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Fragmented Identity

Exploring the Consequences of City Branding in Practice

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Abstract

City branding is a relatively new and emerging field, yet growing in importance as cities around the world increasingly compete for resources. Whether they want to attract more tourists, new residents, or economic development, cities engage in various strategic marketing initiatives in an effort to shape people's perceptions and experience of the city. Our aim is to gain an understanding of how city branding strategies impact stakeholders in public organizations. As such, we conducted a qualitative, interpretive study at a public international school. The school became part of the city's branding strategy as an infrastructural investment to attract international companies and employees to move to the city. Our study shows the inherent complexity of city branding in this context and uncovers a number of implications for the organization, not least of which was a fragmented identity. While there is no single best way to engage in city branding, we argue that certain measures can be taken to help mitigate the risk of incurring such negative consequences, which warrant further attention. Ultimately, we seek to advance the practical understanding of the implementation of city branding activities and offer insights that could potentially help other cities participating in similar projects.

Keywords: City branding, place branding, stakeholders, image, identity, education, international school

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Introduction to City Branding

Cities around the world have turned to branding activities in order to compete for various resources. Whether a city is attempting to increase tourism, attract new residents, or encourage economic investment and development, branding becomes particularly important, both from a research and a policy perspective (Dinnie, 2011). While the field of city branding is seen as having similarities to traditional corporate and product branding practices (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006), the inherent complexity of trying to satisfy the needs of many different stakeholder groups leads to more nuanced challenges (Dinnie, 2011). It is this human element, and the impact that strategic decisions can have on social issues, that differentiate city branding from traditional product branding.

Within the literature and our thesis, the terms urban, place and city branding are used interchangeably (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2016). According to Kavaratzis (2004) city branding is:

> "the means both for achieving competitive advantage in order to increase inward investment and tourism, and also for achieving community development, reinforcing local identity and identification of the citizens with their city and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion and unrest" (p.70).

While there is not much consensus on what city branding is, this definition demonstrates the broad range of activities, and intended outcomes, encompassed by city branding. The strategic focus also highlights that cities deliberately design branding activities in order to shape how people interpret, identify with, and experience a place. These branding activities have typically focused on communication mechanisms such as logos, ad campaigns, and slogans portraying a certain image of the city to both residents and nonresidents (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Other city branding strategies include things such as hosting large-scale events, developing infrastructure such as sporting arenas, theaters, or public spaces, or engaging in certain initiatives such as sustainability efforts.

Recent city branding research, however, has acknowledged the complexity of catering to multiple stakeholders' needs and that the effects of such branding activities are largely uncontrollable (Zenker, 2011). People will naturally perceive things through their own lens, based on factors such as their personal life experience, values, and current situation. In this way, efforts to impart specific city brand meaning on people may be futile since much of the meaning develops organically and people typically have an existing meaning of the city (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016). Green, Grace and Perkins (2016) actually identify this as one of the gaps that exists between city branding theory and practice and call for gaining a deeper understanding of people's existing meaning of cities before attempting to change it. Additionally, the authors call for a closer look at non-marketer-controlled city brand meaning-making processes (for example, education or arts) and ask how practitioners may be able to support these processes in service of the overall branding strategy. Lastly, they propose gaining a deeper understanding of the ethical questions in city branding strategies, specifically around the notion of controlling people's interpretation of the meaning of cities. Green, Grace and Perkins (2016) believe that if both researchers and practitioners work to address these gaps, the field of city branding can advance more effectively.

Given the complexity and uncontrollability of city branding, it has become increasingly important to engage stakeholders in an effort to co-create a city's brand in a more collaborative and participatory manner (Dinnie, 2011; Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016). Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) take an identity-based approach to this idea of co-creation, arguing for a continuous process of identity construction based on dialogue between stakeholders and branding practitioners. Aitken and Campelo (2011) suggest a more bottom-up approach, where the actual experience of the stakeholders is represented in the brand, thereby gaining further buy-in, and creating sustainability as city brand meanings continuously evolve. Dinnie (2011) proposes a 'network approach' to describe this co-creative decision-making process and raises the fact that tensions and challenges are unavoidable when involving large, diverse groups of stakeholders in this way.

Our study will take a deeper look at these tensions and challenges from the perspective of stakeholders in a city branding strategy and show that there are often unintended consequences to such strategies, with impact on people's lives. While there is no single best way to engage in city branding, we argue that certain measures can be taken to help mitigate the risk of incurring such negative consequences, which warrant further attention. We conducted an interpretive study at Malmö International School (MIS), which is one organizational stakeholder in the branding strategy of the city of Malmö (also referred to as Malmö stad). In order to get a better understanding of the context, we will provide a brief overview of Malmö, followed by a background of MIS and how it came to be part of Malmö's overall city branding and communication strategy. We will then present our research aim and questions.

Overview of Malmö

Malmö is Sweden's third largest city, located on the southwest coast, just across from Copenhagen, Denmark. The city has experienced rapid change in the last 20 to 30 years, which has greatly influenced how the city views itself and strategically plans for the future. One of the dominant companies in Malmö through the 70's and early 80's was Kockums, which was dedicated to the railroad and shipping industries. The shipyard located in Västra Hamnen (the Western Harbor) of the city played a major role in the city's economy until it was shut down in 1987 (Kockums Industrier, 2017). Since that time most of the industrial buildings have been razed and brand new sustainable residential and office buildings, shopping centers, and green spaces have been put up in their place. This change happened progressively as Malmö has tried to shift away from its industrial past and toward a much more service and technology-oriented economy (Listerborn, 2017).

Like many European cities, Malmö has essentially had to reinvent itself in the post-industrial era with a focus on becoming a 'knowledge city' (Hubbard & Hall, 1998; Listerborn, 2017). The establishment of Malmö högskola in 1998 furthered these efforts as the city attempted to shed its working-class image of the past in favor of a more entrepreneurial, forward-thinking, city of the future. One significant event that impacted the city's development was the completion of the Öresund Bridge in 2000, which connected Malmö to Copenhagen with both automobile traffic and high-speed trains. With much shorter travel time between the two cities, it created a more complete region making it accessible for residents and tourists alike to take advantage of the combined resources. It also created increased opportunity for companies and sparked a wave of economic development across the region (Listerborn, 2017).

Malmö has benefited on one hand from being so close to the Danish capital, yet it has still had to find ways to compete for resources and form its own unique identity. In order to further grow and pursue the vision of being a knowledge-based city, Malmö aims to attract the highly educated. This further calls for more attractive urban and housing environments (Listerborn, 2017). As a result, Malmö has employed a multi-faceted approach to city branding, trying to appeal not only to existing residents, but also tourists, potential expatriate residents and companies alike. Lavish building projects, including the Turning Torso, Malmö Live performance hall and conference center, Malmö Arena, Emporia shopping center and others have provided new infrastructure and have symbolic value in promoting a vibrant image of the city with many cultural offerings. The city has also hosted various large events, most notably the 2013 Eurovision Song Contest at Malmö Arena. In order to further pursue development projects and host events like this, the city also needs to be on good terms with private capital and investors (Holgersen, 2014; Listerborn, 2017).

Despite the positive growth that Malmö has experienced, it has simultaneously faced other social challenges, putting a strain on resources. For example, the crime rate of the city has has garnered international media attention (Brown, 2017). This has led to a sense of unrest among the population and created a fairly negative image of the city, both in Sweden and abroad. Demographics have also changed as large groups of immigrants and asylum seekers have settled in the city from places like Iraq, Iran, the Balkans, Somalia and most recently from Syria. While many Swedish cities are dealing with similar integration issues, Malmö has felt the brunt with a large proportion of immigrants choosing to settle in the city (Taguma et al., 2010). As a result, Malmö has had to find ways to provide housing, education, training, job search support, and other services. This has added to the political unrest as Sweden's national identity has been challenged in new ways.

In terms of education, Sweden has also faced various challenges. In the 1990's certain reforms converted the once centralized education system into one of the most decentralized among OECD countries (Taguma et al., 2010). Prior to this, private schools were quite rare, but quickly, the concept of free-choice was introduced and parents were able to elect which school they wanted their children to attend. In a 2015 report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) an urgent need for change in Sweden's school systems was called for, echoing the sentiments of a national public debate on the topic. They discuss the falling student performance on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) mentioning that in the period from 2000 to 2012 no other country saw a sharper decline in results than Sweden. In addition to falling test scores the report mentions the ongoing teacher shortage (Elmore et al., 2015). A separate report released in 2010 entitled OECD Reviews of Migrant Education (in Sweden) highlights the many challenges the country faces related to integration of first and second-generation immigrants in terms of both education policy and practice, noting that learning outcomes can be significantly lower for immigrant children compared to native-born (Taguma et al., 2010). The report goes on to say that it is important to recognize local context and that in Malmö, up to 40% of the student body is made up of immigrant children with an Arabic background (Taguma et al., 2010, p.52). It is against this backdrop that Malmö decided to open MIS.

Background of Malmö International School

In January of 2013 the politicians of Malmö stad voted to officially form MIS, a municipal school that would offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum to students free of charge, in addition to running the standard Swedish curriculum. Prior to this, the school was a smaller unit of Söderkullaskolan in Malmö and called Söderkulla International School (SIS) (Ahlfridh, 2012). In light of the growth of Malmö, and wanting to continue to attract economic development in the future, Malmö stad decided that having an international school as part of their infrastructure was necessary (Ahlfridh, 2012). Part of this decision was driven by the fact that IKEA was planning on moving a large part of their global offices to Hyllie, the newest zone to develop in the city (Ahlfridh, 2012). In fact, they were estimating up to 100 students from IKEA families applying to MIS for the 2014/2015 academic year.

The IB organization is based in The Hague, Netherlands and is known for having a high standard of quality education centered on developing internationally-minded, lifelong learners (IBO, 2017). They offer three programs; the Primary Years Program (PYP) for ages 6-12, the Middle Years Program (MYP) for ages 12-16, and the Diploma Program (DP) for ages 16-19 (Ahlfridh, 2012). As SIS was already offering an authorized PYP program, and Borgarskolan was offering the DP program, that meant that the city only lacked an authorized MYP program. SIS had intentions, however, of following the track for authorization of the MYP program. Given this, Malmö saw the opportunity to move the PYP and MYP programs out of SIS to a standalone school, called MIS. They would temporarily be located in an old school facility in Triangeln until completing construction of a brand new, larger school in Hyllie (Ahlfridh, 2012).

The purpose of the school was to cater to the children of expatriate families, who were planning on being in Malmö for a short period of time to work or study before moving, either back to their country of origin, or on to another destination (Ahlfridh, 2012). Until that time, the only available IB school in Malmö was Bladin's International School (referred to as Bladin's) which was private and collected tuition. The city felt it was important to have an authorized IB school available to all students free of charge.
In this way, MIS became part of Malmö's city branding strategy. Opening the school was much subtler than a mass advertising campaign, or a logo and tagline, yet it still had a lot of symbolic value. The expectations from Malmö about the role the school would play in helping to attract future economic development would certainly place an unusual burden on the people in the MIS community, as our study will show.

Research Purpose and Contribution

Our aim is to gain an understanding of how city branding strategies impact stakeholders in the public sector. By conducting an interpretive study at MIS, a city branding project in Malmö, this thesis will present the effects and potential consequences of implementing such a project. It is rather important to consider the unique context of MIS throughout the research. Opening the school was not a traditional marketing activity, such as a slogan, logo, or advertising campaign, but rather a non-marketer controlled factor (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016). As such, the implications stretch further than simply managing image and people's meaning of the city to actually affecting people's lives. We seek to advance the practical understanding of the implementation of city branding activities and offer insights that could potentially help other cities participating in similar projects.

Research Questions

Our main research question is:
What impact does the implementation of city branding strategies have on stakeholders in public organizations?

Additionally, we have developed the following sub-questions during the course of our research:

- How do cities involve the various stakeholders to help shape the city branding strategy?

- What effect do intended city branding strategies have on the image and identity of public organizations?

Thesis Outline

In order to address our research questions, we first introduce the relevant literature and theoretical framework guiding our study on the effects of city branding activities in practice in chapter two. Following this we will describe our methodological processes and considerations used during our research in chapter three. In chapter four we then present the significant empirical evidence, which leads to a discussion and analysis of relevant findings in chapter five. Finally, we provide our conclusion in chapter six with final thoughts and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Background

In a neoliberal environment it seems as if the only solution to social problems is economic growth (Peck and Tickell, 2002). According to Listerborn (2016) the state then becomes more like a ‘private company’. This fosters a competitive environment of cities, since it leads them to focus on business activities, like private capital investment, to further grow while at the same time businesses adapt more ‘social characteristics’ investing in the public sector. Consequently, cities around the world try to brand themselves as ‘the place to move to’ in order to attract human capital as well as economic investment. A geographic location, like a city, is then likely to adapt branding strategies similar to corporations or products to achieve this aim (Zhao et al., 2017). But what is city branding and why are cities branding themselves?

The following chapter reviews literature and research in the field of city branding. We first discuss the role of stakeholders and go on to explore education and marketization, followed by a presentation of identity construction in city branding. Lastly, we conduct a critical review of the discussed literature as well as an overview of current literature gaps.

What is City branding?

To pursue economic, political, or socio-psychological objectives, cities felt the need even centuries ago to differentiate themselves from other cities (Ashworth, 2009; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006). Over the last 30 years the centuries-old practice of city branding has evolved even further, however, patterns from the past still play a role in current practice (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016). Even though literature about city branding is increasing, there are still gaps. According to Green, Grace & Perkins (2016), city branding research is, for example, not always connected to city branding practice. As previously mentioned, city branding activities have been increasingly used over the last decades (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016). Due to the complexity of city branding there is currently no universal definition. In our thesis we follow the definition by Kavaratzis (2004), who sees city branding as:

> “the means both for achieving competitive advantage in order to increase inward investment and tourism, and also for achieving community development, reinforcing

> local identity and identification of the citizens with their city and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion and unrest" (p.70).

In order to discuss the effects and consequences of city branding, we will first present the evolution of the field. The attempts to manage what cities mean to people create some of the underlying assumptions of current city branding activities.

Background and evolution of city branding

According to Green, Grace & Perkins (2016), the evolution of city branding can best be described in waves, each overlapping, and each wave trying to evolve the meaning of cities to people.

