in view of a better exploitation and preservation of the Atlantic natural and cultural assets leading to an enhanced attractiveness of the Area allowing the region to attract new visitors and to generate new products and services contributing to develop economic activities, create new local jobs, fix and attract people and create synergies contributing to the improvement of the social well-being of populations”

“The main challenge, due to a reference situation where key assets of the area - a well preserved and quality natural landscapes, rich biodiversity and important cultural heritage, with around 30 UNESCO world heritage sites, are confronted to natural, climate change, a demographic, economic and urban pressures - will be to enhance the Atlantic Area identity and improve its attractiveness (...)”

Here are some examples of eligible actions:

- Development of strategies, policies and initiatives capitalising on the Atlantic cultural and natural heritage by public institutions, enterprises, NGOs and local population. The objective is to convert natural resources and the cultural heritage into a territorial marketing asset of the Atlantic Area, with a view to generate specific new products, services and tools having an economic impact a local and regional level.
- Development of marketing and promotion strategies for cultural activities
- Value the existing cultural and heritage tourist attractions
- Development of joint initiatives to promote a transnational identity of the Atlantic cultural heritage
- Development of subsectors and touristic products: coastal activities and sports, nautical activities, cruises; coastal, rural and farm products; gastronomy, wellness, cultural products, pilgrimage and religious events and business tourism

9.2. Leadership

The Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities, which is partner of AT.Brand, stands as the natural main heir of the exploratory work carried out in the field of transnational co-branding. Since its creation in 2000, as the only transnational network of cities at the scale of the Atlantic Arc, the CAAC has the ambition to be the Atlantic Urban Forum, with three specific objectives:

- To defend the interests of Atlantic cities, their institutions and citizens;
- To create opportunities for cooperation between Atlantic cities;
- To enhance the visibility of Atlantic cities at European and international levels.

The organisation currently has 21 members ⁶¹, mainly from France, Spain and Portugal, but constantly works for its enlargement. Regarding its scope of intervention, beyond the lobbying function (an area where it has met with some degree of success, becoming a privileged interlocutor of the European Commission and the Atlantic Area Programme) and its participation in European projects (direct or through its members), another important objective of Conference is to provide the area's local authorities with innovative tools to reach integrated territorial strategies

With a small staff working on the daily operations and the secondment of member cities, the CAAC carries out a range of activities of campaigning and communications, cooperation and exchange, notably through four thematic commissions: Innovative Urban Policy, Creative Cities, Social Innovation and Sustainable Development and Blue Growth.

A role expected to be assumed by the organisation is the capitalisation of some of the AT.Brand outputs, in particular the exploratory work on co-branding. In the short term, CAAC will ensure the appropriation of the main findings and recommendations in this field at the level of its thematic commissions first, and secondly at the level of other stakeholders, facilitators and any potentially interested party across the macro-region. Further to this, the Conference might act as technical office for any concrete initiative that may come up.

Tamara Guirao, CAAC's coordinator, has shared some ideas about this issue, in line with the new "Atlantic Urban Strategy" which is to be adopted by CAAC members.

⁶¹ Spain: A Coruña, Avilés, Donostia-San Sebastián, Gijón, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Santander, Santiago de Compostela, Sevilla; France: Brest Métropole Océane, Caen, Communauté Urbaine de Bordeaux, Communauté Urbaine de Cherbourg, Lorient Agglomération, Nantes Métropole, Rennes and Rennes Métropole, Saint-Nazaire Agglomération, AIRE 198 (entity bringing together the four main cities of the Poitou-Charentes region - Poitiers, Angoulême, Niort and La Rochelle), Nantes-Saint Nazaire Port (associated member); Portugal: Faro, Lisbon, Viana do Castelo; Ireland: Cork.

