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**The Distorted Communication of a City**  
Examining the mutual relationship between value construction  
and value destruction in post-industrial cities'  
brand communication  
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# Abstract

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## **The Distorted Communication of a City: Examining the mutual relationship between value construction and value destruction in post-industrial cities' brand communication**

This study argues that there is a problem in previous literature regarding the understanding of value in city brand communication. Value construction has been overemphasized, at the expenses of value destruction, which is problematic because there is a mutual relationship between value construction and destruction. City brand communication is distorted, and therefore, groups are excluded when intending to create value, which leads to value being destroyed as well. Thus, the aim of the study is to examine the mutual relationship between the value construction and destruction in the brand communication of three Swedish post-industrial cities. It will examine this by interviewing city strategists and tourism executives as well as through a document study of brand platforms, policy documents, websites and tourist brochures. The value construction and destruction is identified using a theoretical framework of looking at how humans make meaning of the world - through distinctive worlds of justification - as well as how people exclude opinions - through micro-practices of discursive closure. The analysis is conducted using seven analytical categories, helping to understand the data and to draw conclusions more in-depth. The results demonstrate that the intended value construction of city brand communication simultaneously destroy the same values. The study shows that cities need to develop communicative skills in how to minimise the exclusion of specific groups. There are wider societal implications to democracy when the city brand as a social actor undermines the complexity of the brand communication by excluding groups or opinions. Furthermore, it contributes to previous research by showing that there is a mutual relationship between value construction and destruction, and cities need to address this in order to succeed with their brand communication.

*Keywords:* Place branding, city branding, value construction, value destruction, entrepreneurialism, discursive closure, justification logics, strategic communication

*Word count:* 21938

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# 1 Introduction

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*Standing outside the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, looking out across the waterfront, it is hard to believe that twenty years ago this was a post-industrial wasteland. Bilbao was built on steel and shipbuilding, but by the 1980s those old industries were dying. This gritty Basque city had to find a new direction. It reinvented itself as a hi-tech hub, and the centerpiece of this regeneration wasn't a new factory but a brand new art gallery. (BBC Arts, 2017)*

Bilbao is an example of a city that has successfully rebranded itself from the ashes of an industrial society. Before the Guggenheim Museum was built, Bilbao was afflicted by deindustrialisation. In the 1980s, the old industries - such as the steel industry and the shipbuilding industry - were slowly dying, and the city that was once so flourishing became a city in a crisis (BBC Arts, 2017; Heathcote & Vicario, 2017). The Guggenheim Museum changed the identity of the city and generated an entirely new group of visitors. It is an inspiration for other cities trying to rebrand themselves from a post-industrial city to a thriving city with, for instance, education, culture and creativity as their core values (Franklin, 2016; Keating & de Frantz, 2003; Heathcote & Vicario, 2017). City branding is a strategy commonly applied in pursuit of urban development, regeneration and quality of life (Dinnie, 2011). It is an idea of observed and valued reputation, in a polarised world where reputation is becoming the primary source of trust (Anholt, 2010). There is consensus in previous research that place branding is a much more complex process than corporate branding (e.g. Dinnie, 2011; Anholt, 2007; Kavaratzis, 2007; Hankinson, 2007). One aspect of the complex nature of city branding stems from the many stakeholders it has to deal with (Dinnie, 2011). City branding has to be inclusive and collaborative, to create a message attractive to tourists, politicians, sports fans, citizens and many more (Anholt, 2007).

The transformation of Bilbao from an industrial city, to a post-industrial city, and later on a cultural and creative city, demonstrates how a city successfully can create a new image and a new identity. However, it is also an example of a city where value construction is focused on some parts of the city, excluding other parts, thus creating a dual city where the population who cannot identify with the new image are precluded. Thus, Bilbao shows the importance of the citizens when rebranding a city, and how city brand communication does not merely constructs value, but also destroys value. Furthermore, even though there are cities that have

successfully rebranded themselves as a new city with new values and reputation, all aspects of the new strategy might not be as successful. Vicario argues that, although Bilbao is a success story in rebranding, it is not a success story when it comes to the social matters, because the new centre has been developed at the expenses of the more unfortunate areas (Heathcote & Vicario, 2017). The city has seen inequalities increase since 2000 and Bilbao is a dual city. Thus, a city brand is not always an asset in every aspect.

## 1.1 The problem with value construction in city branding

Corporate brands are owned by organisations, but a city brand is conjointly owned by various stakeholders (Dinnie, 2011). Place brands are part of the public sector, instead of being owned by a group of shareholders or a private organisation (Hankinson, 2015). A city is much more complex than a product, because branding a city is above all for the local citizens. The city delivers value in the forms of cultural and sports facilities, welfare, transport system and many more, all of which contributes to the city brand equity (Dinnie, 2011).

Many city administrations treat the branding process as something that only adds value. However, as Bertilsson & Rennstam (2018) argue, research in branding has previously been overemphasising the value construction, forgetting about the destructive side. Previous literature on organisational branding have not emphasised the value destruction part in depth before, howsoever it is a crucial aspect of city branding, where fundamentally different stakeholders are working to build a brand with diverse target groups. They argue (2018) that while working on constructing value in a city brand context, it is additionally important to be aware of the value destructive characteristics as well.

Where there are several target groups, there are several ways for individuals to justify their behaviour, so-called justification logics (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). Graeber (2005, p. 439) defines value as a "symbolic system that defines the world in terms of what is important, meaningful, desirable or worthwhile in it." Boltanski & Thévenot (2000) argue that value is something that can be divided into different worlds. There are several justification logics, meaning that people tend to create value from different objects, or higher common principles. Moreover, value is not just meaning of life, but also how you relate to other people, and opinions in society. Their thoughts on value make the city branding process more complicated

since the message the city is trying to convey cannot be justified by a certain group of people, instead, there will be a form of value destruction within that particular group.

## 1.2 Aim and research question

This study aims to examine the mutual relationship between brand value construction and brand value destruction in post-industrial cities' brand communication. To approach this, Deetz's concept of discursive closure and Boltanski & Thévenot's concept of worlds of justification are used. The research wishes to emphasise how the mutual relationship takes place in a complex branding procedure where different justification logics exist. It will do this by examining three Swedish post-industrial cities located in the region of Trestad. To achieve the aim, the following research questions are posed:

*1) Which justification logics can be found in the city brand communication?*

*(a) How are they being used when constructing value?*

*2) Which types of discursive closure exist in the city brand communication?*

*(a) In which ways are they destroying value?*

## 1.3 Contribution of the study

This study contributes to the already existing scholarship of city branding by using a different approach. With Bertilsson & Rennstam's (2018) call for further research of how branding creates and destroys value as a starting point, the thesis will use Boltanski & Thévenot's theory of the worlds of justification, and Deetz's discursive closure. To analyse how smaller post-industrial cities brand themselves and how this branding process creates and destroys value. One problem with value in branding is that it "is mainly understood in market terms, measured by price, which limits the discussion of value to monetary aims" (Bertilsson & Rennstam, 2018, p. 2), while according to Boltanski & Thévenot (2000), value can also be understood as a cultural and political construct. In the brand management literature, brand value is also typically conceptualised as brand equity, which according to Aaker (1991) consists of awareness, loyalty, perceived quality and associations of the brand. It is also a matter of how valuable the brand is in terms of money because the end goal of brand equity is to capitalise on it (1991). However, this study argues that brand equity is rather insufficient in a city brand context because it is only showing what is good about the brand, which is

problematic. It is essential to understand that value destruction of brands exists. Boltanski & Thévenot and Deetz offer a different approach with their worlds of justification and discursive closure. With their theories the study can overlook the common way of seeing value in branding, focusing more on the meaning and social values.