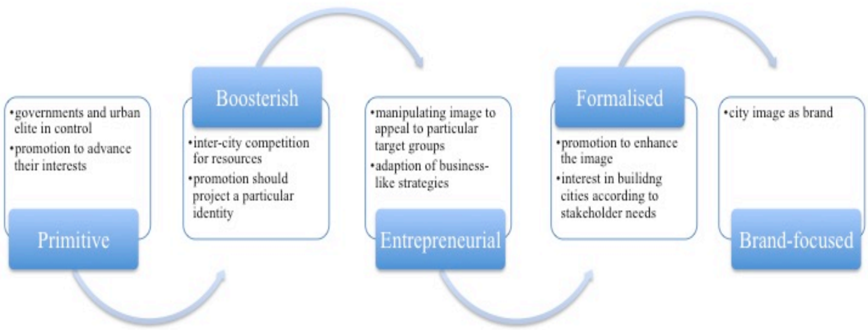

Figure 1: Evolution of city branding (own model based on Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016)

The first wave is called *primitive city branding*. The term 'primitive' seems to be referring to the beginning of actual literature of city branding, since explicit strategies were not developed at that point. It emerged in the pre-19th century, where governments as well as the urban elite shaped and controlled urban spaces and cities according to their interests. The symbol of power played a key role then, since this was the factor that started the practical evolution of city branding (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016). Actions such as the settlement of new land manipulated the perception of the city, since fertile land, security as well as water desirable for residents, which subsequently advanced the interest of the elite as well as of government (Ward, 1998).

Boosterish city branding is referred to by Green, Grace & Perkins (2016) as the second wave in the evolution. Developing on primitive city branding, this wave started to design and promote place identities (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006). Just as within primitive city branding, power was nonetheless the key element within this wave, as the urban elite and government approached resource competition with other cities in both the national and global markets (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006). One of the key features within this wave was the introduction of producing an aimed identity of a city. This form of city branding was achieved through whatever channel was available at the time, for example through newspapers (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016).

The third wave of city branding is defined as *entrepreneurial*. Starting in the 1970s, city branding aimed to include a wider range of activities related to managing their resources, reputation, and the city's image (Dinnie, 2011). Literature characterized entrepreneurial city branding as 'business-like', characterized by risk taking, promotion, and the pursuit of economic development, as well as growing employment rates (Harvey, 1989; Hubbard & Hall, 1998). The focus of entrepreneurial cities during this wave was 'public-private-partnerships' in combination with characteristics from boosterism (e.g. governmental power execution to attract sources of funding) (Harvey, 1989). Further, the competition between cities regarding the above-mentioned factors increased and lead to the development of a service-based industry looking for skilled employees due to deindustrialization (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016; Hubbard & Hall, 1998).

The fourth wave was *formalized city branding*, which started in the late 1980's lasting until the early 2000's (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016). For the first time, public authorities in cooperation with private companies started to design the city, not only according to their needs as within the previous waves, but rather around stakeholder's needs (Hall, 1998). This was pushed forward in part by deindustrialization, when cities needed to change their image from being industrial to service industries and therefore needed to attract a different clientele. Literature around customer-oriented city marketing increased although the main marketing plans were limited to simple and piecemeal promotion (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993).

Brand focused city branding then emerged right throughout and directly after the wave of formalized city branding, and is seen as the current standard practice in the western world (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016). Due to increased mobility of people and capital, and an integrated Europe, the competition of cities constantly increases and leads them to pursue branding activities and techniques such as promotion, slogans and logos (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006; Kavaratzis, Warnaby & Ashworth, 2015). Hence, the question arises: Why do cities brand themselves?

Why cities use branding

Places of all kinds can profit from city branding strategies regarding their resource management, reputation, as well as their image. City branding can therefore be seen as particularly important for the following four reasons. First, it can be seen as *strategic guidance* for the development of cities. Strategic visions can be achieved through a direction of planning as well as measurements, which makes strategic guidance an important factor for successful city branding (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016; Kavaratzis, Warnaby & Ashworth, 2015). A second advantage is that city branding can be seen as a *basis for stakeholder cooperation*. Working towards a common goal, city branding can serve as common ground for both government and stakeholders to achieve their vision of the city (Kavaratzis, Warnaby & Ashworth, 2015). Third, branding cities can *maximize positive place experience* as well as their consumer experience. Consumers do not only include inhabitants, but also visitors, expats as well as tourists. City branding can therefore shape the expectations and experience people have of a city and are subsequently of great importance to cities (Kavaratzis, Warnaby & Ashworth, 2015). Lastly, as mentioned above, city branding increases *inter-place competition*. Due to limited resources regarding workforce, financial and cultural resources and a growing mobility of people, city branding can then be particularly helpful to remain competitive (Kavaratzis, Warnaby & Ashworth, 2015).

Stakeholder composition and stakeholder related tensions in city branding

“The way the population of the city behaves and communicates is key to demonstrating the city brand in action” (van Gelder, 2011, p.38). “The opinion of key stakeholders and decision influencers in the community are critical for success” (Middleton, p.25). Since stakeholders create and produce the image of a place, stakeholder groups play a key role for a successful implementation of city branding (Stubbs & Warnaby, 2015). Stakeholder engagement is crucial for the development of the city, since one aspect of branding is the rhetorical representation of the brand (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016; Kavaratzis, 2012).

According to Dinnie (2011) “the most challenging aspect of city branding is to communicate with the multiple stakeholders or audiences in a way that is relevant, consistent and coherent” (p.11). Stakeholders within city branding are a “large number of disparate groups and individuals, with varying levels of interest in the place brand” (Stubbs & Warnaby, 2015, p.102). They can be defined as “any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p.46).

Involving stakeholders within city branding activities is not only a challenging aspect, but also a beneficial one. A bottom-up approach, including stakeholders in city branding then can serve as a common goal towards a shared vision and generated place stories (Aitken & Campelo, 2011). Kavaratzis, Warnaby & Ashworth (2015) state, that this approach of city branding “focuses on internal audiences assuming that the aim of place branding is to reinforce people’s identification with the place and increase place-attachment” (p.6). Key stakeholders can further help shape the image and identity and therefore the present and future of a city.

> “The investments that [... stakeholders] make in the development of the play, the actions they take and the communications they put out are all vital elements of how the story of the place will be told. The principal channels through which places [...] communicate are their tourism, their private sector, their foreign and domestic policy investment and immigration, their culture and education, and their people” (van Gelder, 2011, p.37).

Kavaratzis (2012) states that even though there is a current turn towards stakeholder orientation through a partnership approach, the actual stakeholder engagement is still limited (Kavaratzis, 2012).

> “The principles of effective partnership [nonetheless] include inclusiveness and representativeness; long-term commitment; shared vision; sharing responsibility; trusting each other; alignment and engagement; communicating as one; taking ‘on-brand’ decisions and actions; making ‘on-brand’ investments; and willingness to evaluate impact and effectiveness” (Dinnie, 2011, p.6).

In order for city branding activities to be successful, there is a high need to include stakeholder groups into the process.

Stubbs and Warnaby (2015) evaluated a large group of stakeholders regarding city branding. Their overview includes residents, businesses, politicians, governmental institutions, academic organizations schools, promotion agencies, infrastructure and transport providers, cultural and sports organizations as well as religious organizations. The following overview includes a list of stakeholders that we believe are crucial to keep in mind within our research.

The private sector plays a key role in branding activities. Often local *businesses* are key employers in the local area and their financial investment can be of great importance for cities. In line with the neo-liberal approach, we see businesses as key stakeholders in our research since their investments and taxes can possibly help social problems of cities. Businesses and governments therefore seem to be connected through a 'give-and-take' mentality. If businesses provide the government with capital investment, they might expect at the same time city branding strategies to make their location attractive. While those businesses directly involved with city branding (e. g. restaurants or hotels) have a higher interest in contributing to a strong city brand, other businesses (e. g. manufacturing companies) might not be directly involved, but still rely on the city brand (e. g. to attract their workforce) and are connected in that way (Stubbs & Warnaby, 2015).

We see *Politicians* as another important stakeholder group of city branding, since they represent the key component in deciding and developing a long-term city branding strategy. While politicians can change frequently, due to political processes, this could pose a further challenge (Stubbs & Warnaby, 2015). Stubbs and Warnaby (2015) explicitly highlight another consequence of city branding on politicians: their "tendency to adopt promotion messages and activities that are unlikely to alienate any groups" (p.107) since they aim to be voted back into office. This can be risky, especially for long-term branding projects but at the same time beneficial.

A third group of stakeholders is *Governmental organizations.* Examples include sports and leisure facilities, transportation and employment agencies, or public schools, such as in our study. On one hand, they are the very organizations that can support and make use of the city branding. On the other hand, they could potentially damage a brand if their offered services do not match the branding strategies. This can further be problematic if they are viewed as constituent elements of the city brand (Stubbs & Warnaby, 2015). Further, "[i]nvestment in education and training says a great deal about how a city values its people as does the extent of private sector investment in the development of the workforce" (van Gelder, 2011, p.38).

Or as Stubbs and Warnaby (2015) claim:

> "When it comes to attracting new residents or even inward investment, a key issue could be education and schools for children. Again, if the city or municipality does not do things that support any claims that are made, the offering of the place will be undermined" (p.108).

This subsequently has an effect on the third evaluated stakeholder group: the *residents* of the city. Often underestimated, residents can play a crucial role in city branding. According to Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker (2013) residents are an "integrated part of the place brand" (p.20). They are "ambassadors for their place brand [... through] brand communication" (p.20), which they perform through architecture and behavior, formal and advertising communication as well as through word-of-mouth propaganda. Further they state, that "residents [are also] citizens [...] with political power [... to] participate in political decisions" (p.21) and are therefore of strong importance for the city. To understand their point of view can important, since "cities and municipalities exist for many more important reasons than simply to be marketed in some form" (Stubbs & Warnaby, 2015). Since this is the residents 'home', not everyone might be open for changing the image of the city, which could actually be negatively perceived. "The basis for successful city branding is [then] some form of joint responsibility between the key stakeholders [and] the city" (van Gelder, 2011, p.38).

Another important aspect to look at regarding stakeholder groups is that certain stakeholders (in our case MIS as a public international school) might simultaneously be part of other different stakeholder groups, which makes these stakeholder approaches even more complex. In our case, MIS as an organization is part of the governmental organizations stakeholder group, while staff, students as well as parents might also be part of the resident stakeholder group.

There is a tendency within branding literature to focus mainly on positive value creation aspects, leaving out potential for value destruction (Bertilsson & Rennstam, 2017). We therefore would also like to highlight potential tensions caused by city branding. Pleasing various stakeholder groups can cause three different main tensions, which affect city branding activities. One tension that could arise relates to various stakeholder groups having different views about the direction of the city marketing, while understanding the city brand meaning subjectively and independently of the initial intentions of the brand (Giovanardi, Lucarelli & Pasquinelli, 2013). A second tension might arise if branding teams rush quickly into stakeholder engagement with an uninterested attitude, which can evoke further conflicts and endanger city branding implementation (Houghton & Stevens, 2011). Therefore, "[r]especting stakeholders is [... then] necessary to ensure the success of a branding campaign [...]. Consultations [... show] respect and courtesy" (Ooi, 2011) and are important for the relationship between branding teams and various stakeholder groups. Further, there can be a third tension that is often overlooked: detrimental outcomes of place making. Examples such as "wasteful investments, uneven development, social inequality and environmental damage, are likely to cause concern among stakeholders" (Insch, 2011, p. 151), These should be kept in mind when analyzing city branding activities.

In conclusion, typically several unique stakeholder groups are involved within city branding. Aligning the interests of all stakeholders appears complex since their understanding might differ, and some may even be part of several different stakeholder groups. There is a considerable risk of evoking conflicts within the dynamic environment of city branding.

City branding and education

As established in the section above, schools are a part of the governmental organization key stakeholder group in our research and can therefore also be considered as an important part of city branding. According to Stubbs and Warnaby (2015), "academic resources and infrastructure are high on the wish list of many organisations wanting to find a new place to locate to or open facilities in" (p.110). Not only does a highly educated workforce attract companies like that, but also education can be a deciding factor. "Having strong schools and educational establishments for the families and children of companies based in, or moving to an area, especially those offering good international programs for companies with international employees who have to relocate" can be a competitive advantage (Stubbs & Warnaby, 2015, p.111). However, a particular lack of those educational institutions, such as a lack of strong international schools or a strong university, can hinder a company's development or even moving plans (Stubbs & Warnaby, 2015). According to Strange and Lundberg (2014), the provision of education is "an explicit means by which society builds the social glue through which its members are linked" and can then also be a factor when integrating expatriate families and children in society. This shows the great importance of a strong educational infrastructure when branding a city.

Marketization of education

The educational system may play a role within city branding strategies, but as an organization is independent. Some educational institutions, such as primary and secondary schools, use branding strategies to differentiate from competitors. According to Peck and Tickell (2002), neoliberalism is not only a market solution to economic problems but also to social ones and therefore has relevance in public organizations. Marketization within education has become 'epidemic' and public schools adapt strategies like deregulation, competition, and stratification to attract a desired student body (Barlett et al., 2002; Maden, 2003; Natale & Doran, 2012). Sweden, as a welfare state, has traditionally viewed public education as being regulated by the state and the same for everyone. Bringing in economic attributes and condoning differentiation or competition seem to challenge this perspective.

In times of marketized school systems, parents, and lastly students, make the choice of which school to attend, leaving behind students that do not fit the admission criteria (Barlett et al., 2002). In addition to an open market, financial support from government decreases, which can lead to even more competition between institutions for students. This again may call for rather business-like strategies in the public sector, such as marketing and branding, in order to promote an institution (Veloutsou, Paton & Lewis, 2005).

Marketing of public schools

When parents and students choose the educational environment according to their needs, marketing and competitive factors play a key role for schools to attract the aimed target group. In order to do this, schools engage in visual marketing or branding activities to achieve and shape the desired student body at their school (DiMartino & Jessen, 2016). As Silk (2006) points out: "the goal of marketing is to reduce the luck factor by measuring the right things so that you can target the use of your limited resources effectively" (p. 6).