Atlantic Urban Strategy Objectives	AT.Brand Capitalisation
To integrate the vision of the Atlantic cities in European policies	Enhance the role of CAAC Executive Bureau members as advocates of the narrative and values associated to an Atlantic brand
	Add AT.Brand findings and conclusions regarding place branding and transnational co-branding to position papers, consultation responses and communication materials
	Knowledge exchange on the meaning and purpose of transnational co-branding and in general city branding with other EU networks and Atlantic key stakeholders
To be exemplary in the development of the European Urban Agenda, giving it an Atlantic dimension	Add the AT.Brand experience as a good practice in the framework of the European Urban Agenda
	Create and maintain a repertory of Atlantic Cities' promotion tools
	Capitalise AT.Brand in the thematic actions of the Atlantic Urban Strategy, especially in Creative Cities
	Bring forward the AT.Brand findings and recommendations related to co-branding the macro-region to discussions around the Atlantic Maritime Strategy
To strengthen Atlantic cooperation, especially between cities	Deepen in the big narrative here sketched for the Atlantic area by means of projecting it into a range of specific audiences
	Launch a drawing and colouring contest about the Atlantic Arc so as to create citizen's awareness
To spread the model of quality of Atlantic cities	Maintain AT.Brand website
	Maintain and update Atlantic Cities' who's who
	Develop the Atlantic City of the Year contest
	Enhance the "branding orientation" of CAAC social media
	Use some of the AT.Brand findings and results to make more effective bridges with the other side of the Atlantic



Atlantic Arc Cities

Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities <http://atlanticcities.eu/>

Not everything from the above table has to do directly with the transnational co-branding issue, but some interesting ideas have been brought in relation to this. Most important aspects at this stage should deal with being the “keeper” of AT.Brand main outputs and the promoter of contacts outside the CAAC current membership towards new initiatives building on the present work.

9.2. Next steps

Into the events-based option

Three modalities have been proposed as ways to move into action regarding this strategic option, namely: Selection, Elevation and Umbrella.

The **Selection** modality actually corresponds to an existing initiative: CAAC’s “Atlantic City of the Year” contest. It was launched in 2012 with the ambition to become a recognition that enhances the Atlantic model of urban development and promotes the attractiveness and reputation of the Atlantic cities at European level.

This model, as described in CAAC’s 2008 Charter of San Sebastian, is made of five priorities: environmental excellence; sustainable and innovative economic development; social cohesion and diversity; enhancement of the shared identity of Atlantic cities (maritime heritage, culture, quality of life, sustainable tourism); open, efficient and ambitious cooperation (multi-level and triple-helix governance).

In addition to present an application, which should match with some of those “Atlantic attributes”, the laureate is to propose an action plan, including initiatives to improve in each of the Charter’s priorities, communication activities and the celebration of an “Atlantic day”, to be organised with the support of CAAC’s General Secretariat.

The concrete benefits for the winning city are:

- In case of not being a CAAC member, the city is invited to join the organisation free of membership fees during the first year;
- CAAC commits to promote and disseminate good practices of the winning city at European level and to provide a privileged space in its communication tools, documents and meetings.

To date, two contests have been organized. The last winner has been the French metropolis of Brest. CAAC is currently considering the revision and upscaling of the event, according to the following elements:

- Revision of the assessment criteria: simplification around the “Unbounded” big narrative and reduction the weight of the “CAAC member” criteria.
- Opening the vote: so far, a jury of Atlantic personalities was in charge of voting. It could be relevant, also in terms of visibility of the event, to broaden that spectrum to a number of significant entities such as CPMR-Atlantic Arc Commission, the Atlantic Transnational Network (a network composed of Economic and Social Councils of the Atlantic Area regions) or influential NGOs related to the assessment topics.

Another option is to introduce an element of public voting in the award. This can be achieved on-line at very little cost. However, a public element would require the criteria to be far more “consumer facing”, increasing the importance of tangible public facing benefits, such as cost and ease of public transport, cleanliness, citizen engagement, cultural agenda and so on. Public voting would also mobilise the cities to promote the competition and in doing so raise awareness of the Atlantic dimension.

These considerations imply changing the rule of confidentiality of the contest applicants which eventually are not granted the award. This, in turn, could be more appealing for potential applicants as it would give them visibility during the voting campaign.

- Increasing the benefits for the winning city: extension of the free membership period, greater exposure in European media and forums, promotion on the winning city as a destination in CAAC member cities.

The event approach could also give way to a pilot project beyond CAAC’s contest, on one of the other proposed modalities: Elevation or Umbrella. Combining both approaches may also be relevant: existing events might be selected, activating tools for

greater visibility and collaboration between their promoters, while Themed Years would give way to new events or special editions of existing events.