No study has been made for smaller cities in Sweden, and no other study has had a focus on the value destructive side of city brand communication, which is an important part when trying to maintain and grow a successful city brand in today's globalised and competitive world. Anholt (2007) argues that in today's competitive world, the population need to act as ambassadors to create that needed advertising medium to stand out. He further argues that the positive words of the population are one of the most influential and powerful marketing practices there is. This is also important when looking at how to minimise the damages so that as many as possible communicate well about the city brand, which in turn maximise the consistency in the city brand communication. This approach is especially interesting in city branding, because of the fundamentally different stakeholder groups and the several justification logics.

Bertilsson & Rennstam's (2018) approach to value destruction in branding is more descriptive; no empirical study has been made using their framework. They contribute to the field by adding a critical understanding of organisational branding. However, this study draws upon their critical understanding, but instead of organisational branding, it contributes to the field of city branding. Furthermore, this study is of an exploratory nature, implementing the framework in a city brand context. By doing so, this study contributes to extending the framework with a city brand perspective. City branding is an interesting example because, as mentioned earlier, it is more complex than corporate branding, and constructing value for multiple stakeholders can have the effect of destroying value for others.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the field of strategic communication when trying to optimise the city branding process in a state of change. Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič & Sriramesh (2007, p. 3) define strategic communication as "the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfil its mission." The purposeful use of communication to focus on how to create and change meaning is powerful within city branding, because often when building a new brand of a city, something has to change. We see that in many cities in the world, going from being a post-industrial society in decline to

being a creative and technological prosperous hub. To form a purposeful use of communication, it is essential to see where potential risks are, and that is why it is important to not only look for value creation, but to minimise value destruction as well. If the values destroyed are too many, there can be no purposeful use of communication, and that is why the holistic approach of strategic communication is important, because it is essential to see all the aspects when communicating a city brand, to be authentic and trustworthy.

## 1.4 Demarcation

This study will focus on the experiences of those working strategically with the city branding and documents. The informants in the study are communication professionals, brand strategists, tourist information managers and other professionals involved in the city brand communication of the cities. It will not focus on politicians determining policies and organisational changes, nor will it focus on communication agencies helping the cities with their strategies or any other document or website than stated in the methodology. The study focuses on how the city branding process intends to create value, as well as how the communication suppresses opinions and groups. It does not examine how stakeholders and citizens perceive the brand communication. Furthermore, it will solely focus on the region of Trestad in Sweden.

## 1.5 Disposition

This master thesis begins with a review of the previous literature on place branding and more specifically branding in post-industrial cities and value. In the following chapter, a theoretical framework of relevant theories will be introduced. Here, Boltanski & Thévenot's theory of the worlds of justification (2006), and the additional seventh world presented in Thévenot, Moody & Lafaye (2000) will be presented, as well as Deetz's (1992) theory of discursive closure. Next, the methodology chapter presents how the thesis was conducted, and justifications for why the choices made are relevant. Thereafter, in the analysis chapter, the results from the interviews and the documents will be analysed from the worlds of justification, and how the cities construct value when engaging in a city branding process. Furthermore, Deetz's discursive closure will be used to examine which opinions and groups are excluded in the communication. Additionally, in the last chapter of the thesis, the conclusions and discussions are presented, where the research question is answered and discussed, as well as limitations to the study and suggestions for further research.

## 2 City branding and value

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In this study, place branding will be referred to as 'place brand communication' (or 'city brand communication'). By doing so, it will have direct denotations to the communicative aspect of place branding. Thus, the foci of the city branding in this study are on the communication of the city brand. In previous literature, the two terms have been used synonymously (see Braun, Eshuis & Klijn, 2014; Therkelsen, 2015), leading to no confusion in this study. How cities communicate their brand is essential and, through communicative aspects, brand identity and brand equity will be created (Hankinson, 2015). While place branding is a conjoint exercise, the communicative aspect is vital, especially because both internal and external tensions will appear (2015). These tensions can - in turn - lead to dual cities, where groups are precluded. Communication is a central aspect when it comes to institutional changes, or to understand institutions and how they are identified (Dolfsma, 2009). Through communication processes, organisations create value and de Beer (2014) argues that non-financial performances are vital when valuing an organisation. This means that managing both the internal and external communication is essential when maintaining a city brand. It further means that city brand communication cannot only act with monetary aims but also to create a culturally and politically good environment. It is important to understand that in a city brand communication process, the value the city is intending to ascribe the place is socially constructed and that it does not exclusively construct value. City strategists have to be aware of the destructive side of their communication, which is especially complicated with several justification logics, and stakeholders make meaning in different ways. Therefore, more research has to be made on how the value destructive side of city branding is affecting the brand.

Anderson (2006) argues that a place also is socially constructed. A place is what values people ascribe to that specific area, and how communication such as the media creates imagined communities. This means that a collective comprehension of a place increases or decreases the value, depending on what that understanding is. Therefore, it is important for the city brand to be aware that there are several justification logics within the population and the stakeholders so that the collective comprehension is as positive as possible. Because when the population of a place positively values the city brand, they become ambassadors. However, city brand strategists tend to look at city brand communication as something solely

adding value, which this study argues against. This study argues instead that it is a problematic procedure, and city strategists have to be critical in that value can also be destroyed when creating a communication strategy of the brand.

It is important to note that a city also be defined as a public organisation, in the public sector. Boenigk & Möhlmann (2016, p. 86) argues that a city "respond to complex relationship marketing specifics between the public sector and its service users, which are dominated by sociopolitical concerns." The city brand strategists always have to depend on the local government, which may not always understand them. Furthermore, the function of a public sector is not like the private sector - which wants to optimise profit - but instead, it is about balance and optimised value from the public. This has to be done on different levels, to create the balance of value in society (2016). Creating a balance in society can be difficult since the local government decides the strategy in the end. The same local government cannot remain the same, since the elections determine the government, while the identity and image of a city should last. Cities want to attract new residents, and they compete with other cities to gain influence and investments. Therefore, it is essential to maintain a strong identity, and a strong image. Although the competition is high, and the need to attract new residents demands a lot, the isomorphism is high when it comes to city brand communication, and cities are following prosperous cities and imitate them (Trollhättan, personal communication, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018). Zenker (2014) state that cities invest a lot of taxpayers' money in their city brand communication, which requires the communication to be sufficient and adequate to satisfy the taxpayers. Furthermore, it requires solidarity, and that groups and opinions cannot be systematically excluded.

## 2.1 Place- and public sector branding

It was not until late twentieth-century place branding appeared in academic literature, before it had been widespread, coming from various perspectives. According to Hankinson (2015, p. 20), place branding originates from the fields of urban policy, tourism and marketing, working "independently of each other and with little reference to mainstream marketing." Place branding - a broader term involving city branding, destination branding and nation branding - is a process where local, regional or national governments are conjointly working with the private sector and the local citizens to create a brand strategy (Govers & Go, 2009). In recent academic literature, place branding has become a widely used term when referring to

managing reputation and identity as a place (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Anholt (2010) argues that: "'Brand' is a word that captures the idea of reputation observed, reputation valued and reputation managed (...)" (p. 20). He further argues that the practice of branding does not merely exist within a commercial sphere, but also in the public sphere, and other non-commercial areas (2010). Therefore, it is essential to talk about value, because constructing value creates reputation, and to create good reputation the value destructive side has to be considered. Govers & Go (2009) also pinpoint the central aspect of managing reputation. Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2006) argues that place branding simply is product branding, applied to a place. Places possess the same characteristics as a product, such as identity, awareness, and value (2006). However, it cannot work the same as product branding, since places are much more complex than products, with for instance its multiple stakeholders, the political aspects, various justification logics of the citizens (e.g. Dinnie, 2011; Anholt, 2007; Kavaratzis, 2007; Hankinson, 2007). The terminology of place branding is diffuse (Anholt, 2010), but there is consensus that place branding is the practice in which places identify and differentiate themselves from others (e.g. Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006; Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2005). Nowadays, places "are objectively evaluating their competitiveness and methods of optimizing their relevance and value to internal and external customers" (Baker, 2012, p. 35). Places use branding as a mean to attain this. This they do to manage their identity specifically and to increase the reputation, either on a smaller, local scale or on a bigger, global scale. Place branding:

*[C]overs some of the hardest philosophical questions one can tackle: the nature of perception and reality, the relationship between objects and their representation, the phenomena of mass psychology, the mysteries of national identity, leadership, culture and social cohesion, and much more besides (Anholt, 2007, p. xii).*

The importance of a good place reputation is increasing as the human population increases, and societies grow (Anholt, 2010). Regardless of being a product brand, a place brand or a personal brand, they are all promises of value (Van Gelder, 2003), and exist to create experiences for the consumers of the brand. When creating a successful place brand, the brand generates value; value from the people consuming it and processing it. The goal of branding a product or a service is to maximise profit. However, the goal of city brand communication cannot only be about maximising taxpayers and earning money from tourists or other monetary goals. However, they use the same practice. When brand value is of monetary aim,

value for people is also about cultural and political aims. Therefore, to create a satisfied city, the destructive side of branding a city is an interesting approach when creating and maintaining an identity as well as an image. Managing an identity is problematic when several justification logics are prevailing, it is important to find common denominators to mitigate the destruction of value. Because branding is not a simple practice where to construct value and reputation, it is a process where both destruction and construction appears mutually. To create a common form of identity and image, the place brand communication needs to address the justification logics to not exclude parts of society.

## 2.2 Post-industrial city branding

According to Meyer (2000), a post-industrial city is a former industrial city, which now has its emphasis on soft skills, rather than hard skills. For example, emphasis could be on communication, technology and innovation, instead of producing products (2000). Simply put, the economy of the city shifts from producing goods and products to offering services instead (Crossman, 2018). Möllerström & Stenberg (2014) argues that cities have developed from the industrial cities many of them once were, to entrepreneurial cities with innovation as its core. Cities are more like corporations, and this is shown in how they brand themselves and how competitive the discourse of city branding has become. Furthermore, this shift could not have been possible at an earlier stage in our development (2014), and this aligns with Florida's (2002) argument of the creative class. Society has changed in the past 60 years and "that driving force is the rise of human creativity" (2002, p. 4). Creativity is the attribute that distinguishes the human species the most, meaning that it is a great asset in a competitive environment (2002). However, as Banet-Weiser (2012) describes, a focus on the creative class erases the non-creative class of the society, destroying value for a specific part of the city. Service workers, poor people and other groups of people do not typically possess the "innate creativity of humans" (p. 109). The creativity aspect of a city brand communication is well matched with entrepreneurial environments of a city, which are means to attain recognition (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

Dinnie (2011) argues that city brand communication has a complex nature, not only due to the wide range of stakeholders a city has to address in their brand communication, but also because of the "spectrum of fundamentally different target audiences" (2011, p. 4). Moilanen (2015) made a comparative study on ten European cities, which identified several challenges,

and a large number of stakeholders was one of the most profound challenges, which has implications because of the vast amount of justification logics existing. The study identified several other challenges - among others - limited internal buy-in, formulating the brand strategy in accordance with a common identity, conflicting opinions internally and creating a consistent message (2015). All of the challenges mentioned are consequences of the richness of stakeholders and justification logics, and that cooperation to create a common brand is troublesome when dealing with stakeholders having contrasting goals. Nine out of ten cities in the study saw this as a challenge, and Moilanen (2015) argues that it is mainly because of the different objectives from public sector, private sector and non-profit organisations. Therefore, it is a great challenge to include all parts of the city brand communication. Moilanen argues that it is hard to secure "sufficient internal buy-in from the public sector organizations" (2015, p. 222). Virgo & de Chernatony (2006) also argues that it is a challenge for cities to achieve a cohesive and uniting brand vision. They suggest that to create internal buy-in, the city brand has to be consistent; it is only then both short- and long-term objectives can be framed by allowing all stakeholders work conjointly to achieve their vision. This is easier said than done, although a consistent and unifying brand vision creates buy-in, it is not easy to create consistency in the brand message. However, most cities understand the importance of internal buy-in, and creating a brand identity starting with the citizens is important, thus creating value from the brand platform, as Moilanen (2015) points out.

According to Baker (2012, p. 43), many cities "are making the difficult adjustment from an industrial society into a service and information society." There are an increasing number of cities competing to attract new citizens and tourists; they are trying to construct value where they can make money, which in many cases lead to dual cities. Furthermore, there is a focus on creativity, innovation and talent (2012). Meyer (2000) argues that the new focus for post-industrial cities is soft skills such as creativity, technology and communication. Govers & Go (2009) writes about 'The Third Wave', meaning that humankind has gone into an information age lately, where citizens are growing a self-service mentality. The new information age demands shared decision-making and participation in management. The citizens have to be up to date and educated, and with access to information in every corner of society, citizens become updated. In today's competitive market, cities are looking for ways to differentiate themselves from others, this they do to attract key targets (Virgo & de Chernatony, 2006). Post-industrial cities such as Detroit, Bilbao, Manchester, Odense and Turin have rebranded themselves through the means of culture, technology, innovation and education. (See for

example Plaza, González-Casimiro, Moral-Zuazo & Waldron, 2014; Walker, 2016; Ortiz-Moya, 2014; Miller, 2017; Vanolo, 2008). Innovation and creativity attract inventions and investments from key targets, which is essential in being a prosperous society, and it is essential in expanding the city with both new companies and citizens, which in the long-run produces money to the city. There is also a common practice of being green and sustainable nowadays when rebranding the post-industrial city. De Sousa (2014) mentions that post-industrial cities are greening themselves to "achieve aesthetic, infrastructure, recreational, ecological, and economic development objectives at various scales" (p. 1049). Cities are following the trends, and it is not without problems, focusing too much on one aspect of society exclude groups and opinions, leading to discursive closure. Vanolo (2008, p. 370) argues that a "creative city approach" often has been criticised, but it is still a core value when discussing place brand communication, and many post-industrial cities are rebranding themselves through this core value.

### 2.3 Value in city branding

Since city branding involves multiple stakeholders, and the brand is owned by a number of them, it is important to start from the inside. It is difficult to speak about value construction without mentioning the value destructive parts as well because they possess a mutual relationship. With multiple stakeholders, it is more complex to minimise the value destruction, because there are several wills, and several ways of how people make meaning of the world. It was previously mentioned that achieving internal buy-in is essential when trying to build a city brand. Anholt (2010) argues that place brand communication is not what corporate branding is, because it starts in the opposite direction. The branding of a place has to start from the inside. It starts with the identity, which exists inside of the place. To be a successful and attractive city, the identity has to be strong, and there should be no alienation of the people (Baker, 2012). To create this identity, there is often a need to build on what already exists, because that is where citizens find value. Trying to create new core values, and trying to change the behaviour of the people can lead to destroying value, which will later lead to a dual city. Campelo (2017) advocates for a participatory approach to create an identity. She further argues that place brand communication strives to create directions for the future of the community. If there is no consensus internally in a city, there can be no identity, and when a city lacks an identity, it is challenging to create a strong image externally (Anholt, 2010). Anholt (2007) argues that to create a competitive city brand, one of the most

influential marketing tools - the words of a citizen - has to be included, making it central for the city brand communication to appeal to the population of the city. Pecot & de Barnier (2015) argues that city brand heritage is important when practising city brand communication, and this can help generate pride, authenticity and commitment among the internal stakeholders, such as the citizens, politicians and local companies. By maintaining positive brand associations from the past, city brand heritage creates a strong sense of belonging and does not alienate either tourists or the local citizens.