On the one hand, researchers found that schools with relatively weak or even absent marketing strategies are likely to be passed over by their target group. On the other hand, over-marketing of schools is seen critically since misleading claims, or missions or purposes that are not fulfilled in reality, can result in wrong school choices (DiMartino & Jessen, 2016).

If schools cannot meet the criteria set by city branding teams, it might lead to further negative image and identity outcomes for both the city and the schools. A vision can then also help to keep the school on track and become more effective (DiMartino & Jessen, 2016). To establish a strong and credible brand, it is crucial for schools to have a strong and shared vision.

Another point that needs to be highlighted is, if schools are relatively unknown and not able to attract students at all, it will get even harder to attract the desired student body. Even if the schools have certain admission criteria, they might not be able to use them properly since there might not be enough students fitting the school's criteria. Branding strategies may also be relevant since it could also influence the overall number of applicants and students for a school. Even if those strategies are not attracting the desired students, they can serve as 'gatekeeping' methods to keep a school running. Accepting students in this manner, however, might also negatively impact the image and identity of a school in the long run since the aimed target group is not what was first intended (DiMartino & Jessen, 2016).

Identity construction in city branding

Due to the uniqueness of city branding environments, and further complexities within stakeholder integration, it is not enough to 'only' brand the city and implementation activities. In order to be effective, city branding strategies need to be aligned with the identity constructions. In our case, this means that MIS as the stakeholder within Malmö stad's city branding process needs to have a shared and communicated identity in order to be successful.

City branding is about fulfilling the created expectations in line with stakeholder's expectations (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2006). To create brand loyalty and trust, an organization needs to make sure that the gap between brand perception and reality is minimized, or even eliminated (Nandan, 2005).

We can then suggest, that in order to fulfill these expectations cities need to work with communication as well as promotion, which can then subsequently be linked to the identity and image of a city. According to Kavaratzis, Warnaby & Ashworth (2015), city branding is not only influenced by promotional activities, but also aims to attract a certain target group through image and reputation management. In our research, the city's target group would mainly be expatriate families (including parents and students), since MIS wants to attract expats' children to the school. According to Alvesson (2004), issues such as culture, identity, and image in organizational analysis are the general economic and socio-cultural development. This leads us to investigate the role of image, identity, and culture within the context of our study.

Brand identity can be defined as how a company aims to identify itself (Marguiles, 1977). While it is company focused, it is also created by managerial activities. It is encoded by the 'brand originator' (in our case either Malmö stad or MIS) and then sent to specific target groups (Nandan, 2005).

Brand image on the other hand is characterized as "the set of beliefs held about a particular brand" (Kotler, 1988, p.197). There have been a number of studies on brand image (e.g. Ditcher, 1985; Gardener & Levy, 1955; Herzog, 1963). Image is considered valuable for city brands as a city's aim is to create a "favourable place image and a general, positive place reputation to underpin development/regeneration efforts" (Ashworth, Kavaratzis & Warnaby, 2015, p.6). Brand image is focused on the target groups and created by consumer perceptions. It is decoded by the 'brand receiver' and perceived by the target groups (in our case, businesses in addition to parents, students and staff of MIS (Nandan, 2005).

Image and identity can be seen as two sides of a coin; while one side is invaluable without the other (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). To express and communicate their identity, companies use branding strategies to create value to stakeholders and consumers (Nandan, 2005).

According to Aitken and Campelo (2011), "brands play an integrative role when related to places because at the core of the brand is culture and the people who live and create it" (p.913). *Place culture* here can be seen "as a way of life as this is experienced and created by the people that live in a place, therefore providing the context for internal definitions of place identity" (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p.78).

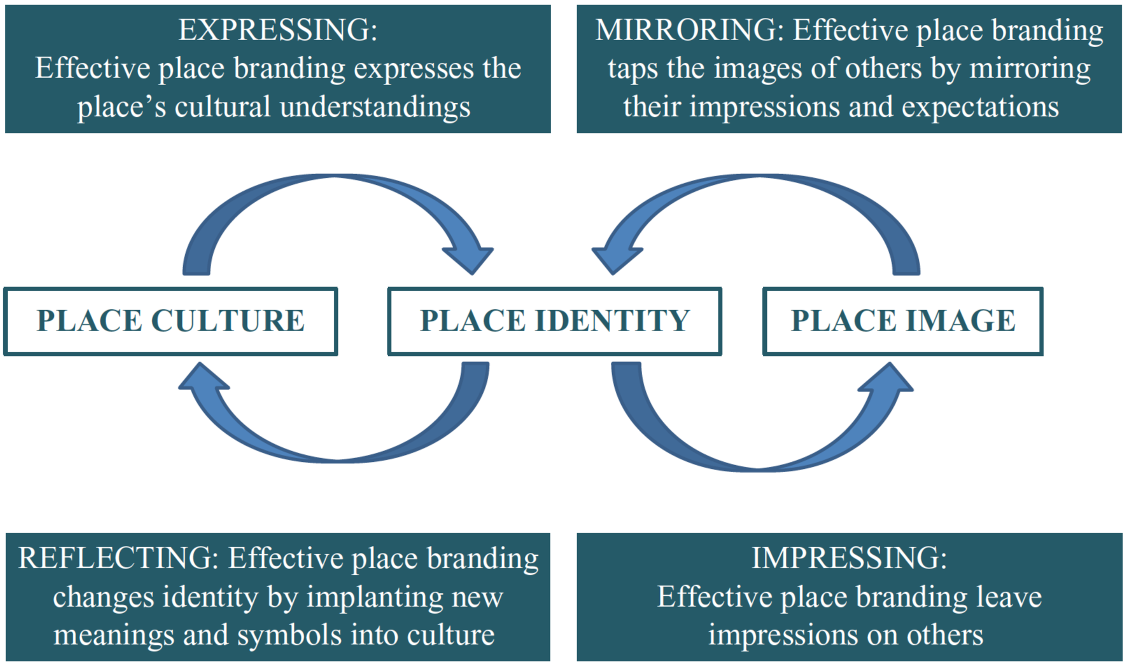

Figure 2: **How place culture and place image affect place identity (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p.80)**

Figure 2 shows place identity as an "ongoing conversation between culture and image/images that implicates interplay between the sub-processes" (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Kavaratzis & Hatch (2013) developed the concept further from Hatch and Schultz (2002) and established four sub-processes underlying the connection between place identity, place image and place culture (see figure 2). First there is a need to *express* the place's cultural understandings. Here, stakeholders are encouraged to express the cultural features of the city identity. The second link then is how an identity leaves an *impression* on others. According to Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013), there is a need to pay special attention to branding activities regarding their content, relevance and truthfulness, since they reflect their role of branding. In the third sub-process, identity is *mirroring* the images of others. Any changes in external images will affect the brand according to Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013). The last sub-process then *reflects* how identity is embedded in cultural understandings (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p.991). This is of special value, since this sub-process can produce new cultural understanding through place identity conversation. Within the reflection process of city branding 'Vision and Strategy', 'Internal Culture' as well as 'Local Communities' and 'Synergies are of high relevance (Kavaratzis, 2009; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). To sum up, we can then say, that branding opportunities lie within the relations, interactions and interconnections of place culture, place image and subsequently place identity (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Kavaratzis and Hatch

(2013) emphasize the fact that branding, including city branding, is an ongoing process and only possible if processes are fluid and open to facilitate the messy processes that construct identity.

Hatch and Schulz (2002) evaluated this model on the basis of showing further that place identity is more than the outcome of ‘how we see ourselves’ (like previously defined) but rather the process of creating this identity internally (through culture) as well as externally (through image).

The identity of an organization is not only important for trust of ‘customers of the brand’, but also for organizational members. They can be seen as producers of organizational identity, but also as consumers of it (Kerr & Oliver, 2015). Additionally, identity can be expressing belongingness and attachment to a place when communicated right. Customers of the brand (in the educational field, e. g. parents and students) therefore, are looking for a place whose perceived identity is in line with the customer’s desired identity (Kerr & Oliver, 2015).

It is worth mentioning that brand identity is a meaning-making process between residents and the place according to Kerr and Oliver (2015). The identity then is the interpretation of elements by residents, such as the natural and constructed environment, the culture of the place as well as influences inside and outside of the place. However, individual interpretations are constrained to the identity-holder’s cultural environment (Kerr & Oliver, 2015). Additionally it is then important to understand the shared identities within the environment, since that is what creates an authentic place brand (Kerr & Oliver, 2015).

According to de Cillia, Reisigl & Wodak (1999) there is no one and only identity. Different people experience the identity of a brand, city, or even an organization differently. However, this shows once again that brand identity is unique and distinctive, but also complex and subjective (Kerr & Oliver, 2015). “Identity dynamics branding can [then] also be seen as an instrument of expressing – it expresses internal, cultural understandings of who “we” are as a community or an organization” (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p.79). This leads to the question: what if the culture of an organization does not match the image of this particular organization?

If branding teams are unable to align the sub-processes of branding, ignore the complexities of stakeholder implementation, or are simply not open to reflect continuously on the city branding process, there is a certain risk for an identity crisis.

An identity crisis can have partially conscious and unconscious parts. This can further lead to contradictory mental states, set within the dynamics of conflict. Another aspect of a crisis is that the identity conflict has its own development period. Before a certain point there is just a slight risk of a crisis but after that certain point it evolves into a crisis and then all future developments depend on it. The identity crisis is not only important in the current moment, but reaches both into the past and towards the future (Erikson, 1970). Further, the social surrounding of an organization or individual during an identity crisis is relevant, since “the establishment and maintenance of that strength which can reconcile discontinuities and ambiguities depends on the support of communal models” (Erikson, 1970, p.732).

Lastly, we can see an identity crisis as “the sum of all those identifications and identity fragments which the individual [or the organization] had to submerge in himself as undesirable or irreconcilable [...] (Erikson, 1970, p.733).

Critical review of city branding and literature gaps

While city branding strategies seem to be promising for organizations, there is also a rather critical perspective on city branding, which evolved around 2005. There is an ongoing criticism about the question of whether city branding can be compared to other branding entities, like e.g. companies (Anholt, 2005; Kavaratzis, 2007; Parkerson, 2007). Even though city branding and product branding are different, we believe that the concept of corporate branding is nonetheless relevant in city branding, since it includes complexities (just like within corporate branding) that are shaped through various stakeholders. Additionally this causes a lack of control. Even though in our study we focus only on MIS, a brand meaning is created through a combination of multiple brand meanings by multiple stakeholders, which can be seen as the ideal image of the city brand (Merrilees, Miller & Herington, 2012). Still we believe that it is also important to focus on particular stakeholder groups in our research (here MIS including the school’s staff and students), since problems affecting one stakeholder group might affect the city branding as a whole, or even other involved stakeholder groups and are therefore also of great relevance to further analyze.

City branding can be seen as a power exercise through struggles of social, political and financial power. There are critical voices stating their concern about this point, since elite-led interests could further lead to actions fitted to their needs instead of common aims (Kavaratzis, Warnaby & Ashworth, 2015).

City branding activities are unique, since they are underpinned by stakeholder's perspectives as well as a multiplicity of city branding elements. Due to a lack of stakeholder participation, there is further concern about a potential erosion of the city's natural distinctiveness, caused by selected targeting (Hornskov, 2007; Kavaratzis, 2007). Due to the complexity of city brands, some aspects of city brand management are still uncertain.

Since 2010, this view on city branding has further evolved. The co-creation of city brands emerged a lot since then, including stakeholders to participate in branding of cities (Ashworth, Kavaratzis & Warnaby, 2015; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Still, branding cities is an uncertain, complex and rather uncontrollable activity that needs to be implemented through more participatory and collaborative implementation approaches (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016). City brands develop rather organically and factors such as history, education, literature, the arts, and the media shape city brand meaning (Braun, 2011; Hankinson, 2007; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). However, there is still a concern of sociologists, human geographers and city planners of public administration becoming 'selling-oriented' (Zavattaro, 2010).

While literature on city branding has increased over the past decades, there are still literature gaps to be taken into consideration. According to Green, Grace & Perkins (2016) there still is a lack of brand orientation, since the 'idealistic city images' created by entrepreneurial urban governance left a mark on current models. A second gap poses ethical considerations, an aspect that Insch (2011) and Sevin (2011) also critically analyze. It seems to be crucial for city branding to evaluate the meaning of cities to people. There remains the question of whether city branding is still an assertion of power (Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016) due to the neo-liberal influence, and an increase of public-private sector relationships. The question aligns with the organic origins of city brand meaning. What has not been thoroughly analyzed yet, and what we aim to address in our thesis, is a non-marketer-controlled branding approach. Even though branding processes are complex in this environment, can and do city brand management groups support strategic processes? Oguztimur and Akturan (2016) note that even though there is a strong focus on citizens as stakeholders, they are still relatively ignored in city branding practices. From our perspective, the impacts of city branding on affected public organizations, such as schools, are similar. Even though the literature acknowledges the effects of city branding on stakeholders, we could not find literature that specifically focuses on this. This thesis will then take a closer look at city branding effects on MIS to not only evaluate consequences, but also contribute empirical material and insights into the practice of city branding. We will now discuss the methodology used to conduct our study and analysis.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

Methodology is the theory about how and why researchers gain knowledge, and can be characterized by a "set of ideas about the relationship between phenomena" (Scott, 2014, p.31). During our research we used a qualitative approach based on non-quantitative methods such as interviews, observations and document analysis to educe meaning, gain an understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Prasad, 2005). Research methods "are always in a binding relationship between epistemology (or knowledge) and ontology (or reality)" (Scott, 2014, p.31). As such, we followed a combination of an epistemological and an ontological interpretation in our research, to not only gain insights on the social reality but also on the production of knowledge (Prasad, 2005).