In any case, a pilot may consist of the following steps:

- Definition of event categories and selection criteria. In this scenario the process necessary in order to agree the values would not need to be as onerous or intensive as if the sole focus was to create a place brand. Presumably, some kind of project team should be established, and the values and positioning of the events could be agreed as part of that process. All of this should be drafted in an appealing way through a dedicated commercial-oriented dossier.
- Mapping and selection process, including consultation and interaction to/with key related stakeholders.
- Dialogue with events managers and promoters to determine scope of potential collaboration: facilitation/exchange of information, use of open application programming interface (API) in the perspective of a common web platform, reciprocal promotion, etc.
- Design and roll out of a genuine web platform and social media strategy to offer greater visibility to the events. It could include an event calendar with advanced functionalities such as links to travel and accommodation booking, etc. The activation of the umbrella way would require a special effort in international advertising.
- Work on the commercial sponsoring issue, beyond the period of EU-funding as a pilot.
- Use of designated events to create collateral to promote the Atlantic Arc.

Into the cause-based option

AT.Brand final event in Dublin included a session on project ideas and proposals. Bretagne Développement Innovation (BDI), one of the external stakeholders having participated very actively in the consultation process on transnational co-branding, came up with a proposal related to the cause-based approach.

With no doubt, it is a concrete opportunity to move forward with this strategic approach. Later on, BDI's proposal was discussed in more detail with the team in charge of the AT.Brand main technical assistance resulting on the following preliminary sequence:

- Action 1 - Design of a collective promotional offer around the theme of Blue Growth⁶², with a strong link with the Atlantic EU Maritime Strategy. Creative methods such as design thinking may be used to find possible solutions. In this respect, when it comes to producing marketing collateral, it will be necessary to define the purpose of the material, the intended audience and the expected outcome. It will be necessary to define priority challenges or sectors.
- Action 2 - A shared digital strategy for public and press relations. Using the prestige of the participating place brands to collectively promote the Atlantic Area as the core of Europe in relation to “Blue Growth”.
- Action 3 - Networking and collaboration between businesses across the participating regions, through B2B international meetings, workshops, conferences and so on the theme of Blue Growth and the contributions of Atlantic stakeholders. To a large extent, these actions will capitalize, in terms of communications mainly, on the numerous R&D and business-led collaborative projects from the past programming period (2017-2014)

Collaboration is a pre-requisite for co-branding, but co-branding is not a pre-requisite for collaboration. Collaboration and cross learning are well known benefits of the Atlantic Area Programme. The cause-based approach, which is a established practice in today’s corporate branding & marketing, could innovate in the way to address cooperation in the context of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC).

- Action 4 - Development of the ambassador figure related to the “Blue Growth” cause. Testimonials, stories and videos will be carefully produced to be then broadly disseminated. It will require a well-focused recruitment programme within the Atlantic area, targeting leading companies, researchers and celebrities but also local small-scale innovators and ordinary people.
- Action 5 - Collective international promotion of sea-related clusters and industries in the Atlantic area in order to attract foreign investment and talent from the US and other FDI target markets.⁶³

⁶² Blue Growth is major concept promoted by the European Commission. See Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Blue Growth—opportunities for marine and maritime sustainable growth (COM 2012 494 final). We firmly believe the Atlantic Area should be called to lead this strategy within the EU, http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/blue_growth/documents/com_2012_494_en.pdf

⁶³ Anyway, this would need for further analysis to avoid the risk of substantial overlapping, due to the plethora of cluster-based internationalisation initiatives and the activities of national bodies in charge of FDI attraction. Maybe the way is to find certain niche-activities where the cooperation at the Atlantic scale is timely and relevant enough to organize technology showcases.

Into the place brand approach

This reports has revealed that it makes little sense to build up a single place brand for the whole EU Atlantic façade, conventionally speaking, in terms of both content and strategy. Besides the extremely high heterogeneity of the Atlantic arc, from Faroe to Canary islands, the main reason for that is many of the Atlantic cities are quite engaged managing their own branding process, which is a quite absorbing task. Even, a few of them are already involved in process of horizontal and/or vertical co-branding. That is the case of Cardiff, for instance ⁶⁴. To be honest, the issue of transnational co-branding has not proved to be a priority at all, at least for the Atlantic cities.