## 2.4 Summary

There is consensus that place brand communication is a complex phenomenon both in the research and in practice. Place brand literature derives from different academic fields, such as urban policy, tourism and marketing. It is a complex phenomenon because of the various stakeholders with contrasting goals and justification logics in the city brand process, and as much as place branding is about constructing value, it is about destroying value. There were also various scholars mentioning that most of the cities have troubles with achieving internal buy-in. Where branding finds value in monetary aims, citizens can instead find value in cultural and political purposes, which creates a tension. The importance of city branding is to find common ground, where the majority of the justification logics are addressed in the city brand communication. Because if they find common ground, the city brand can both address the majority of its citizens, as well as its investors and other stakeholders, thus, minimising the value destruction. If stakeholders from different sectors, such as the public, the private and non-profit organisations have different goals and processes as the cities, conflict may emerge. However, if the city brand strategy is cohesive, consistent and unifying through all stakeholders, a reputable and robust city brand can arise. When it comes to post-industrial cities, many of them already have a shared opinion that it has to be rebranded. These cities are mostly using innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship and environmental friendliness to rebrand themselves, to attract talent, and to show competitors that the future is ahead of them. However, by focusing on the creativity, groups of society can be excluded in the brand communication, groups that do not typically possess the creativity aspect, and entrepreneurial spirit of their jobs or life, creating a dual city with some of its values destroyed.

# 3 Theory

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Looking at city brand communication in post-industrial cities, this study aims to examine the mutual relationship between brand value construction and brand value destruction in post-industrial cities' brand communication. It will do so by using Boltanski & Thévenot's (2006) work on how to reach agreements in settings where multiple and contradicting opinions exist. With their theory of the six worlds of justification, and Thévenot's et al. (2000) additional seventh world, the study will analyse the empirical material and find the intended value construction. In addition, Deetz's (1992) theory of discursive closure will be used as an analytical tool, operationalising the value destruction in the city brand communication of the cities, because the suppression of opinions and groups leads to value destruction elements.

## 3.1 Justifications of actions and worlds of justification

City brand communication is an on-going form of social interaction, which is the root of creating brand authenticity (Beverland, 2009). Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) argue that it is essential to understand the way humans justify their behaviour. Individuals are acting by how they think their counterpart will react. There is a wide range of situations where people justify their actions, and according to the authors (2006), it can be divided into six main logics - or worlds of justification - as it will be referred to henceforth. The seventh world of justification was later developed (Thévenot et al. 2000) and is now used among the six earlier worlds.

### 3.1.1 The seven worlds of justification

The seven worlds of justification are forms of justifications, different forms of how people find value in life (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). The authors argue that, when trying to justify an opinion, a referral to what the individual think is the general interest of humanity, also referred to as the 'higher common principle', is inevitable. However, there are different worlds, because people think of value as distinct, and the view of the general interest of humanity differs (2006).

In their book *On Justification: Economies of Worth* (2006), the authors discuss six different worlds, which are all presented in figure 1. In a later work, Thévenot et al. (2000) elaborate on a seventh world, called 'the green world'. To grasp the analysis, and the results, a brief

introduction of the worlds is needed. Thus, comprehend the complex nature of justification logics. The book is considered being one of the most essential books in economic sociology and the worlds are inspired by philosophers such as Rousseau, Hobbes, Adam Smith (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006).

Figure 1. *Schematic summary of the worlds of justification*

	<i>Inspired</i>	<i>Domestic</i>	<i>Fame</i>	<i>Civic</i>	<i>Market</i>	<i>Industrial</i>	<i>Green<sup>a</sup></i>
<i>State of worthiness</i>	Grace, singularity, creativeness	Esteem, reputation	Renown, fame	Collective welfare	Price, cost	Technical efficiency	Environmental friendliness
<i>Qualified human beings</i>	Creative being	Authority	Celebrity	Equal citizens	Customer, consumer, seller	Engineer, professional expert	Environmentalist
<i>Test</i>	Adventures of the mind	Family ceremonies	Presentations	Demonstration	Closing the deal	Trial, verifying	Sustainability, renewability
<i>Form of relevant proof</i>	Emotional involvement, expression	Oral, personally warranted	Semiotic	Formal, official	Monetary	Measurable, statistics	Ecological
<i>Unworthy</i>	Temptation to come down to earth	Being rootless, does not stay in place	Being indifferent and unknown	Being divided and a minority	Being enslaved to money	Treating people as things	Not being environmental friendly

Table 1. The six worlds presented by Boltanski & Thévenot (2000, p. 159-211), as well as the seventh world presented by Thévenot et al. (2006, p. 229-265). The values of the keywords are only examples and do not show everything; it serves as a guide to better understand the theory.

<sup>a</sup> Thévenot et al. (2000) state that the green world is not as detailed and developed as the other worlds. However, it is an important contribution to city branding, especially when environmentalism is an important aspect of our lives.

Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) distinguish the worlds by several ‘keywords’; each of them is different depending on what kind of world is discussed. There are 13 keywords, which refer to the way individuals construct or destruct value. The worlds could, simply put, be explained as to where individuals find meaning in life, and which goals they have in different spheres of life. All worlds are interrelated, meaning that people are different, and use different

justification logics, which in their eyes create value among themselves, but in other's eyes, it destroys value (2006). This is essential to understand as a city brand communicator, and therefore, it is necessary to comprehend the worlds of justification in one way or another, to create an authentic brand.

#### **a) The Inspired World**

Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) describe this world as somewhat unstable because there are no measurable metrics here. The emotional involvement and expressions are the proof and the justification of things. People in this world are creative and spontaneous because the state of worthiness is inspiration in its purest form; it is about being inspired by the unique and marvellous, instead of the down to earth aspects such as caring about the risks. Passion is an important aspect of this world, and there are no boundaries in the imagination and inspirational thoughts. The risks are high, but when things are successful, it is usually unique and unusual. The tests are the vagabondage of mind, where it is more important to believe and create adventures and voyages of your mind than to actually achieve them in real life. It is important never to give up dreaming because if you do, that makes it unworthy in the eyes of the inspired person.

#### **b) The Domestic World**

The domestic world is stable and based on hierarchical superiority and traditions. Orders are established through a hierarchy, and the most worthy beings are superior leaders. This world can be seen as a family with superior parents. Loyalty is an important word, and there is no competition of all against all, but instead, the inferiors are learning from their superiors, just as tradition has it. Ethical behaviour and manner are value-adding aspects of life, and the rules of etiquette are the objects to strive for. These objects "are primarily determined by the way they support and maintain hierarchical relationships among persons" (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 169). The domestic world does not value when beings approach social life selfishly, but instead, they must think in terms of others. Humans in this world believe that good manner is needed to proceed with life and to maintain the hierarchical order. Unworthy behaviour to beings of the domestic world is for instance impoliteness and disorderly behaviour, and to not stay in place. Having roots are fundamental. (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006)

### **c) The World of Fame**

The state of worthiness in the world of fame is to be visible, recognised and to have high public exposure. The opinion of others constitutes the worth; stars and their fans make up this world. It is important to be named in places having high exposure; for instance in the media. Public relations and branding are ways to gain fame. One of the most important aspects is to reveal all the secrets, because that is the price that has to be paid - being as transparent as possible. Identification is a strong word because being identifying is equal to being a star. Fans are identifying with stars, and mostly, stars are identified by what is successful. The public is the judges, and decides the fame of the stars, which they do through opinions, rumours, and demonstrations. The unworthy state in the world of fame is to be unknown, and to lack an image; it is also a disgrace to have a forgotten or fuzzy image. (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006)

### **d) The Civic World**

The civic world is a collective world. The higher states of worth do not appeal to the individual human being, but instead a collective. The general will is the most important and has the highest priority. The justifications should be based on solidarity and civil equality. In this world, it is important not to put individual interests ahead of collective interests, and to create relations based on legal rights, such as official laws and rules. The best illustration of the civic world is in democracies, where collectives are demonstrating and creating rules and laws for the common good. The test is then the demonstration for a just cause, such for example in unity, meetings or any other aspects where "the collective person is confirmed by the physical presence of its members (...)" (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 192). The fall of this world is the individualism, and when collectives are divided into subgroups or when particular beings are being cut-off from the collectives. (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006)

### **e) The Market World**

It is important to remember that the market world should "not be confused with a sphere of economic relations" (p. 193). The actions of individuals are motivated by rivalry and competition, a desire to possess objects such as luxury items. The worthiness of this world is decided concerning price and market worth. Objects that have a strong position in the market are worthy and worthy people are millionaires or other wealthy persons living a desirable life.