Research Design

In order to research how city branding strategies affect public organizations, we conducted a qualitative interpretive study at MIS and did a secondary literature review. Using the qualitative approach, we aimed to generate meaning of collected data, elucidating the connection between Malmö stad and MIS, as well as to identify people's perspectives and experiences (Patton, 2015). Further, we used an abductive approach. In this way, new empirical evidence was our starting point, yet we did not neglect the existing theory in the literature, which served "as a source of inspiration for the discovery of patterns that bring understanding" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p.4). This new understanding is one of the characteristics that distinguishes the abductive approach from both the inductive and deductive approaches and likens it to Hermeneutics (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

As researchers, we bring a certain level of prior knowledge to this research topic based not only on secondary literature and media review, but also through personal work experience and formal marketing education. Nonetheless, we remained open and flexible as we carried out the research and fully interpreted the complexities of the results. As Prasad (2005) says, "[T]he experience of any reality is possible only through interpretation and to make sense of the whole picture" (p.13). In this way, we completed the hermeneutic circle by leveraging our pre-understanding of the topic. Our aim was to make sense of the whole picture, while simultaneously using our interpretation of the whole situation to better understand the individual parts (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009; Prasad, 2005).

As mentioned above, we used qualitative research for data collection to gain insights on views, feelings, and experiences of people. The predominant method of collecting empirical data for this study was therefore 11 semi-structured interviews with various school personnel. We chose to use semi-structured interviews in order to guide the interviews, while at the same time being open and flexible to expand on certain aspects in service of discovering new information. An important consideration for these interviews was to select as diverse a sample as possible, including different stakeholders, such as the administration and lower and middle school teachers, taking into consideration factors such as position, length of tenure at the school, and gender. The diverse sample helped us to gain a deeper understanding and construct a more accurate picture of the organization, especially given differences between the perspectives of the various interviewees. We interviewed key members of the administration including the Principal, both Vice Principals, and the Director of Marketing in order to gain an understanding of how school leadership experienced the relationship with Malmö stad, their work environment, as well as current challenges. We further continued to interview six teachers (three from the lower school and three from the middle school), in order to understand their perspectives and views on the topics above, and compare them to those of administration.

In addition to interviews, we conducted various observations. Through descriptive data collection, the aim of the observation was to find out how people behaved and reacted within a certain environment. As the Principal indicated that part of the school's marketing strategy involved creating a positive school culture, where people felt good about coming to work, we felt it was important to experience this first-hand. By walking the halls, sitting in the staff room, and having casual interactions, we completed a mini-ethnographic study, providing insights into the reality of the school environment (Prasad, 2005). Lastly, we took part in three staff meetings, where issues in the work environment were discussed. This provided us a better understanding of the relationships between staff and administration as well as insights about relevant and salient topics at the school.

Research Process

Within our empirical data collection process we conducted a total of 11 semi-structured interviews with individuals that ranged between 30 minutes to an hour. The majority of the interviews were conducted during a time frame of two weeks. During the interviews two interviewers were present in the room, as well as one interviewee. Both interviewers posed questions, which enabled us to get even more responses from interviewees. Interviews were conducted in a face-to-face manner either in the interviewees' offices or in a separate room at the school, to generate a semi-formal setting. We prepared three sets of questions: one for administration, one for teaching staff and one for marketing. They consisted of 10 questions, which we used as a guideline throughout the interviews and, in line with semi-structured interviews, asked follow-up questions when we felt appropriate. The questions covered the fields of the working environment, challenges interviewees face, as well as marketing strategies the school used.

It is worth noting that we began our research at MIS, and designed our interviews, with a focus on strategic human resource management. However, during the course of our research, a new topic emerged. It became evident that MIS played a role in Malmö's city branding strategy. In accordance with our qualitative, abductive approach, we adapted in order to explore this unexpected topic further and used it as an addition to our understanding of the organization.

In addition to the interviews, we also conduct observations. During the observation times from 30 to 45 minutes, we walked the halls, sat in the staff room, and had casual interactions with employees at the school to develop a certain trust level, as well as to find out more empirical data. Further, we observed three staff meetings, including the workplace meetings for both the PYP and MYP, and an additional staff meeting at PYP, where issues related to the physical, emotional, and psychological well being of school staff were discussed, among others.

Lastly we did a document review, looking at readily available documents from Malmö stad. Accessing and reviewing this helped us to add texture to our interpretive study and gave support to triangulate certain data collected during interviews and observations. We then analyzed the data through three successive steps: sorting, reducing, and arguing (Rennstam &

Wästerfors, 2011). We continuously interpreted the empirical evidence as our understanding of the situation at the school evolved. Our first step was sorting and initially coding the collected data to relevant themes and abstractions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2011; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). We were especially looking for repetitions, as well as similarities and differences (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Preliminarily, our second step was to reduce the data to only relevant themes and abstractions, making it more lucid for conclusions. Our third and final step of the analyzing process was then to bring all of the above together, leading to the final discussion in CHAPTER 5 and ultimately, our conclusions.

Research Limitations and Credibility

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) evaluate the technique of source criticism. Since interview material serves "as the main bulk of database in qualitative investigations" (p.115) like ours, it is of high importance to be critical of the source in order to avoid interpretation mistakes. We therefore analyzed the interviews critically keeping in mind Alvesson and Sköldberg's (2009) criticism of authenticity, criticism of bias, criticism of distance as well as their criticism of dependence (p.115) towards different sources.

Throughout the whole data collection process we felt an overall openness towards us while at the school, and a willingness to engage and answer our questions. However, we could still notice a certain level of 'political correctness' coming especially administration. This is in line with what Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) explain as the capacity of people describing their tacit realities, or external conditions, which might differ from reality. This potentially limits our research, since their responses do not necessarily reflect exactly what they think. Nevertheless, we tried to overcome this situation by interviewing them in a private space, or when available, in their own office.

This was also the case with our observations. While walking the halls or sitting in the staff room, we had casual interactions with employees who knew that we were there to observe during our study. Knowing they were being observed could possibly be a limitation if they acted differently than normal. In the worst-case scenario, this leads to a falsified outcome, however, the risk of this seemed remote in our case.

A further limitation was that one of the researchers had worked at the school before and therefore had a biased perspective. Even though at first that seemed to be a potential limitation, we actually viewed this as a benefit to our research. When complemented with a more neutral information source, which in our case was the other thesis partner, it made it easier and likely to get more realistic results (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). This enabled us to leverage an insider's perspective to gain trust and access, but also gave us the necessary distance to analyze the data appropriately.

Even though according to Merrilees, Miller and Herington (2012), "the complexity and quantity of city branding stakeholder groups makes it an exemplar for studying multiple stakeholders" (p.1034), due to the scope of our research we decided to follow existing literature and focus on governmental organizations, and more specifically focused on analyzing MIS as the key stakeholder group. While this could be seen as another research limitation by not generating a diverse approach of our study, it did enable us to analyze the effect of city branding in more detail compared to a multiple stakeholder approach.

Lastly, we need to highlight that the secondary literature sources reviewed were mainly international, meaning that due to language limitations, only publications written in English were used. Only documents in Swedish by Malmö stad were used and translated for us by a native, to gain an insight on Malmö stad's perspective. Extended literature in Swedish or other native languages could have further extended our research.

CHAPTER 4: Empirical Material and Analysis

In this chapter, we present and explore our empirical material gathered at MIS. What emerged from our research was that MIS represented one piece of a much larger puzzle that had many moving parts. Further, certain struggles that MIS faced were representative of, and possibly a direct result of, their role in Malmö stad's larger vision for the city.

Curious about the experience of the people at MIS, we interviewed four administrators and six teachers at the school. We specifically wanted to understand how they perceived and made sense of their realities, especially given the role the school in the overall branding strategy of Malmö stad.

In order to provide structure, we will revisit the context in which MIS began, discuss the underlying tensions that existed between Malmö stad and MIS, and finally, reflect on the many consequences these tensions had on the people at MIS.

A Context of Competition

Malmö has experienced rapid change in the last 20 to 30 years, which has greatly influenced how the city views itself and strategically plans for the future. Not only have demographics changed with the integration of waves of immigrants and asylum seekers, but Infrastructure has changed as well. Possibly the most significant infrastructural development was the completion of the Öresund bridge linking Malmö to Copenhagen, Denmark in 2000. This is also seen as such by an administrator at MIS as he states:

> "[M]any of the headquarters were relocating to Malmö for different reasons, but I think one of the major reasons was the bridge to Copenhagen and Kastrup airport. So, they ended up in Malmö" (Administrator 1).

The bridge between the two cities unified an entire region, known as the Öresunds region, and opened up possibilities for greater economic development. Malmö has adopted an entrepreneurial approach in an attempt to compete with other cities for resources by attracting companies to establish operations there.

Consequently, the companies that relocate to Malmö will then bring a pool of professional new residents to the region as well. In order to accomplish this, Malmö has undertaken other large, strategic projects related to city branding and image. They have tried to shed their industrial, working-class image of the past in favor of a more entrepreneurial, forward-thinking, city of the future. Since the closing of the Kockums shipyard in 1987 (Kockums Industrier, 2017) the city has taken measures to reinvent itself, like many other European cities in the post-industrial era (Hubbard & Hall, 1998). Elite groups, which expand the local tax base, left Malmö starting in the 1970's and there have been various branding projects to try and improve this and attract people back (Listerborn, 2017; Hubbard & Hall, 1998).

> "[Y]ou can then see in Lund, for instance there's a complete other focus than Malmö, where the international school in Lund has been around much, much longer, because with the university, you attract from abroad and it's a necessity and it's in that direction that Malmö is moving and it started, um, well, about 20 years ago I'd say it was a major kind of swap in how we view what the future for the city is. The major industries were put to sleep more or less" (Administrator 1).

The economy has shifted away from its industrial past toward a much more service and technology-oriented economy, becoming a 'knowledge city' (Listerborn, 2017). The establishment of Malmö University (formerly Malmöhögskola) in 1998 further drove this push towards a knowledge-based economy. Additionally, investments in projects such as the Turning Torso tower in Västra Hamnen, Malmö Live conference center and theater, and the neighborhood of Hyllie with Emporia, Malmö Arena and more, have all been in line with Malmö's efforts to rebrand the city and attract more businesses, often with a sustainability focus (Malmö stad, n.d.). Sustainability efforts have shaped Malmö's city brand and garnered international attention for their innovation.

It was within this context that MIS was born. When talking about Malmö's stake in competing for economic development, one administrator said:

> "[I]f the discussion is [...] where we are going to place our headquarters, and one city can offer housing and international education and these things, and the other city can't, then the obvious choice here will be the city that can offer [these things], because otherwise the company is going to have extreme difficulties recruiting from abroad" (Administrator 1).

The politicians in Malmö believed that a public, international, IB school was necessary in order to attract international businesses and employees to the city (Ahlfridh, 2012).

> "[T]he business life in Malmö stad was growing and flourishing in a way and the politicians said, 'this was something that we want for the city.' Many of the headquarters were relocating to Malmö for different reasons, but I think one of the major reasons was the bridge to Copenhagen and Kastrup airport. So, they ended up in Malmö and you can't tie big companies to a city and not be able to offer education for the families if you're looking at employment that requires international education and that's how it all came about" (Administrator 1).

Malmö stad made the decision then to take an existing, small international school, that was part of Söderkulla at the time, and make it a standalone school in the city. In this way, Malmö wanted to become even more competitive when attracting companies and people to the city from abroad by being able to offer schooling in English to expat children, free of charge. Prior to the establishment of MIS, as one administrator said:

> "[T]he only other alternative was Bladin's, which is private, and that doesn't sit well with how we view education [in Sweden] and what we are able to offer because that has fees attached to it" (Administrator 1).

The development of MIS appeared to be necessary for Malmö to strategically brand itself and compete for resources. Despite the existence of an existing private IB school, the establishment of MIS would provide what the city believed to be a missing link in the necessary infrastructure to make Malmö an attractive place for international families to relocate to. What eventually emerged, though, were tensions between MIS and Malmö stad.

Tensions with Malmö Stad

It was evident from our research that MIS and Malmö stad had developed a complex relationship, almost from the very start. Nearly every interviewee mentioned Malmö stad in some capacity, most often related to budgetary and resource constraints, the burden of teaching dual curricula, or a lack of support and understanding.

Budgetary and Resource Constraints

It has been a big struggle for MIS to get the city to understand what it takes to run an international IB school. A recurring theme was that the school lacked the necessary resources to run as effectively as they would like.

> "I mean, the issue that we tend to come up against is red tape when it comes to Malmö stad [...] being able to do what we need to do and have them support us. Especially when it comes to space and money and to know that an international program is so expensive to run. Just to put the IB name on the school is expensive. It costs us a lot. Our outgoing is at least maybe double of what you'd look at for a 'normal' Swedish school. So, I want the relationship with Malmö stad, to kind of see us as one of them, but also see us as a school with special needs. We need special things. That doesn't mean we're better [...] than anyone else, because that's something we really have to combat in the Swedish society [...]. So, having a much stronger relationship with Malmö stad is where I want to go" (Administrator 3).

When asked about what they would like to see changed at the school, one teacher echoed the sentiment by saying:

> "It may not be MIS I would change, because my big frustration to work for this school is actually Malmö city. So, I would like to change Malmö city [...]. [On the one hand t]hey understand that we're maybe a little bit more expensive than a public school and we cannot employ enough staff here, because we have to save money. [On the other hand, w]e can hardly buy anything we need because we have to save money. They want us, but they're not ready to give and make us successful, so I don't think I want to change the school. I want Malmö city to understand who we are. So, wake up! We're an international school!" (Teacher 1).

Since Malmö stad pushed so hard to open MIS, it was surprising to learn that the school struggled with resources. We expected that Malmö would not only have a full understanding of the operational costs of such a school, but would also be willing to properly invest, especially since the importance the school would play in the city's economic development was emphasized in the planning phase.

Dual Curricula

Another tension with Malmö stad that arose in the research was the dual curricula that the school was required to use. They needed to teach and assess students using both the Swedish and IB curricula, placing a large burden on the teachers, especially in terms of time and workload. MIS petitioned to drop the Swedish curriculum, so they could continue just with the IB curriculum. This would be consistent with the school's mission to serve the international, expat community in Malmö. We learned, however, that Malmö stad had consistently delayed addressing and voting on the issue for a few years, which had created additional stress at the school. When asked what they would like to see changed at MIS, one teacher responded:

> "Well, the first priority would be the curriculum, or curricula, since we have two. [... W]e're working 200% [...], because compared to other schools here in Malmö, which only have one program, or one curriculum, we have [... twice as much]. [...] But the politicians have postponed it and they forgot to submit the form to the education agency in Sweden, so now it's postponed for even longer" (Teacher 6).