Having said this, it might make sense to build up not a place brand toolkit in the conventional sense, but a sort of web-based repository of values (crossovers), stories and appealing images, available to any interested party in the macro-region. Indeed, this report has initiated that way unveiling a common big narrative around the “Unbounded” concept and a set of related values.

But this AT.Brand contribution for a brand proposition needs to further development and be exposed to a wider range of stakeholders as well as to citizens and the media. In case an events-based initiative emerges and goes forward, its related web platform might be a good occasion to test and better shape both a storytelling and imagery related to the “Unbounded” big narrative. Ideally, it also means to set up proper mechanisms to get feedback from thousands of potential stakeholders and active citizens interested in the Atlantic/Blue Growth cause. That is, such an initiative could also be useful to enhance a “we-feeling” in the Atlantic Area.

Another possibility would be to discuss directly with the Secretariat of the Atlantic Area Programme the organization of further consultation on the brand proposition.

9.3. Engagement for project generation and synergies

The launch of the first call of the 2014-2020 Atlantic Programme to be expected for the first quarter of 2016, which gives reasonable time to work on a proposal.

First of all, the present report will be circulated widely to relevant stakeholders during the last quarter of 2015. TASO may take over of it, on behalf of the AT.Brand partnership. The report will be sent to the stakeholders contacted as part of the consultation

⁶⁴ At this time, Cardiff is dealing with two significant challenges in terms of multi-level governance and co-branding, namely the case for the Cardiff capital region (a cooperation of the 10 local authorities of the functional urban area, including Newport a long-standing Cardiff’s competitors) and the alliance with Bristol basically to target the Greater London market (the so called Great Western Cities Partnership).

processes on transnational co-branding – those who showed a large interest to collaborate on concrete initiatives around co-branding the Atlantic Area. The e-mailing will include an invitation to get in touch with CAAC, if interested to take part in a project proposal around the events-based approach. We consider that, currently, the most relevant interlocutor for the cause-based approach is Bretagne Développement Innovation (BDI), as the organisation is concretely considering a project application.

It would be relevant for BDI to actively participate in the second “Atlantic stakeholder platform” conference, to be held in the very Brittany, concretely in Brest, on October 29. The organization of such events is part of the Action Plan of the EU Atlantic Maritime strategy, for further networking and exchanges of best practices -the first conference was held in Porto on January 2015. The 2nd Atlantic Stakeholder Platform conference will include eight “stakeholder-led workshops and match-making activities” on topics related to Priority 2 of the Atlantic Action Plan, notably in the areas of maritime safety and security; climate change; sustainable management of marine resources; and the exploitation of renewable energy potential of the Atlantic area’s marine and coastal environment .

It is highly recommendable that CAAC should engage a dialogue with CPMR-Atlantic Arc Commission⁶⁵ to test the interest of its member regions, as they are also relevant stakeholders in any related to transnational place co-branding.

Other relevant stakeholders to be considered by potential project promoters are national/regional organisations devoted to sector-focused marketing (tourism, FDI attraction and business internationalisation, cultural diplomacy...) in particular from Ireland, Portugal and Wales, where they play a comparatively more important role.

Finally, a specific consultation could take place on the potential of other product-based developments in what respect the potential for cross-border co-branding and co-marketing. In this respect, key interlocutors could be the promoters of 2007-2013 INTERREG projects around nautical sports, tourism and cruising.

⁶⁵ Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions www.crpm.org

AT.Brand is a partnership of six cities – Dublin, Cardiff, Faro, La Rochelle, Liverpool and San Sebastian- plus the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities, working on three areas: i) Cross-learning on innovative city branding, open to any interested practitioner; ii) Implementation of pilot actions in each of the participating cities, matching specific needs and with high potential for transferability; iii) and exploration on trans-national Co-branding in the Atlantic area, including consultation to a wide range of stakeholders in the macro-region.

Project coordinator: Robert Hughes, Dublin City Council, robert.hughes@dublincity.ie

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