It is important for individuals to own things the rest of the world wants. Because of this, it is profoundly unworthy to be hated, because of the individual not being desirable anymore. Competitors need to exist to be prosperous, and there is a need for people to desire objects to reach competitiveness. The judgement of this world lies in the price of objects, wherein a reasonable price has to be in place. The test of the market world is to close the deal and to finish the argumentation in ones' favour. One might think that the fall of the market world is the loss of the price or a market decline, but instead, the fall is the enslavement of money, wherein you can get obsessed with the money. (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006)

#### **f) The Industrial World**

In the industrial world, the state of worthiness is the technical efficiency, and the productivity and performance of the beings in this world are highly appreciated. It is very important for the people to understand and to operate according to the needs of society. There is a functionality in this world that does not exist in many other worlds. When producing something useful, the people are useful, thus, the state of unworthiness is when people create something improper. Control is very important, and the most worthy people are the ones who have control, such as experts, specialists and people in charge. The test in the industrial world is the trial when a new product is launched, or something is being set up, and it is uncertain whether it will function or not. The judgement lies in the function, if what is set up is functioning then it has high value.

#### **g) The Green World**

In a later book, Thévenot et al. (2000) discuss the green world, which is a world of environmentally friendliness. The worthy people are the environmentalists and human beings taking care of the environment. Justifications based on what is best for the general good of nature and the human being are seen as worthy. The test is to see whether things are sustainable, or renewable. If something is ecological, it is a proof of worthiness. Hence, it is important to ensure the future of the planet, and a healthy future for the generations to come. The world should be pristine, and as natural as possibly can be, and the wilderness should be protected to sustain as many natural habitats as possible. The unworthy beings in this world are people not being environmentally friendly.

### **3.1.2 Origin of the theory**

The common worlds derive from the thought that people do not find value in intrinsic properties, but instead external objects, serving as instruments for determining the worth. A lack of understanding can explain many conflicts. In a city brand context, this means that the citizens might not see the same values in the communication, as the city wants to convey. That is why it is crucial to show clarity and to explain each step in the city brand communication, as well as to create internal buy-in, where stakeholders buy the message. According to Boltanski & Thévenot (2006), these disagreements could be explained with the worlds of justification, and how people - consciously or unconsciously - refer to different principles. They further discuss that it is easier to reach agreements when the same logics are used in an argument (2006), which can be difficult when multiple stakeholders and multiple worlds are acting in the same arena. As for city brand communication - when interacting with stakeholders, society and internally - several logics apply, and reaching an agreement of an identity could be troublesome. In city brand communication, one of its main objectives is to create value and to position itself in a strong competitive world. Another aspect of city branding is to be notable and to appeal to the public opinion. Howsoever, the importance of city brand communication does not lie in which world the branding communication is appealing to, but how it is compromising the messages and identity to reach settlements with the target audience and their justification logics. Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) further discuss critique given from one world to another, in an attempt to understand how justification logics work in society. For instance, the civic world will criticise the market world for being too subjective towards money, because it does not create any value; instead, authorisation and the pre-eminence of collectives will create value.

Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) argue that organisations are the perfect setting in which to apply their framework. It is highly inspirational for scholars in various traditions. Researching about agreement building in environments where different logics operate is an interesting approach, especially in a phenomenon where the majority of the research is focusing on the construction of value while excluding the destructive part. In their search for the common model, the authors found that concepts of worth are notably pertinent in disputes. Their theory of justice “that would take into account the diversity of ways to specify the common good” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 14), have been useful in many traditions. Understanding how to comprehend, and how to manage people with different value sources are highly relevant in a city brand communication context.

As individuals, we always try to justify our behaviour to be respected by others. However, it is not an easy task when there is a plurality of justification logics, and each person is different. The logics share common underlying mechanisms (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). However, people have different conceptions of the common good attached to those justification logics. Therefore, it will always be challenging to settle an agreement in a world with various stakeholders, as for city brand communication. Creating value for every stakeholder will be nearly impossible, and that is why for instance individuals, organisations and governments can never reach full agreement. To create value for the most important group of a brand (important as in generating the most profit), there has to be a selection, which will suppress other alternatives. Thus, instead of creating value, value is destroyed for the suppressed opinions or groups.

### 3.2 Discursive closure

Building upon Boltanski & Thévenot's (2006) theory of justification, organisations sometimes struggle to build agreement with their stakeholders. Having the intricate stakeholder management city brand communication has to deal with in mind, there is no doubt that organisations are working with most of the worlds of justification when trying to convey their message to the broader mass. Bertilsson & Rennstam (2018) argue that when looking at branding as a discursive closure, the brand is showing only fragments of all of its operations. In this way, the brand communication suppresses the other fragments, and this is particularly interesting in city branding because its complex nature makes it inevitable to neglect city branding as a discursive closure. Branding is a way to complexify, hide and manipulate the operations made. In other words, branding is distorted communication, and discursive closure is a way of creating this distorted communication. Deetz (1992, p. 187) states, "Discursive closure exists whenever potential conflict is suppressed," and when there is no agreement of the justifications of the message from the city brand communication; there will be friction. Deetz – who is specialized in organizational communication and in conflict studies - further argues (1992) that there are several different ways in how one can suppress an opinion. One of the most common forms of discursive closure is disqualification, where some of the groups in society are excluded. "When discussion is thwarted, a particular view of reality is maintained at the expense of equally plausible ones, usually to someone's advantage" (Deetz, 1992, p. 188). All communication is distorted (1992, p. 173), "communication is distorted

whenever genuine conversation is precluded or, more specifically, any of the conditions of the ideal speech situation are not upheld." Every conversation existing excludes other conversations, which means that discursive closure exists in all conversations we have. However, there are several ways to preclude opinions and groups, and these ways have different consequences. Branding is a practice of discursive closure (Bertilsson & Rennstam, 2018) because they strive to neglect and to suppress views and voices harming the brand, which they, in the first hand - directly or indirectly - have disqualified through their mechanisms of power. Discursive closure happens in city brand communication when the practice of constructing value contributes to suppression of one or several worlds of justification; thus, value destruction appears. A conflict or a group can be suppressed in several ways, and Deetz (1992) identifies eight different micro-practices in which to suppress a group, an individual or an opinion (Figure 2). By consciously or unconsciously working with these micro-practices, there will be a lack of insight from several points of view. Furthermore, Deetz (1992) argues that they are somewhat small practices, and no significant value claims. Everyone is doing it, and in some ways, they exist to maintain a natural and normalised conflict-free experience. However, drawing on the idea of the worlds of justification (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Thévenot et al. 2000), when suppressing opinions or groups to maintain a status of society, there must be a practice of value destruction, how small it may be. There can never be an even balance in the societal opinion building. The micro-practices of discursive closure is to be seen as a way of destroying value among the worlds of justification, creating a method in how to analyse how a city brand suppress groups or opinions, which in turn leads to value destruction.