The fact that they had two curricula, and must assess all students against both sets of criteria, seems to have become an issue that may cause turnover in the middle school (MYP) where they've had historically lower turnover. Another teacher said:

> "[...] MYP [... is] waiting for something to happen. So, I can see potential resignations by the end of this term within us. Now, I don't know if [our principal] will be able to convince them to stay, but I'm really thinking that we might lose very precious people in this team because they're fed up. [... We have] a very good principal, but it's not the only factor [to ...] actually stay. The working hours, the fact that we have to work with the Swedish program and the IB program in the same time. What the politicians [are] doing to the school is really ugly" (Teacher 4).

Not only was this teacher frustrated and concerned about potential turnover related to the situation, but also spoke as if they were victims. From this teacher's perspective, it was as if the politicians were intentionally doing things to harm the school, or avoiding doing the things that could prevent it. They went on to explain that the international school in neighboring Lund had also petitioned to drop the Swedish curriculum prior to MIS, and while the process was lengthy, the city of Lund actually supported the school.

> "[U]ntil they were granted that they went through a lot of problems [...], and [...] it was Lund's kommun, that stood behind them, supported them. They actually paid fines for them because of this. Because they said we're not actually going to teach the

> Swedish program, this is only an international program and we're sticking to IB" (Teacher 4).

The fact that Lund stood behind their public international school in this matter seemed to exacerbate the feelings of resentment of the teachers at MIS. Malmö had delayed the process for years and the mounting frustration on the part of the staff was palpable.

Lack of Understanding & Support

A second tension was that teachers perceived that Malmö stad lacked an understanding of MIS and withheld support. One teacher specifically talked about this when asked about the relationship between MIS and the city:

> "This is an international Swedish school. We're not a public Swedish school. And they don't understand that we are different from the public Swedish school. And that is frustrating many, many times because they, in a way, work against us" (Teacher 1).

Again, this idea that the city was somehow working against MIS surfaced, this time related to feeling misunderstood. Again, since this was a project created by Malmö stad, with overarching economic development goals in mind (Ahlfridh, 2012), why would the city undermine their efforts? This theme recurred throughout the interviews, however, and what also emerged was the sense that Malmö stad ignored MIS.

> "So, it's not just the money, the fact that the politicians in this town, they don't appreciate this school and we feel like that we are taken for granted. [... A] lthough [...] whenever we have the politicians or [...] visitors from other countries, the first thing they do [is] they come and visit this, to show them that we have this [public] international school. It's like this is the pride of the town, but I'm sorry you don't really matter until we have visitors or someone big to show that what we're doing" (Teacher 4).

On one hand, this sense of pride from Malmö stad in showing off the school shows the city recognizes the value of the school in some way, but it was juxtaposed with this recurring feeling of neglect and under appreciation. Another teacher echoed this by saying:

> "It's really, really a pity because [MIS] should be in the spotlight, and Malmö stad should give this school [attention]. [...] It's one of the few schools like that, an

> international school, an IB school, free of charge. This school should be under the spotlight here in Sweden and it seems they don't care at all, we are in this old building nobody knows" (Teacher 5).

According to this teacher, even the physical location of the school played a symbolic role in how the city viewed the school. Despite having a central location in Malmö, the building is quite inconspicuous, blending into its surroundings. After interviewing these teachers, and discovering their perspectives, we got the feeling that morale at the school was rather low. There were things to be very proud of, most notably, the recent authorization of the MYP by the IB Organization, making it the first public school in Malmö to offer the program. Even this accomplishment, however, was overshadowed by feelings of under appreciation.

> "And then you would see them writing the news about the authorization, being the first [public] IB school within Malmö stad […] and they're so proud of it okay, [but] there's no reward, nothing. We got a cake and I'm sorry, but this is not what the teachers are looking for" (Teacher 4).

While not explicitly stated in the interviews, it seemed the teachers were looking for some other form of recognition. Additional resources for supplies and pedagogical tools, or higher salaries for the teachers, might have had a much different impact on the morale at the school and worked to begin to improve the relationship with Malmö stad. Instead, however, it appeared to actually complicate things further.

Not only did Malmö seem to lack an understanding of the required resources and support MIS would require, but they also had unrealistic expectations in terms of how long it would take the school to grow to capacity. There was great pressure put on the school to grow, and to do so quickly. When asked about the challenges MIS had faced with regards to the relationship with Malmö stad, one administrator responded:

> "So, I mean it takes time, [...] but that's I think been the most difficult, trying to explain this [to Malmö stad] as well. Yes, these things take time and I mean it's got to be that we are growing, it's not that we can start from day one and be in full bloom basically" (Administrator 1).

The administrator also talked about how it will take companies time to grow in Malmö as well and attract and relocate international staff that would require the services of MIS. Until now, however, it seems to have been a struggle to get Malmö to fully grasp this and the pressure to grow the school has remained. Another administrator summed up the frustration with the relationship with Malmö stad by saying:

> "Yeah, but that's what's been so difficult for them to understand. That if we do well, it means that the city is doing well, because we've [all] attracted talent to Malmö. Families who want to work at the big companies that are based in Malmö, they want to live in Malmö they want to pay tax. You know, they've just not been able to see the chain until quite recently" (Administrator 2).

It would seem self-evident that the city that created this project as part of their larger branding and image strategy would understand the resource commitment, time commitment and overall importance of the success of the school. It became clear, however, that this was not the case, from the perspective of the school. Despite Malmö politicians showing MIS off on special occasions, the onus of responsibility has actually been on the school to prove its worth to the city that opened it to begin with. This paradox has led to a number of consequences for the school, especially as it relates to their own branding, image, and identity. The remainder of this analysis will focus on these consequences and the impact they have had on MIS, and the people working there.

Consequences on Image and Identity of MIS

The context in which MIS was founded, and has operated, combined with the tensions with Malmö stad, has had various repercussions for the school and its employees. While we will refrain from drawing conclusions of causality, we will highlight some of the themes we saw in the research, especially as it relates to the school's own image and identity.

Who Is MIS?

The very concept of MIS automatically put the school in a unique niche, almost between multiple worlds. It was meant to be public, Swedish, IB and international, catering to children of expatriates on short-term contracts. The interviews uncovered an inherent difficulty in defining the identity of MIS. Some interviewees saw the main differences between MIS and other Swedish schools as the IB curriculum:

> "It's actually our curriculum that is totally different. […] But we follow an international curriculum and we work with inquiry based, where all teachers work together. With the art teachers, music teachers, after school teachers, you work with one theme and try to collaborate as much as possible, you know with themes. And that's not how you work in a traditional Swedish public school" (Teacher 1).

Others referred more to the fact that the operative language was English:

> "Well differences, obviously, the language" (Teacher 6).

Yet others still found the school more Swedish than anything else:

> "The problem is I think it's considered a Swedish school more than an international school. […] It's still more Swedish than IB [and] it's the mentality that should change" (Teacher 5).

What became apparent is, that there were many ways to define the school and their overall identity was entangled in multiple sub identities. We learned that IB does not automatically mean that a school is international and vice versa. The fact that MIS has had to comply with the Swedish curriculum, and is a fully public school, has added yet another identity more in line with the typical public school in Malmö. While the interviewees often pointed to their IB identity as what sets them apart, they are also quite different from most other IB schools around the world, which are private and have ample financial resources. However, we challenged the notion that MIS was so different from other public schools in Malmö, except for teaching in English, since the city is known for its diversity and multi-national demographic. In fact, when talking about MIS, one teacher voiced the same thought:

> "I mean if you look at our school and then at other public schools in Malmö, there are also so many different countries. But, of course there are a lot of different students at our school, but I don't think it's such a big difference actually" (Teacher 1).

In one way, this multiple identity approach can be seen as an advantage, making MIS quite unique and able to cater to a wide range of students. The lack of clarity, however, seemed to create a risk of trying to be too many things to too many people. The identity of the school varied greatly depending on who you spoke to. Confusion and frustration arose when teachers tried to reconcile the initial intentions of the school to what it was in reality. This leads to the second consequence.

Who Does MIS Serve?

As previously mentioned, Malmö stad had put a lot of pressure on MIS to expand and grow their student body. This was driving certain decisions at the school, such as allowing students to start at an earlier age and having bigger class sizes. With all the talk of expansion, it called into question whether they were admitting the students that matched their candidate profile. Their criteria included that one or both parents must be foreign, typically with a home language other than Swedish, with the intention of staying in Malmö on a temporary basis. Students meeting these criteria get priority for admittance. MIS was established as a public international school to cater to expatriate families who were coming to the city for a few years to work or study and then would be moving, either back to their home countries or on to another country. The actual students at the school, however, did not reflect this vision. This reiterated that there was no clear identity established for MIS yet. We could see that in different statements by teachers. One teacher described MIS as follows:

> "I mean, it's an interesting place to work. I think, it's not a traditional international school where [...] the whole concept of international schools is that one parent or two parents are working away from their home country for two, three years and that's how long you spend in your international school as a student and then you go back to your home country or you move to another one. It's not meant to be a place where you go through your entire schooling, it shouldn't be. So, part of me feels like we are letting these kids down, because if you're here for the 10 years or whatever it is, and [...] we do everything in English mainly – unless you're doing Swedish, and a lot of these kids don't speak good Swedish, or they can't write or read Swedish. They might be able to speak it, but they can't read or write it. So, I often think, okay, you go through from PYP 1 to MYP 4 when you really should only be here for three or four years and then move on to your home country or whatever it is, and then you're expected to get a job in a Swedish organization more likely than not and yet you can't read or write Swedish, so we're not really doing you any favors. You have an international diploma, but you can't get a job because you don't have the Swedish that you need to succeed in a Swedish society" (Teacher 3).

This highlights how the student body at MIS was very different than typical international schools. One administrator shared that, "*Right now our largest language group is Arabic and this changed. A couple of years ago it became Arabic*" (Administrator 1). We were told that over 60% of the school actually has Arabic as their home language. Another teacher shared a similar perspective:

> "[MIS is] not a typical international school […]. The students that we have are not typical international school students. Because some of them have started this school even though I think they shouldn't go to this school, because they actually live in Sweden. And if you live in Sweden I think you should learn Swedish. Because you should be a part of the society and you should learn the language to be successful in the Swedish society. So, we have some families who are telling us 'Ah we are just going to be here for a few years'. They're actually lying, because they know already that they're going to stay here for a longer time, and that doesn't make the school international then. We are here for families if they're just staying for a few years if the parents are studying, researching, working for a company for a few years and then leaving again. So, we're kind of a combination I feel of two different kinds of schools" (Teacher 1).

Based on the teacher comments it seemed everyone agreed on the intention of the school to serve short-term expatriate students. The different reality created a bit of confusion in terms of the identity of the school. We saw the teachers try to rationalize it by calling them a 'combination' but we also heard frustration and concern for the students. They felt their students' long-term learning needs might suffer by staying at MIS and further prevent them from integrating and becoming productive members of Swedish society. It was quite difficult for staff to reconcile the vision of who the school was supposed to serve and who they actually served.

Due to the pressures from Malmö stad to expand the school, MIS admitted many students that did not meet their profile, out of necessity. One administrator spoke about this as being a normal part of the start-up and growth process:

> "We can be stricter with all the criteria now. It's like anything you're starting. You have to be a bit more lenient. You can even see it in the year groups. Moving up the different levels" (Administrator 4).

When asked roughly what percentage of the school's student body did not meet the profile criteria, one administrator responded:

> "If you asked me that question about two years ago I'd say about 80% [would be gone] but that's not the case now. I'd say, most, at least more than the majority of the families meet the criteria that we're only supposed to be here, so, 30% something like that" (Administrator 1).

While this has obviously begun to change, a decent percentage of the school is still made up of students that do not fit the school's profile. Many fall into the category of first or second-generation immigrants who often stay in Sweden on a permanent basis. This made us question whether Malmö actually had a market to substantiate a public international school for expat students, such as MIS. The teacher, previously quoted, went on to share a specific story they had encountered:

> "I had an interesting question last year. One of my students, he was okay, sort of middle of the line and his father (from a Middle Eastern country) [...] came in and [... asked ...] 'should I be putting him in a Swedish school? Should I be doing that?' I kind of said, well if you can see yourself being here for the next 10 years, 5 to 10 years, you're not going to go back to wherever your home country is, then probably yeah […] The next week that student was pulled out […]. I didn't feel guilty about it, because I think I did him a favor […]. That was sort of an interesting conversation I'd never really had with a parent before" (Teacher 3).

We also wondered if the needs of those students in the same situation, who actually stayed at MIS, were being met in terms of learning outcomes and long-term integration. Not addressing these needs could have unintended consequences for not only these individual students, but also the city of Malmö overall. The pressures from Malmö stad led to the acceptance of these students at MIS, and now teachers were forced to deal with these situations that were not ordinary or easy.

School as a Business

Another theme that surfaced in our research was that some school administration seemed to view the school as a business. We viewed this as a consequence on the identity of MIS as a result of Malmö's city branding efforts and the pressure they put on the school to expand quickly. One administrator said:

> "I view education like a business, [...] and you need to get everybody on board and you want to do what you're here for. I mean, ultimately, it's the students that give us jobs. If there are no students, we don't have positions. So, everything we do should be student-focused" (Administrator 4).

Since MIS is a public school within Malmö stad, complying with Swedish standards and curriculum, it was surprising to hear it described as a business. It became obvious that thinking of the school as a business was not isolated to just a few administrators, but had been communicated out to both staff and faculty. Teachers were being encouraged to think of their workplace as a company that needed to 'compete', for students:

> "[Administration] also said, that they would like for us to think of the school more as a business, also because they need to compete against other 'businesses' [...] now" (Teacher 6).

On one hand, this made sense. Students must elect to go to MIS by choice, meaning their families must apply for admittance. As a result, the school is competing against other international schools in the region for their students. On the other hand, MIS must balance the need to differentiate themselves with the need to be the same as all other public schools in Malmö. This latter perspective is not business-like and seemed to put the administration, and subsequently the teachers, in a difficult position.

When further discussing the workplace in general at MIS, another teacher said:

> "I think unfortunately there are too many decisions made at this school that are business related rather than education related. So, it is – and I see a lot of schools going this way [...] turned into a business. We have to have X number of students. The more students, the more money we get and we don't care where they go and that's when education suffers. The quality of teaching suffers" (Teacher 3).

This philosophy seemed to directly conflict with the idea of a public school in Sweden, which in theory should be equal to all other public schools, free from competition. The view of a public school as a business fits more with the model of marketization, where choice and diversity are encompassed (Maden, 2003). Even though Sweden did decentralize their educational system in the 1990's and introduce the concept of free choice, it was geared more at being able to choose a private school versus a friskola or standard public school (Taguma et al., 2010). It was not aimed necessarily at creating competition amongst public schools or fostering a for-profit motive in the public sector, which still relies on a budget from the state to be used for operations.

While taking on an identity of MIS as a business might appear logical for the administration, it added to internal challenges in terms of how the school was run. Teachers were confronted with the tensions created by bringing a for-profit mentality into a non-profit, public organization. As a result, teachers were left questioning their own identities and motivations for becoming a teacher to begin with. Interestingly, in our interviews, teachers emphasized that while nobody would complain about a higher salary, it was not just about the money. Higher salaries, bonuses, and big profits may motivate business people; Teachers seem to go into the profession for more intrinsic factors.

> "[Y]ou wouldn't be a teacher to make money. No one ever goes into the profession saying 'I'm doing it because I want to make money and the holidays'. If they do, they do it for the wrong reasons" (Teacher 3).

While the OECD (2005) states, that 64% of current expenditure of schools goes to teacher's compensation, they also acknowledge its importance, highlighting the impact on student learning. Doing business in education can then be seen as a way to stay competitive in an environment that is supposed to be equal and at the same time about having a certain budget to further improve the quality of the school. Looking at the definition of a teacher, they are "persons whose professional activity involves the transmission of knowledge, attitudes and skills that are stipulated to students enrolled in an educational program (OECD, 2005, p.25) and not taking care of business issues, assigned to administration. Interestingly, we see that while the commitment towards factors like salaries is rather low, the commitment toward the profession is quite high.

When speaking about what changes they would like to see at the school, the same teacher shared:

> "I think that's where the school has to have clear guidelines – despite what Malmö stad says [MIS has] to say 'no, we listen to our teachers, and they're quality teachers

> and for them to be at their best we must have A, B, C, D and we cannot go above that'. They need to stick by that to show their staff that they are supporting and they're not just pandering to these people that are above them to get more money, to get more bums on seats, to get more students to grow. We've got to grow, grow, grow when the quality is going down, down, down" (Teacher 3).

Here we heard a plea from the teacher for the school to take a stand and defy Malmö stad. Interestingly, it was as if the teachers felt the politicians in the city did not support the school and additionally the school did not fully support the teachers. This trickle-down effect highlights the risks of bringing a for-profit mentality into a non-business organization. This contributed to mounting tensions, which further complicated the image and identity of the school and the teachers working there.

Lastly, the more the identity of MIS as a business develops and is adopted by teachers and staff, the more this could shape their image externally. A risk is that this might be negatively perceived by other public schools in Malmö, who do not share the same view of education, and may feel that MIS is trying to be superior in their efforts to compete and differentiate.

MIS Brand and Image

Another issue related to the identity and image of MIS was that they actually had to create their own brand. When the school started in 2013 few people knew the school existed. Further, students are not zoned for MIS, like a typical public neighborhood school, but rather must elect to apply to the school. With the mounting pressures from Malmö stad to grow, the school felt something had to be done. What surfaced in the research was that MIS had been asking Malmö stad for additional money to be used for marketing purposes.

> "[L]ocal authority schools in Sweden don't market themselves. [...] Everything should look the same, regardless of school. The city of Malmö['s ...] policy is, that every school is equal, and that's the concept basically. But we need a bit more than that because we need to be able to reach out to companies, or the corporate world basically and abroad as well" (Administrator 1).

It appeared, that some of MIS's efforts to educate Malmö stad about international education, and their specific needs, worked because they were granted a marketing budget this year. As one administrator said:

> "Yeah, there's always budget issues. I think when it comes to paying for things that aren't really necessary. You know, from the finance department they'll look at it and go 'but why do we need to spend 20,000SEK on marketing a school?' [... B]ut we have been able to pitch them on the reasons why we need it, so I mean from last year […] they've said to us buy whatever you need and that's also fairly unheard of within the city" (Administrator 2).

As this administrator pointed out, it was not typical for a public school to receive funding for marketing activities. On one hand, getting this additional money from the city symbolized appreciation from Malmö stad for what the school was trying to accomplish and acknowledges that they are in fact different from other public schools. On the other hand, the marketing budget seemed to condone the school's identity as a business and further promoted the idea of marketization of education.

MIS has begun utilizing social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as a customized website and other printed materials, in order to publicize the school and increase awareness. When asked whether the efforts have paid off, one administrator said:

> "Absolutely […] I mean we increased our student numbers with like 21 students after the Christmas break, that's never happened before. We've never had that many students start. It's not even at the beginning of an academic year; it's right in the middle of an academic year it's never happened before. And I definitely think it has much to do with our visibility and how we now profile ourselves" (Administrator 2).

Here again, the measure of success came down to enrollment and growth of student numbers. The overwhelming focus for the school, especially in administration, was on growing the school to capacity. The words, 'how we now profile ourselves' also show that the school was paying particular attention to their image and how they manage it. There were indications that MIS had developed a sort of negative reputation when compared to other international schools in the area.

> "I think they've started with these marketing activities and it's a good step, but it's not enough. It's the reputation of the school […] in general, the reputation, it's like it's a bad school" (Teacher 5).

Another teacher said:

> "I did have a colleague who […] didn't really encourage me going to this school if I'm going to compare it to the other one. [...] So, alone by itself it's fine, but then when you start comparing [the colleague] said that you will find some differences, and yeah, I found a lot of differences" (Teacher 4).

This reputation could then be influencing how the teachers perceived and experienced their workplace, thereby affecting morale. In fact, one administrator spoke about morale of the teachers and the effects that their marketing efforts may be having, saying:

> "I think it can be noticed and also I think we also have much more positive sort of […] stories going out. We have Facebook, we've got Instagram, we're on Twitter, we've got a lot of positives showing and I think people are able to see this is what, they have fun at work, the students are happy, they're doing this this and this" (Administrator 2).

The hope was that employee pride would increase as a result of the marketing efforts, further promoting a certain image and identity of MIS. By doing this, they hoped to indirectly influence their culture, which in turn would influence their identity. In addition, administration expressed interest in wanting to do more regarding marketing, specifically by having direct contact with companies that may be expanding, and recruiting international employees in Malmö.

> "[T]hat takes time to establish a name, a brand, yeah, and that takes time and it takes time for the city as well to have this shift in who do we want to attract as a city? And I think we're all struggling" (Administrator 1).

We viewed the branding and marketing efforts at MIS as a sort of representation of what has happened in Malmö overall. The city branding efforts aimed to shape how residents and visitors viewed and experienced Malmö just as the school's marketing strategy intended to do the same for students and teachers. Both the school and the city were trying to shed a more negative image of the past and promote a more positive, forward-looking picture of themselves. As the administrator acknowledged, however, this is not so easy and the reality has often been a 'struggle'.

Image vs. Reality

MIS wanted to develop its brand focusing on the international, IB school components. In general, the image of an international, IB school is quite prestigious. Often the fact that the curriculum is in English, and that it is known for its academic rigor, creates high demand, even among local parents in the host country abroad (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). Here again, however, the empirical evidence showed a struggle at MIS between their intended identity and reality.

> "[I]t's extremely different than what I had at different IB schools" (Teacher 4).
>
> "Now our school is a little bit different from a typical international school" (Teacher 1).
>
> "But, yeah, this is not, I would say this is not a normal [IB] school" (Teacher 3).

While the sentiments here were quite similar to the previously discussed identity confusion, there was something slightly different. Various teachers at MIS had previous teaching experience at other IB schools. We were curious how and why they felt MIS was different. A few themes surfaced as a result.

First, our interviews showed that teachers felt there was a lack of efficient administrative processes and procedures to support them in their work. One teacher said:

> "We're still struggling with having a set protocol of how the information has to flow you know from whom to where and sometimes we're still I think also, this is a bit of a negative thing in our school, is that we don't know who's responsible of what. […] A simple thing like ordering books, okay, it would go from Administrator A, to Administrator B, to Administrator C, back to Librarian and then you see and you don't know who should you go to directly. You would go to your coordinator, that

> makes sense, and then the coordinator would say 'oh but this is not my job, this is maybe Administrator C's job. You go to Administrator C and then, no, but then you have to pass it to Administrator B. [...] But then maybe because this is related to this publisher, then maybe the librarian can have a better idea about how to do this. This is [...] very negative. it's very frustrating because it's time-consuming, it's effort-consuming as well because you keep running around, 'oh what do I have to do? What do I have to do?'" (Teacher 4).

While administration has stated that they have made all information, like job descriptions within management, available to everyone, teachers have still shared frustrations. They go to the 'right' person per the job description for a request, and that person ultimately says it is someone else's job.

Similarly, there seemed to be an excessive amount of changes that promoted a certain level of instability, something that is quite important for teachers and students alike. One teacher shared:

> "I just found 'can we not get a bit of stability here? This is crazy'. […] It was like I can't deal with this right now. […] That was stressful. So, the working environment at […] times was very difficult" (Teacher 2).

While one would expect a school to have some levels of stress and change given the dynamics of working with children, MIS seemed to exhibit levels that teachers had not experienced in other schools. We noticed this in our observations as well. When casually passing teachers or assistants in the hallways we would ask how people were and they usually said things like 'Don't ask' or just breathed heavily and said nothing at all. Overall, the energy was quite low.

When we inquired further about the way things were run, we heard over and over that the school was a 'new school' and some of this was to be expected.

> "I think it is because we are a new school. Not everything is working perfectly. […] Everything is not perfect, but we have to give it some time to work out. There are a lot of things we need to work out" (Teacher 1).

While MIS was made a separate school in 2013, it was a functioning international school in Söderkulla for a number of years before then. We wondered why the processes and procedures were so lacking then at MIS and questioned whether being a 'new school' was just rhetoric being used to excuse these issues. In fact, one teacher also shared this sentiment:

> "I would say this is new in IB, but it's not really a new school because it was part of another organization, so you would assume the system or the structure would be the same as at least they have to try it to see if it's working or not, but it's extremely different because you wouldn't have that. There's a very clear way of communication in previous [IB] experiences regardless where they were and the way of spreading the information, the way of providing instructions for everything you do, the description of anything you need, the way how they lines are chosen, everything is way more structured than this" (Teacher 4).

Again, this seems to critically question why things are not operating in a better way and also compare it to previous IB experiences. Given the IB image, it was unexpected to have these findings. Further, teachers appeared stressed with the number of meetings. When discussing if meetings caused them stress at work, one teacher replied:

> "I think it's everything. Personally, the meetings for me are just so worthless, that's just one thing, and I think everybody knows that, and I think it comes from that" (Teacher 2).

We began talking about communication in general at which point they shared:

> "I think there is almost too many pathways, for example with loads of email addresses or even loads of meetings, where we spend two hours and you think that there is 10 minutes of value in that. Or it could have been one e-mail. Just to let us know. Simple and effective. That might be just me, because I am very much to the point. I don't need to talk about this for three hours, so definitely there is an issue with communication" (Teacher 2).

We also observed this while attending various staff meetings in both the MYP and PYP. During the MYP Workplace meeting, for example, almost half the meeting was spent debating how to schedule the parent-teacher-student meetings. It was evident that administration had not sorted out the logistics of the scheduling prior to the meeting and was actually consulting the IT person and teachers during the meeting to ask for recommendations. We could visibly see the stress of the teachers increase as things were not clear. There was even debate at the end of the discussion as to who would be responsible for sending out communications to the parents on how to schedule. The principal reluctantly said that she would take that on since nobody else wanted to volunteer. This was an example where administration could have sorted out the logistics of scheduling the meetings prior to the workplace meeting so that they simply could have shared how it was to be done with the teachers. Further, administration could have automatically taken charge of communicating with the parents, so ultimately the teachers could focus on the crux of their jobs.

When coupled with the lack of well-functioning policies and procedures, the meetings added another layer of stress to the teacher's work experience that made it more difficult for them to focus on doing their jobs well.

A second theme where the image of MIS as an IB school differed from reality was in the area of training and development. It became clear that many teachers had not received proper IB training and development courses. It is rather expensive to send teachers to the IB training seminars around Europe and, due to lack of funding, the school's policy was that only five teachers could be sent each year. Further, one must be a teacher at MIS for at least one academic year before being eligible to go to a training course.

> "[I]t takes a year before I can do IB training, which is a little bit of a long time now. I thought I needed it kind of straight away. You know, I wanted […] because I feel you get into bad habits and things like that. You get your own IB system, so you'd have your own system for it, which isn't right either, because I'm happy the way it is and the way I'm going, but I probably do have bad habits that if I have to go to a course now they might be like 'oh, you did that completely wrong', but at the same time I wasn't told anything else" (Teacher 2).

What this teacher highlighted was the inconsistency that could develop in teaching methods as a result of everyone not having equal access to the IB training. Also, why would the IB training be reserved for teachers that have been there for longer periods of time rather than as an initial training as part of onboarding? The lack of resources clearly constrained the school's ability to offer the training across the board. If they could, the administration would send all their teachers to as many trainings as possible, but the reality was that Malmö stad did not provide sufficient funding for that to occur. Further, only sending five teachers per year creates a rather competitive environment within the school amongst the teachers. When asked about the opportunity to receive IB training, one teacher said:

> "Not for all the teachers. Some of the teachers they can ask for training and they get training especially IB training, but it's not for all of them. There's a selection of who can have IB training and who cannot" (Teacher 5).

The negative aspect of this is that some teachers feel there is priority given to certain subject areas and that access to the training courses is based a bit on the perceived value of the subject and the teacher. This competition can add to resentment if some teachers are consistently denied attendance at an IB training course. One would expect the image of an IB school to be backed by the teaching staff actually having full certification in IB teaching methods and curriculum. What our empirical evidence showed, however, were the constraints MIS feels from Malmö stad and the struggle to align their image with reality.

Related to development, teachers also spoke about the ambiguity involved in the performance feedback process.