Figure 2. *Deetz's micro-practices of discursive closure*

<i>Disqualification</i>	<i>Naturalization</i>	<i>Neutralization</i>	<i>Topical Avoidance</i>	<i>Subjectification of Experience</i>	<i>Plausible Deniability</i>	<i>Legitimation</i>	<i>Pacification</i>
Groups are excluded	Socio-historical processes are removed	Objects or thoughts having value are treated as value-free	Something is prohibited from addressing.	Meaning is in people, which assure closure of experience	A message is present and disclaimed	Rationalization of decisions through the invocation of higher order explanatory devices	Discussion is made trivial

This study strives to understand the discursive closure from a destructive side, building on Bertilsson & Rennstam's (2018) approach. Instead of solely looking at the value creation,

there has to be a process of minimising harm as well. Looking at how messages destroy values is a different approach, worthy of analysing. "Thus, brands promise quality rather than encourage people to scrutinise products and services, and simplify choice rather than asking people to critically interrogate possible alternatives" (Bertilsson & Rennstam, 2018, p. 9). The argument here is that transparency is needed, there can never be an unhesitating agreement since individuals are different, and there will always be discursive closure in a city branding process. However, "the primary effect of these moves is to suppress insight to the conflictual nature of experience and preclude careful discussion of and decision making regarding the values implicit in experience, identity and representation" (Deetz, 1992, p. 188-189).

# 4 Methodology

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With the literature review and the theoretical framework in mind, we now move on to the methodology. Merriam (2009, p. 237) argues that:

*For most practitioners, doing research means designing a study that addresses some problem arising from practice, collecting and analysing data relevant to the problem, and finally, interpreting the results.*

Drawing on the abovementioned quote, this chapter shows how the research was conducted regarding the perspective, research strategy, selection of cases, collection of the data, as well as analysing the data. Furthermore, the chapter contains contemplation of the choices made and what consequences they entailed.

## 4.1 Perspective

This study is conducted from a social constructionist perspective, looking at how the city brand practitioners are constructing value through their actions, as well as at the same time destroying value. Value is not limited to be measured in money, or prizes, but instead, value is socially and politically constructed (Bertilsson & Rennstam, 2018). Constructionism's roots come from idealists such as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Their idea was that humans construct the world individually, even though it may seem like there is an objective world, and the everyday life of a person has a significant impact on how we see the world (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Since this research aims to examine brand value construction and destruction elements in post-industrial cities' brand communication, we must understand what makes up the image of the city brand. Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) argue that meaning lies in each person, and we make meaning individually. Furthermore, we make meaning from external objects, because people are socially constructing the world through language and communication to find meaning.

## 4.2 Research strategy

A qualitative study was conducted because the study seeks to understand how people, and in this case city strategists, construct value, as well as suppress opinions and groups. It seeks to

understand meanings and contexts of city brand communication. The theoretical framework derives from how people make meaning of the world, and which discursive aspects are suppressed or highlighted, which makes it necessary to conduct this study using qualitative methods. Merriam (2009) argues that qualitative research is interested in finding the meaning of specific actions, or understanding how the people in it construct a specific phenomenon. Furthermore, qualitative research is interested in finding meaning and understanding in how people interpret and construct the world, and how people make meaning and sense out of our experiences (2009). To comprehend how people make sense of the world - and how we interpret meaning in our lives - are important aspects of qualitative research, and this study seeks a deeper understanding in how city brand communication functions, from a value construction and value destruction point of view. Spiggle (1994) argues that qualitative research is to interpret and to seek patterns in different meanings. It is important to grasp what others have to say, or what they write, to understand how meaning is created. Furthermore, it is essential to be aware that qualitative research is interpretative.

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research explores and describes a phenomenon, it contextualises and tries to understand peoples' choices, and this study is of exploratory nature, trying to understand the phenomenon of the mutual relationship between value construction and value destruction in city brand communication. Merriam (2009, p. 16) argues that: "the framework [qualitative research] is informed by what we inductively learn in the field," and that the theoretical framework allows us to focus and interpret the data, which is what the theoretical framework of this study serves the purpose of. The data has functioned as a way to build themes and categorisations, to grasp the results. The theoretical framework of a qualitative study is to frame what we are looking for. In this study, the theoretical framework allows seeing city brand communication in a new way, deriving from the Bertilsson & Rennstam's (2018) idea of the destructive side of branding, but where they focus on organisational branding, this study focuses on city brand communication.

### 4.3 Selection of cases

Doing a case study is to investigate a phenomenon in real life, in its natural habitat. By creating a bounded system, in which the phenomenon is to be studied, it is easier to pinpoint the phenomenon occurring (Merriam, 2009). However, by choosing to study a phenomenon in

a bounded system, it is hard to understand the phenomenon outside of the system and to generalise. Heide & Simonsson (2014) argues that case studies are a research strategy where as detailed knowledge as possible can be obtained. The benefits of this method are to understand how a specific phenomenon is occurring in a specific context (Merriam, 2009). This study is a multiple case study, where each case was first treated by its own, and later on, treated in a cross-case analysis. Merriam (2009) argues that in a multiple case study, the data should be gathered so that the context, in which the data is set, can be understood as much as possible. The multiple case study helped to construct a comprehension of how value construction and value destruction could be seen through the means of city brand communication in post-industrial cities.

Studying the place brand communication in a city is about studying the strategies whereby the city is constructing an identity and an image (Coca-Stefaniak, 2014). In looking at how post-industrial cities are working with value construction and value destruction, this study chose three cities as case studies - Uddevalla, Vänersborg and Trollhättan, three middle-sized cities in Sweden. The cities were selected because of their similar history, size, population, as well as their cooperation, and they are all part of a business-region called Trestad. The cities are post-industrial societies, sharing traits with post-industrial cities such as Detroit, Bilbao or Sheffield, and having major industries were once a part of their identities (Trollhättan, personal communication, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018; Uddevalla, personal communication, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018). Especially Uddevalla and Trollhättan have had big societal transformations, which changed the economy, the business landscape and the citizens. Uddevalla and Trollhättan were previously seen as crisis cities, with bankruptcy and failing industries. However, both cities have come far in their city brand communication process, and both cities are today prosperous (Trollhättan, n.d.a; Uddevalla Kommun, n.d.). Vänersborg and Trollhättan have a close relationship, and they both share the same tourist company, promoting the cities as one destination (Vänersborg, personal communication, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018), which makes it inevitable to exclude Vänersborg in this study as well. Important to note is that Vänersborg has started with its branding platform recently, but are not finished, and will not make it official until autumn 2018 (Vänersborg, personal communication, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018). Some of the city brand strategists in Vänersborg did not want to participate in the study since they did not want to discuss what has not been official yet. However, since city branding is about value, awareness and identity, the city is as relevant as the other two cities. The

communication of the city to its stakeholders is a form of city brand communication. It has guidelines and the tourist information - which is communicating the image of the city - also has guidelines, and they work closely together. According to one of the interviewees, Vänersborg is trying to convey a sense of culture, nature and environment, these are also part of the new brand, but will not solely consist of it (Vänersborg, personal communication, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

The cooperation between Trollhättan and Vänersborg has been a necessity to grow (TTELA, 2007). The reason behind this cooperation was that the industries in the region were a threat to the environment, leading the municipalities to cooperate to find a solution. Additionally, they were chosen because there is a lack of research in place brand communication in Swedish cities, and in smaller post-industrial cities in general (among others: Che, 2008; Hassen & Giovanardi, 2017), adding new knowledge to an already existing body of knowledge makes the field broader, thus creating a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

The business-region of Trestad, as mentioned earlier, shares many similarities, but the cities are also different because Uddevalla does not belong to the same province as Trollhättan and Vänersborg. Therefore, Trestad is particularly interesting; furthermore, it is fascinating to study these cities because they are all in different stages of their brand work, which has been leading to interesting results. Similar studies could be made on other cities in Sweden as well since the country has many post-industrial cities transforming into a new societal landscape, but probably with a different outcome. Since the cities in this study are dependent on each other, but at the same time, Uddevalla is dependent on cities that are out of reach for Trollhättan and Vänersborg - and vice versa - it is especially interesting to see where the cities create meaning.