> "You have the set criteria […] it felt like it's so vague there's no specifics about it first of all. It's given by Malmö stad, it's not the school's creation. It's so vague and they had this line, which starts negative and then ends up positive and then [they] would say 'oh you're somewhere here' but what is 'here'? […] And then [administration] said, 'this is something that Malmö stad is forcing everyone to do.' But then how is that different from this for example? How is it different than this? What is this that you're talking about? You have the criteria if you're developing, if you're that, but it's so vague" (Teacher 4).

It seemed that administration was just doing the minimum required by Malmö stad to tick the box signifying that the process had been completed, but the ambiguity in the process removed some of the value in the exercise. We wondered why the school did not develop their own, customized process of performance feedback. MIS is autonomous and has the ability to implement their own processes. We found this interesting since the school had been pushing for the city to understand that they are different and have different needs, yet other things administration has just left as the standard Malmö stad process, even when it may not serve their staff specifically.

We got the feeling of frustration from teachers on some of these underlying themes where image did not align with the reality, at least as perceived by the teachers. Overall people were positive about the school, but we questioned whether things were functioning as well as they were meant to appear. While some policies and procedures were documented and available, it was evident that in practice they were not necessarily functioning effectively in a way to facilitate teachers doing their jobs. In fact, it seemed to just create more stress. There might be ways to further improve the environment and better align the intended image of MIS as an international, IB school with reality.

Divided Organization

The last consequence on MIS' identity and image was that the organization was quite divided. Teachers identified more with the part of the school they worked in, such as PYP or MYP, rather than with the organization overall. The interviews showed evidence where teachers regularly clarified what part of the school they were speaking for:

> "I don't know how it is within the PYP team so I'm being really specific. Actually, I don't even really have any social interaction with the PYP teachers" (Teacher 4).
>
> "I don't really know PYP, I don't collaborate with them a lot I mean we could make the study days and I feel a bit of division, but maybe it's my personal perspective" (Teacher 5).
>
> "And now I am talking about PYP. Because I don't know MYP so very well" (Teacher 1).

On some level it seemed natural that a primary school teacher working with six-year olds might not collaborate regularly with a middle school history or science teacher, yet the fact that this division so regularly came up when people were talking about their experience was interesting. We often had the feeling that we conducted interviews at two separate organizations. As a result, the identity of the organization was rather split.

This split was also evident within the administration, who at times appeared to be on different pages. This may be the result of a lack of time and resources with the focus having been on increasing student numbers and growing the school. One example of this incongruence was when we inquired about recruiting teachers. The overarching theme of recruitment was that, for MIS, it was difficult to find qualified candidates. One administrator said:

> "Well, I mean especially for teachers. It's very, very difficult to find teachers, qualified [...], great teachers, it's really difficult and especially for us. You know, we have specific requirements. They need to be able to teach, [and] do all their teaching in English. They need to have IB experience. [...] I mean sometimes we have one applicant for a teaching position. It is difficult to find good staff. Good teaching staff" (Administrator 2).

This was in line with our expectations given the teacher shortage in Sweden and knowing that MIS is also in a smaller niche market. Reflecting this, one teacher told us:

> "[...] I get the feeling that a lot of these jobs placements have been through desperation [...], and I'm not sure how many applicants and how many qualified and how many non-qualified are applying for these jobs. I get the feeling not many, and therefore they don't have a huge selection of quality to choose from and they're just opting for the next best thing" (Teacher 3).

Interestingly, another administrator shared a different perspective:

> "Recruiting hasn't been - maybe I shouldn't say that, but then it will be difficult - but it hasn't been that difficult. There aren't too many international schools around, and if you have a teaching qualification from abroad and you can't teach at a Swedish

> school until you're not qualified with a Swedish one. But we can employ them" (Administrator 1).

This was very unexpected since an overwhelming majority of the evidence showed difficulties in recruiting and finding qualified candidates. Another instance of this occurred when discussing retention. We learned that there had been higher than usual turnover the prior academic year, so we were curious how the administration viewed and dealt with this issue. When we inquired about whether turnover was measured by the school, or at least Malmö stad, one administrator responded:

> "I don't think they do. I'd love to have that. [...] Both, for staff and for students that would be so interesting for us to know […] because you know, that's all part of 'how can we be better', 'what can we improve'? I mean it has to be analyzed, it's so important! How can we ever get better if we don't know if we're not?'' (Administrator 2).

It was interesting that neither the school, nor Malmö stad, tracked these sorts of statistics related to HR matters like retention. Further, when asked the same thing another administrator said:

> "No. We talked a bit about that. To have maybe like an exit meeting. [...] I think it is a very good idea. The problem is, that it is not that often that we have people who do resign for starters, [...] many of these resignations came in during the summer, and then you've got the three months where they hand it in […] I think it would help in a way as well. Because I think it's a very good idea if we had reasons for why people leave" (Administrator 1).

Interestingly, when discussing the same topic with a third administrator we discovered a different story:

> "I think our turnover has been very special. Because on every case this time, we have really looked into the reasons why. You know, where did the turnover originate, why was it there? What could have been done to avoid it? Or, did we want to avoid it? Those sorts of things have to be discussed as well if we want to avoid that turnover,

> maybe not […] In an international school, there is always going to be a great turnover. It's not like a home country school in that way" (Administrator 3).

We saw a disconnect and inconsistency among the administration regarding what their procedures were related to retention and turnover. It also seemed convenient here to compare MIS to other international schools, when in fact they are very different in this regard. While international schools typically do have lots of staff coming and going each year, they are based on two-year contracts and often times financially incentivized to stay longer. MIS, however, does not utilize these practices. Much like the student body at MIS, the teachers are either native Swedes or permanent immigrants. Very few teachers are foreign, short-term immigrants who are coming just for the experience and then moving on.

We point these aspects out to highlight the fact that even school leadership was a bit scattered, much like the organization overall. We had the impression after interviewing three key administrators that they were each focused on something different. On the surface this was not inherently troublesome as their skills and focus actually worked quite well together to manage the school. When combined with the divided organization, however, it appeared to further complicate the idea of creating a consistent identity and image across the whole organization.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

The empirical evidence presented in the previous chapter has highlighted the complexity involved with city branding and has provided examples of the myriad consequences that can occur as a result. In this chapter we will group some of the main themes that emerged from our research and discuss them in relation to existing literature in order to then draw our conclusions.

As van Gelder (2011) states, "[i]nvestment in education and training says a great deal about how a city values its people […]" (p.38). While the original intentions of Malmö stad in opening MIS were rooted in creating the infrastructure to attract economic development (Ahlfridh, 2012), establishing the school also conveyed a certain image about Malmö. It represented that the city cares about its people and places a great deal of importance on ensuring that all its residents, whether long-term or short-term, shall have equal access to high-quality education. The empirical evidence uncovered, however, that the teachers and administration at MIS had a much different perspective.

Our interviews repeatedly showed how teachers felt the school was 'misunderstood' by Malmö stad. They spoke about a lack of resources and that city officials did not understand what it truly took to run an IB curriculum. The teachers also felt unsupported and like the city did not care about the school or the work they were doing. It seemed they even felt victimized by Malmö, especially when it came to petitioning to get the Swedish curriculum dropped. The double workload, low salaries, and struggle to get the curriculum dropped left many teachers feeling resentful and even considering pursuing opportunities elsewhere, further creating issues for MIS by potentially losing valued staff members.

Administrators at MIS shared their struggles in getting Malmö stad to understand the school's needs as well. The principal and vice principals were the people with the most contact with Malmö stad and as such acted as intermediaries between the teachers and the city. It seemed the burden has been on them to explain to the politicians what MIS does and what they need in terms of support. It included more than just financial resources as well. For example, one of the biggest obstacles according to them was convincing the city that it takes a very long time to initiate and grow a school like MIS to full capacity, yet the city continued to put pressure on them to do so very quickly.

Branding as a Box-Ticking Exercise

The perceived lack of support and follow through, from Malmö stad, to ensure the success of the school created a clash between the symbolic value of opening the school and reality. This led us to believe that opening MIS may have been more a case of branding as a box-ticking exercise. Malmö decided they needed this infrastructure to help attract further economic development. As such, they wanted an IB school in the public system to cater to expatriate families and they took a small, operating school at SIS and required that they move to a new space, forming MIS, because it was the easiest and most convenient way to achieve this goal. After this point, MIS has been left to try and succeed, despite many obstacles, and actually prove their worth to the city that created them in the first place. The empirical evidence showed that the city did have a certain sense of pride with the school, however. When politicians or important diplomatic visitors came to Malmö they were often brought to MIS for a tour, yet teachers said that seemed to be the only time the city cared about the school. These examples support the idea that a key factor for cities in attracting new residents could be education (Stubbs and Warnaby, 2015). This further showed the possibility that opening the school was more ticking a box as an act of image management to attract new residents rather than true substantive investment.

Due to the complexity and uncontrollability of branding, much of the literature on city branding talks about the need to involve stakeholders in the process of developing the brand. This act of co-creation helps the brand to develop more organically and with more consistency and buy-in (Dinnie, 2011; Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016). In this case, however, MIS, as a stakeholder group, felt largely ignored in the brand-development process. Kavaratzis (2012) found that even though there is a current turn towards stakeholder engagement within city branding, the actual involvement is still limited. Further, according to van Gelder (2011) "[m]any of the problems that arise during city branding exercises are due to flawed relationships between the city's key stakeholders" (p.38). The relationship between MIS and Malmö stad certainly suffered from tensions. The establishment of the school seemed to be a top-down decision and approach rather than collaborative and consultative.

Over time, the teachers and administration have continued to struggle with the repercussions without much support. City branding deals with influencing people's perception and meaning-making process about the city and Green, Grace and Perkins (2016) speak about the importance that word-of-mouth can play in this process. In the case of MIS, the teachers and administrators actually become more of a risk in terms of word-of-mouth since their frustrations and resentment towards the city could lead them to speak negatively about the city.

A Branded Identity Crisis

When city branding efforts are perceived as merely a box-ticking exercise, it may result in organizational identity issues. The lack of clear direction, understanding, and support from Malmö stad left MIS to decipher their own identity. Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) argue that a link to place identity needs to be made in order for the field of place branding to advance and that this should evolve as an ongoing process and dialogue between the internal and external members. The previously discussed tensions highlighted a lack of functional dialogue between Malmö stad and MIS. While MIS represents the 'internal' part, as they are an internal stakeholder of Malmö's city branding, an interesting theme also developed in that they themselves had identity issues.

Analyzing MIS further, we could see an identity struggle. It became evident that MIS showed signs of having a fragmented identity. They were meant to be a public Swedish school, an IB school, and an international school. Some staff described the school as being very different from the ordinary Swedish school, mainly because of the IB curriculum and teaching language in English, yet most teachers agreed that they were also quite different from the typical IB or international school as well. Others pointed out that in terms of demographics and diversity MIS was potentially quite similar to many other schools in Malmö. Our sense was that it was difficult for the school to develop a clear identity as they were trying to simultaneously be everything to everyone. They were in a delicate balance of trying to 'fit in' with the rest of the public schools in Malmö while at the same time having to stand out so people knew they existed.

Another rather surprising identity emerged from the interviews in that certain administrators viewed the school as a business. This seemed to stem from the pressures placed on the school by Malmö stad to expand and grow quickly, thereby forcing management to take a much more business-like, or marketized, approach (Barlett et al., 2002). The school is not a business, however, as it is a fully municipal school, supported by taxpayer money. The school as a business identity had been communicated throughout the school, which created further tensions as many teachers resisted this idea and felt much more motivated by intrinsic factors to become a teacher. Nevertheless, this played into MIS's own branding efforts as they engaged in activities to develop their own image and identity and communicate this to the public.

While Alvesson (2004) discusses identity at a more individual level, we draw on his work as it relates to identity construction. Alvesson (2004) states that identity "concerns how a person constructs a particular version of him- or herself and can be seen as the response to the question 'Who am I?' The answer to this question has consequences for the priorities and motivations, the thinking and acting, of the individual" (p.188). This same concept can apply to MIS as an organization. It seemed difficult for MIS to determine who they were exactly as a school. This in turn made it more confusing in terms of their priorities and motivations, for example, who were they supposed to serve?

According to the original intention of the school, they were supposed to cater to expatriate students who would be in Malmö for a temporary period of time (Ahlfridh, 2012). Ideal candidates would be children of expatriate employees who had contracts in Malmö for anywhere between two and four years at which point they would either return to their home country or move on to somewhere else in the world. The empirical evidence, however, showed that the demographic of the student body was much different in reality creating a disconnect between who they were *meant* to serve and who they *actually* served. Since students of MIS are stakeholders, "affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman, 1984, p.46) they play an important part of creating the organizational identity. Yet if they are not represented in the overall branding and image of the school, how might that affect the identity of the organization?

This discrepancy between intention and reality at MIS may be representative of the city of Malmö overall. The actual population of the city may not be the same demographic as what the city branding efforts were intending to attract. The question then becomes, how does the city, and MIS, satisfy the needs of the actual population while still furthering their branding efforts? When combined with the lack of communication and tensions between the city and the school, the school's apparent fragmented identity can pose further challenges to the city's branding strategy. When key stakeholders feel they have not been included in the development and implementation of branding strategies, and further do not feel supported by the city, they may end up creating their own brand identity separate and apart from the city's brand intention (Dinnie, 2011). In the case of MIS this led to a branded identity crisis, as they were apparently Swedish, public, international, IB, and a business. They were left left trying to be everything to everyone, yet this seemed to work against them. Since an identity crisis evolves from the past to the present and even impacts future developments it should be addressed appropriately (Erikson, 1970).

The Shadow Effect of City Branding

There is a tendency in corporate branding to only focus on the positive, value creation aspects while neglecting the potential for value destruction (Bertilsson & Rennstam (2017). The same is true in city branding. "Detrimental outcomes of place making, such as wasteful investment, uneven development, social inequality and environmental damage, are likely to cause concern among stakeholders, but typically do not receive the attention that they deserve" (Insch, 2011, p.151). The 'shadow effect' then refers not only to the unintended negative consequences that might arise, but also to the stakeholders whose needs might be overlooked in the process. Some of these aspects have been critically analyzed in the literature (Insch, 2011; Sevin, 2011) and we also encountered some in our empirical evidence. We feel it is worth discussion, not simply to criticize, but to bring attention to some of the not often talked about aspects of city branding.