#### 4.4 Methods for data collection

The phenomenon of city brand communication in post-industrial cities is approached from a Swedish smaller cities perspective. There has been little research on value destruction in city branding, and how that is expressed in the brand communication when forming an identity and image. Therefore, a broader perspective has been used to grasp the complex nature of a

city brand. When studying value construction, it is important to understand how the strategists are working on creating value through their messages. Hence, interviews were conducted. As a complement, to fully grasp the city brand communication, the cities' respective website, Facebook page and tourist information website were used. Furthermore, the brand platform of each municipality, policy documents and brochures containing the city brand communication were analysed.

#### **4.4.1 Qualitative interviews**

Merriam (2009) argues that an interview is a conversation with a purpose, where the interviewer wants to obtain specific information, thus trying to understand what is going on in the head of the interviewee. Interviews are also conducted to find out about something that has already happened, by doing interviews the researcher can gather data about other persons' perspective. The same author (2009) further argues that interviews are the best method in case studies, finding information beneath what is expressed. This study is using semi-structured interviews with an interview guide with both open and structured questions (Appendix 1). The first interview question was of explanatory nature; the interviewees were asked to describe their specific work with the city brand. The interview was later formed in regards to what the answers to the first question were. The interviews lasted from 40-60 minutes, and they were recorded, and in a later stage, transcribed. Seven interviews were conducted with city brand strategists from the municipality office and tourist office in Uddevalla, Vänersborg and Trollhättan. The interviewees chose the interview place - meaning that they choose what suited them best - to be as comfortable as possible, thus, talking freely about their work, to find the most appropriate data as possible. According to Brinkmann & Kvale (2009), when conducting interviews with the purpose of finding categories, it is recommended to engage in a conversation, more than asking specific questions made up beforehand. The interviews conducted in this study were different from interview to interview, depending on what the answer to the first question was, thus, creating a conversation to see through which worlds of justification the interviewee found inspiration from. The language spoken was Swedish, which was the native language of all involved, leading to a comfortable discussion without any linguistic boundaries.

The interviewees were selected through email, using a snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a method where there are a few originally contacted interviewees, which in turn recommend other interviewees, to find relevant people contributing to the study (Griffith, Morris &

Thakar, 2016). Furthermore, this is the most common research sampling method in qualitative research, finding hidden populations, and finding people knowledgeable about a particular phenomenon (2016). The interviewees were working in the public city office, or tourist information in one of the cities. The purpose of the interviews was to get a picture of the communication regarding both the identity and the image of the city.

Brinkmann & Kvale (2009) argues that 10 to 15 interviews are a somewhat adequate number of interviews in a qualitative study. This study has conducted seven interviews since the purpose of the interviews was to interpret the works of the city strategists, and understand how these strategists understand the city brand communication, and what goals it has. Since Uddevalla, Vänersborg and Trollhättan are small cities, there are not too many working with the city brand communication; thus, a smaller amount of interviews can be conducted, since there are no more relevant people to interview about the subject matter. Additionally, documents were used to create a broader understanding of what occurred in the brand communication. Being able to generalise and make in-depth analyses of the interviews is essential according to Brinkmann & Kvale (2009) and should be strived upon. However, the results of this study cannot be generalised since the people involved have socially constructed it, what can be generalised is instead the framework of which the interviews were analysed with.

Alvesson (2011) argues that it is many times challenging, as an interviewer, to keep full control of the interview, the interviewee has an important role to fulfil, because both the interviewer and the interviewee have motives and wishes during the interview. For the researcher to obtain the information needed to answer the research question, it is important to ask questions that both covers the subject of study, and at the same time harmonise with the interviewee's experiences. In this study, open questions were asked, making the interviewee deciding in which direction the conversation should go. Although, when it was necessary, the interviewee was interrupted and the conversation was steered by the interviewer so that the conversation could lead to answers relevant to the aim of the interview.

According to Merriam (2009), analysing the data early on, while collecting the data is essential to truly find the essence of the study. In an interview study, analysing the first interview to make the second interview better makes the study more accurate, since the researcher understand what went wrong, and what can be even better. "Without ongoing

analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed" (Merriam, 2009, p. 171).

Some overall questions had to be answered in the interviews, and if not in the open discussion, they were asked specifically about the questions. The overall questions were as follows:

*What is the interviewee's overall work with the city brand communication?*

*Who are their stakeholders? What strategies are used to work with them?*

*What type of city do they have (industrial, entrepreneurial et cetera) and how do they convey that to their target groups?*

To understand the value construction and value destruction of the city brand communication, it was necessary to understand how they perceived their own work with the city, as well as what kind of visions and goals they had. The interviewees working at the tourist information were mainly asked questions related to the image of the city, while the interviewees working at the public city office were mainly asked questions related to the identity of the city. The result did not consider separating the image communication with the identity communication since they used the same brand platform for communicating the message.

#### **4.4.2 Document study**

Documents that have been studied are texts showing the ideal image of the city, as well as the identity the city wants to convey to their target groups. The documents show the cities' image, identity, values, slogan, their future visions and development, as well as practices the cities have been made to strengthen the brand - both internally and externally. The documents analysed were the cities' respective website, Facebook page, tourist information website, the brand platform of each city, policy documents and brochures containing the city brand communication. The brochures and policy documents were collected in relation to the interviews, where the interviewees provided them to the interviewer. Moreover, relevant websites communicating the city brand were investigated. All the documents were open to the public, and have been published before, either as promotion material, graphics profiles or information brochures given at fairs.

The various natures of the texts and images in the document study were a way of making the empirical material nuanced. The tourism brochures were from 2017, and the material from Facebook was updates, pictures, information about the cities and the purpose of the Facebook page; everything ranging from 2017 up until April of 2018. The brochures used had no date published but was created in relation to the brand platform's establishments.

The material in the study was chosen to grasp how the cities present themselves through their communication. In total, the study consisted of 12 documents of approximately 300 pages, as well as Facebook timelines from 2017 and 2018. The empirical material included in the study were three different brand platforms: Trollhättan, Uddevalla, as well as Bohuslän, to understand the collaboration between Uddevalla's brand platform and Bohuslän's, which is the region Uddevalla belongs to. Furthermore, six tourist and visitor guides were selected, three from Uddevalla, and three from Trollhättan and Vänersborg, since they have a mutual tourist organisation. Moreover, three information brochures from Trollhättan were studied, where plans and existing assets were presented. Additionally, three web pages on Vänersborg's website was studied, as well as two web pages on each website of Trollhättan and Uddevalla. Ten different web pages from the mutual tourism webpage of Västsverige were also included in the study, looking at the communication from a tourism perspective. Lastly, six Facebook pages were studied, and on these pages, the about-page and the timeline were looked upon. Facebook was chosen because it is the most prominent social media platform for all of the cities' purposes.

#### 4.5 Analysing the data

To understand, and to analyse the data used in the study, it was necessary to move between the empirical material and the theoretical framework, which in general is important in qualitative studies (Spiggle, 1994). Spiggle argues for seven analytical operations, *categorisation, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalisation, integration, iteration and refutation*, to analyse the data, which has been a valuable tool in conducting this study. Furthermore, to interpret the data it is important to grasp the meaning of what other people have been said and to seek patterns in these meanings. When interpreting data, you are translating the text into abstract conceptualisations. Therefore, it is essential to understand that interpretation of a text is a subjective operation, and according to Spiggle (1994, p. 500),

"interpretative insights often spring from serendipity", and creativity is an important asset in interpreting empirical material in qualitative studies.

As to understand what Spiggle's (1994) seven analytical operations consist of, a table has been made. The "categorization, abstraction, comparison and integration are the fundamental, basic analytical operations" (p. 495), while the dimensionalisation helps with comparing and abstracting the categories. Furthermore, the iteration and refutation are ways of showing that the analysis of the data is trustworthy, and can be verified.