One shadow effect that emerged from our interviews revolved around the learning needs of the students. While the school was intended for short-stay expatriate families, the reality was that a large number of the students was either first or second-generation immigrants that were not likely to leave Sweden. Teachers expressed concern and shared specific examples of how they have had to work with parents to encourage them to move their children to a different school based on their long-term plans, given that MIS would not necessarily prepare them for a life in Sweden. Some students may end up stuck, without the necessary Swedish level to study or work in Sweden, and without the necessary grades to continue their IB studies in English. Malmö stad placed pressures on MIS to grow rapidly which in turn led the school to accept many students that did not fit their ideal student profile. Further literature shows, that schools that are not extensively marketed are often unable to attract the 'right kind of students' (DiMartino & Jessen, 2016).

While MIS was trying to address this utilizing their own branding and marketing strategies, the immediate situation had real consequences on these students' lives and learning outcomes. As shown in the OECD report (2010) on migrant education in Sweden, migrant students are at a great disadvantage in many respects and learning outcomes show that they perform significantly lower than native-born Swedes. We questioned how attending an IB school, in English, such as MIS would help this inequity in any way. We also wondered how the creation of MIS helped the city regarding integration of immigrants, something that has long been a pressing issue in Malmö.

This leads to a second shadow effect in the research. Given the social challenges facing Malmö overall, we question whether opening MIS was the best use of city resources. Why would a city that, as of 2010, had approximately 40% of students coming from an Arabic background (OECD, 2010) devote resources to opening a school geared at short-term expatriate families? The city already had Bladin's, which has a long-standing history amongst international schools in Sweden. While Bladin's is private, expatriate families coming to Malmö with the support of multi-national companies would likely have the financial resources to send their children there. The empirical evidence showed that Malmö believed it was necessary and actually 'demanded' to have a public, IB school, but given the actual demographics of the school, one could argue that there was not a market for it. While city brands and identities are supposed to reflect the actual place (Dinnie, 2011), this was not the case in our research. From our perspective, the intended image and identity for MIS did not align with reality, and we question whether reality will ever align with that intention. As Oguztimur and Akturan (2016) point out, a "common critique in most of the studies is that, in city branding practices, there is a gap between what is desirable and what is real" (p.366).

Unlike most city branding activities that involve ad campaigns or logos, non-marketer controlled projects, such as MIS, can have real social consequences. Teachers are affected as it is their workplace. Students are affected, not only in terms of their immediate learning needs, but also by shaping their futures. While some of these consequences were most likely unintended on the part of Malmö stad, they could still be addressed in some way. Based on our analysis, however, it does not seem that teachers or staff are being involved by Malmö stad to communicate these concerns and further shape the brand and identity of the city and the school.

The City as a Scapegoat

Until this point, most of the thesis has centered on the consequences experienced by MIS due to Malmö's city branding strategy, yet we also want to discuss the role MIS may have played in the scenario. The perception of most of the teachers and staff at MIS was that they were 'victims' of the city and politicians of Malmö who misunderstood them and withheld true support from the school. While there were certainly indications that Malmö stad could have done more to understand the identity-related issues at MIS, what could MIS actually still have done to improve the situation?

The constant reference to Malmö stad as the 'problem' appeared to be a scapegoat at times, used to help rationalize the situation and excuse the shortcomings of MIS. A certain rhetoric developed, which served to manage the perceptions of the internal members of the organization and attribute the negative aspects to Malmö stad, thereby relinquishing the school from any responsibility. Rennstam (2013) says "[w]hen an organization offers a scapegoat to represent its ills, it makes its problems tangible and thus easier to see for an outsider" (p.125). In this case, it made it easier not for an outsider, but for insiders (i.e. the teachers and staff at MIS), but the essence of the concept applies. Putting the blame on Malmö stad may have helped MIS 'reduce complexity' related to their own identity and operational issues.

There were indications, however, that the school was in fact trying to change things through their own branding and image work and develop a stronger organizational culture. As Kärreman and Rylander (2008) revealed, external branding activities can become more of a 'leadership' tool by shaping how internal members perceive and collectively experience the organization. In fact, at MIS they began using marketing activities, such as publishing stories on social media, as ways to not only promote the external image of MIS, but also to help boost morale within the school. Much focus has been placed on promoting a positive workplace at MIS and engaging teachers and staff to speak positively about the school in every context. While this may help to build their culture and strengthen their identity, there is a risk of negative backlash if the externally promoted image of the school does not align with the individual's actual experience internally.

Within the interviews we heard a plea from teachers for the school to do more than just branding. There were repetitive mentions of wanting administration to stop 'pandering' to the city and push back on certain issues, especially where they felt that the quality of education was being compromised. This was especially evident when it came to treating the school as a business and placing more importance on growing school enrollment rather than on the needs of the teachers and existing students. As a result, teachers revealed wanting strictly enforced policies at the school regarding the age of admittance and a cap on class sizes, as these were two areas where they felt the school was putting money ahead of actual needs. Related to this was a cry for more policies and procedures to support them in general.

Practical Implications

Based on our empirical evidence and our analysis we offer the following insights in an effort to further the understanding of the implementation of such city branding strategies and the related consequences. There is no one best way to structure and implement a city branding project and, like cities, strategies are constantly evolving (Dinnie, 2011). We would argue, however, that taking certain steps could help mitigate the risk of incurring negative consequences. We find this especially necessary when dealing with a similar context to MIS, where real lives are impacted. These may not be novel approaches, but our analysis reinforces the need for such structures in practice. Additionally, this is not meant as an exhaustive, prescriptive list, but rather a starting point for practitioners of city branding to reflect on the potential implications of their strategies.

Emphasize Substance of Branding Over Symbolism

What the case of MIS brought to light was the need for cities to not make city branding an exercise in box-ticking. More emphasis should be placed on the substance of branding strategies to ensure that they were not initiated simply for symbolic purposes of 'maximizing positive place experience' (Kavaratzis, Warnaby & Ashworth, 2015). Further, the decision to open MIS seemed rather quick and lacked a full understanding of the true resource expenditure and potential consequences on the organizational identity of the school.

From a branding perspective, rushing quickly into projects, with a rather uninterested attitude can create tensions regarding implementation (Houghton & Stevens, 2011). Our findings show signs that Malmö may have done just this with the establishment of MIS. Instead of looking at MIS as one large stakeholder, Malmö could have considered the individual stakeholders as the teachers, and possibly the students and parents, taking more time to address different perspectives. If the politicians had actually scheduled a meeting at the school to discuss issues with teachers, rather than just bringing diplomatic visitors by the school to show it off, it would have carried much more substance. Without platforms for interaction, stakeholders may never fully feel understood in their experience and question the motives of the city, creating an environment of distrust.

Consistently and Effectively Communicate Brand and Identity

In addition to communicating more with the individual stakeholders, cities should ensure that their branding message and identity is consistently and effectively communicated across all affected organizations. MIS was left to autonomously determine their own identity and develop their own branding strategy and image. This may or may not be consistent with what Malmö had intended for the overall city brand, but the lack of communication lead to uncertainty.

Further, Malmö made a top-down decision to create MIS in the first place, but then did not maintain the perspective of brand 'owner'. According to Sevin (as cited in Insch, 2011) "unclear ownership of place brands obscures the legitimacy of actors and authorities in the communicative process of place branding. [...] Implementing this framework [...] involves grassroots projects to enable social inclusion of relevant stakeholders to create new platforms for interaction in the meaning making process of place branding" (p.151). Coupled with a lack of consultation in terms of brand creation, MIS was left to then balance fitting into the mold, while simultaneously needing to stand out. This paradox seems to have gone unrecognized by Malmö stad, and without proper channels to vet the issues with the individual stakeholders, it may simply continue. It is important for cities to maintain awareness of this potential and manage it through consistent and effective communication.

Adjust Intentions To Meet Reality

Our research also underscores the need for continuous adjustment between the strategic intentions of a city brand and social reality. We saw that the intentions of Malmö stad to create a school catering to short-term expatriate families did not align with the demographic the school ultimately served. This disconnect had various consequences on both students and teachers, and further complicated the identity issues for the organization. It brought awareness to the *shadow effect* of city branding, which is worthy of addressing when certain projects of this type are initiated by cities.

We argue that the problem may not be in the misalignment, but rather the failure to adjust the intentions with the reality. It appeared the city and the school were both continuing to force the originally intended image and identity onto a reality that did not exist. For example, if Malmö ultimately said that, based on the market, MIS no longer needs to serve just the expatriate community, but rather the entire Malmö community, their whole identity would shift. It then meets reality and frees the energy and resources of the school to focus on addressing the needs of their faculty and students. By critically analyzing these types of branding projects, and allowing for adaptations, cities may be able to foster the organic development of the brand and better fulfill the needs of the stakeholders involved.

Stakeholders Must Also Take Responsibility for Identity Creation

While the overwhelming evidence in our thesis pointed to the city of Malmö bearing much of the perceived responsibility for the identity issues at MIS, we take a more critical perspective. We believe that despite the consequences at the school as a result of the city branding initiatives, MIS has their own responsibility to clarify and communicate their own brand, at least internally. In some ways, they are doing this quite well and have taken measures during the last year to address their branding, at least in terms of attracting students and families to the school. As a result, they hope to indirectly influence their culture by boosting morale and strengthening the identity of the teachers and staff. We felt that developing an even clearer vision, and consistent communication of this throughout the organization, would help them truly take ownership of their identity creation.

Additionally, once stakeholders take measures to address their own culture, identity and operational issues internally, they should also become proactive in driving the brand co-creation process with the city (Dinnie, 2011). If the city does not provide platforms for stakeholders to engage with them on developing the city brand, and sharing issues, then grassroots efforts should be made to do so. This calls for creative, 'outside-the-box' thinking in order to effectively organize and communicate.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

Summary

The aim of this thesis was to gain an understanding of the impact of city branding strategies on stakeholders in public organizations. In order to do this, we used a qualitative, interpretative approach to study MIS, a public international school in Malmö, Sweden. Given the background of how MIS was established, it became clear that the school played a role in Malmö's overall city branding strategy. Specifically, they were an infrastructural investment that the politicians felt was necessary to attract further economic development and potential future residents from abroad. We not only viewed MIS as a key organizational stakeholder in Malmö's city branding strategy, but also the teachers as individual stakeholders. As such, we conducted semi-structured interviews with a diverse sample of teachers and administrators to gain an understanding of their experience.

Main Findings

Our interviews uncovered a tense relationship between MIS and the city of Malmö. Issues ranged from budgetary and resource constraints to a feeling of being misunderstood and unsupported. The school felt as if the city that created them lacked a full understanding of their needs. Teachers actually perceived the city as purposefully working against them. As a result, it appeared Malmö treated the establishment of MIS as merely a *box-ticking exercise* that promoted their image as a city. This dynamic resulted in what could be classified as a *branded identity crisis*, whereby who MIS was, who they served, and how they operated were all challenged. We also saw evidence of the *shadow effect of city branding* in that discrepancies in who the school was intended to serve and who they actually served may have had unintended negative consequences on certain stakeholders. Finally, our analysis showed that Malmö was often used as a *scapegoat* as a way to excuse various operational shortcomings at MIS.

Our observations and analysis culminated in a list of practical implications for practitioners and stakeholders of city branding activities. First, cities should emphasize the substance of branding activities over symbolism by engaging stakeholders, helping to prove branding efforts are not just for image sake. Second, brand and identity should be consistently and effectively communicated across the organizations affected by city branding activities. Third, cities and stakeholders must both work to continuously adjust intentions of branding activities to meet reality in order to better serve the needs of end users (for example, teachers and students). Lastly, stakeholders must also take responsibility for their own identity creation, focusing on what is within their power to change.

Research Implications

Our findings highlight the inherent complexity of city branding. While this is not a new observation, we feel that the type of non-traditional marketing activity that we studied provides a nuanced perspective. Establishing an organization, such as MIS, is different than creating an advertising campaign or logo design in that it becomes someone's workplace and ultimately serves people as 'customers'. It is also slightly different than many other infrastructural investments, such as bridges or parks. In this way, the teachers and students within the organization act as a sort of microcosm of the city overall, reflecting the issues of the greater society.

As a result, we conclude that decisions to establish similar projects cannot be made in isolation and must consider the whole context, including the real-life impact it may have on certain stakeholders. What may seem straightforward and necessary on the surface may actually cause a number of unintended consequences if the whole context is not carefully considered. In the case we analyzed, the lack of full understanding and consideration lead to identity fragmentation, resulting in additional confusion and stress for the organization and its members. We advocate taking a more critical perspective when assessing this type of city branding project. The potential for such negative consequences should be acknowledged, and proper measures taken to prevent and address them.

Further Research

As Oguztimur and Akturan (2016) point out

> "the city branding literature is still open for development, and there are gaps in the literature in terms of theories and approaches. There is a need to find common ground between marketing-oriented and planning oriented approaches" (p.368).

Indeed, the field of city branding is considered relatively new and emerging and as such requires further development. Green, Grace and Perkins (2016) highlight a gap between city branding research and practice calling for more work to help close this gap, especially as it pertains to studying non-marketing factors.

Our thesis strengthens the argument for such additional research in this regard. Specifically, we see a need to further study organizations in a similar context to our case. Particular attention could be given to the relationship between the city and the organization, and the effects that has on the organization's identity. Existing literature has discussed the branding-identity connection, but as it relates to the identity of the city (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Our thesis suggests that it is the identity of the organization and its members that might be of interest in studying stakeholder relationships and its importance to city brand creation.

Lastly, Insch (2011) says "detrimental outcomes of place making, such as wasteful investment, uneven development, social inequality and environmental damage, are likely to cause concern among stakeholders, but typically do not receive the attention that they deserve" (p.151). Our thesis showed what we call *the shadow effect of city branding*, bringing some attention to the negative consequences certain decisions have on various stakeholders. We believe even more studies can be done, utilizing a critical perspective, to further explore this aspect of city branding with particular attention to social impact.

As more cities around the world begin to engage in city branding, it becomes even more crucial for practitioners and researchers to collaborate. Combining and sharing their knowledge may help not only narrow the current gaps between research and practice, but also help the field of city branding to further advance.

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