Figure 3. *Spiggle's (1994, p. 492-496) analytical operations*

<i>Categorisation</i>	<i>Abstraction</i>	<i>Comparison</i>	<i>Dimensionalisation</i>	<i>Integration</i>	<i>Iteration</i>	<i>Refutation</i>
Coding the material	Elevate the categories into higher-order conceptual constructs	Explore differences and similarities of the data	Explore empirical variations	Trying to integrate a theory within the data	Moving back and forth between the analysis and the data	Trying to subject one's emerging inferences to empirical scrutiny deliberately

In this study, the categorisation was already deriving from the theoretical framework, using the worlds of justification, as well as the micro-practices of discursive closure. The categorisation led to the abstraction stage, which was made by creating different themes, deriving from the theoretical framework. In this stage, the themes of value creation and destruction were identified. Furthermore, a comparison between the cities was conducted, as well as within each city, to comprehend both the similarities and differences between the cities and within them too. Empirical variations were found, and the value construction was dimensionalised in relation to the value destruction, and here many interesting results were found. Henceforth, in the integration stage, seeing and understanding different patterns, and how patterns are usually followed by other patterns have been essential to creating inference.

Moreover, moving back and forth through the data and the theories were an important stage in understanding and interpreting the results correctly.

There are of course limitations with analysing and interpreting text subjectively; one of them is that it is possible to overemphasise the theory, which can exclude contextual aspects of the phenomenon under scrutiny. It is also important to be aware of the coding; while coding too broad could include several phenomena, and coding too narrow makes it a risk of fragmenting the material. Since qualitative research is about interpreting results, it is important to understand the subjectivity when conducting a qualitative study. To grasp the meaning of what has been said, and written in the city brand communication, it is essential to stay close to the material and to understand the context in which it was created (Spiggle, 1994). It is also important to mention that the interpretations made might not align with the city strategists. However, using already established categories make the analysis trustworthy, and it makes it easier to understand the material more correctly.

By conducting interviews, the study gathered opinions and statements coming from the brand strategists, tourist information managers or other people working with the brand strategy of the cities, and it was possible to ask follow-up questions to get a more in-depth understanding of the brands. The interviews were used to capture the cities' intention to create brand value through their brand communication. The seven interviews were transcribed, and each transcription was read several times to get a grasp of the interviews from a holistic point of view, as well as more in-depth. In the interview texts, patterns of meaning were found by using the seven analytical operations, both within the interviews, as well as throughout all the interviews. The analysis of the transcriptions sprung from the theoretical framework. By identifying the justification logics, and the worlds of justification, the overall strategy was identified, by abstraction. The justification logics from Boltanski & Thévenot (2006), as well as Thévenot et al. (2000), helped understand where the brand communication found its meaning to create value. Deetz's (1992) discursive closure was also used when analysing the interviews, and they served as a way of finding the value destruction of the city brand communication.

By looking at the language of the interviews from Deetz's (1992) micro-practices of discursive closure, opinions and groups suppressed were identified, and because city brand

communication is distorted, discursive closure existed. Furthermore, when identifying the micro-practices of discursive closure, it was possible to detect what values had been destroyed in the city brand communication. Looking at the interview transcripts was essential to analyse the underlying meanings of the thoughts behind the brand strategies, as this could not be found in the document study. By looking at the justification logics in the city brand communication, I was then able to interpret how these logics were used to create value for their target groups could be interpreted. The analysis covered both the understanding of text and context in which the message of the text was produced.

The analysis of the documents was similar to the one of the interviews. Looking into the documents, different categories were aimed to be found in connection with the theoretical framework. Furthermore, ways to create value, and contradicting information to understand the destructive side of value were also aimed to be found. Lastly, and generally, how the documents were designed and what kind of language they used to pursue their image and identity to target groups was identified. To find the value construction, the worlds of justification was investigated, in order to understand which justification logics existed in the communication. Furthermore, to understand the value destruction, the discursive closure was identified using the eight micro-practices. However, instead of only looking at the written language of the documents, the images were analysed as well. The various texts in the document study were necessary to analyse to find the patterns in the meanings of the language and the images.

The document study was also analysed by using the seven analytical operations from Spiggle (1994). The documents helped to create a nuanced empirical material, and this helped in analysing the overall messages of the cities and interpreting the results creating inference and conclusions. Because of the different nature of the documents, ranging from policy documents, tourism brochures, web pages and social media, it was important to first and foremost understand each text individually, and find patterns within the texts, to grasp the meaning of them.

#### 4.6 Quality criteria

According to Merriam (2009), in a qualitative study, it is important for the researcher to provide enough detailed description of the study so that it is shown that sufficient and

trustworthy conclusions have been reached. Due to the qualitative research describing how people act, and how they make meaning of the world, it is important to be objective and give an authentic analysis. Furthermore, since the qualitative research is based on assumptions of reality and worldviews, it should be named differently than validity and reliability (2009).

The traditional quantitative-oriented criteria for trustworthiness of a study often mentions external validity, internal validity, reliability and objectivity, while Lincoln & Guba (1994) proposed a new way of looking at the quality criteria for qualitative research, especially in constructionist research. Furthermore, when judging the trustworthiness of constructionist research, four criteria are acting as guidelines: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1994, p. 114). Additionally, it is essential to ensure that the study is authentic. Moreover, results deriving from qualitative research are all social constructs, and cannot be a proof in a conventional sense. Since humans make qualitative studies, there will always be human errors, and when doing qualitative research, the persuasiveness of the results are more important than proof, since human constructions are different from person to person - because the reality is socially apprehensible (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Trustworthiness, and being able to believe in the results of a study is essential, and by reflecting upon choices and communicate how the inference has been made in the study is important as well (Spiggle, 1994); thus it is important with transparency.

Lastly, it is critical to address that the empirical material of the study was in Swedish, which can have implications on the translation of meaning. As Spiggle (1994) discussed, interpretation is translating a text, not necessarily into a different language. However, when translating text into another language, it might not be entirely accurate. Nevertheless, since I am fluent, and understand the Swedish culture entirely, as well as being fluent in English, this will have minimum effects on the overall results.

#### 4.7 Ethical reflections

When conducting interviews it is not only important to maintain the moral and ethical concerns during the interview, but before and after it as well (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). To make the interviewees feel comfortable, meaning they are as relaxed and natural as possible in their answers, they need to know much about the study beforehand. Telling them what the

interview will be sought to investigate is essential, and this can also decrease the stress, and the effect the questions will have on the interview (2009). The interviewees did participate voluntarily, and the interviews were made in consent.

According to Brinkmann & Kvale (2009), confidentiality is important in interviews for the interviewees to not feel omitted. By reporting private matters in a public arena, there is a need to understand the effect it has. Because of this, and that some of the interviewees wished to be anonymous - to avoid any harm or risks for the interviewees – all of the answers are anonymous. The study aims to examine the mutual relationship between brand value construction and brand value destruction in post-industrial cities' brand communication, which does not require any names to be revealed.

According to Brinkmann & Kvale (2009), the oral statements from the interview may not be completely loyal when transcribed. Being aware of that, the analysis attempted to be as close to reality as possible. The oral statements from the interview were analysed by the author, without the help of the interviewees. However, a consequence of this can be that the author misinterprets the answers given by the interviewee. Furthermore, as long as the risks to the participants or the study do not exceed the benefits, it will be no complications. The interviews were conducted with an open mind to be as truthful as possible in the interpretations, and the interviewees should not feel criticised at any rate.

Other limitations can be that misleading information is published, causing harm to the involved in the study. In this study, the author was fully aware of the consequences. Thus, working with public documents, accessible for all, there will be no revelations harming the cities or persons involved. The interpretation of the information was careful and open-minded, meaning that no precipitous conclusions were drawn. The interpretation of the data derived from Spiggle's (1994) suggestion of looking at literary tropes, such as metaphors metonyms and so on, and these tropes helped to interpret the data and find patterns relevant for to the study. Being open-minded is also a way of understanding that it is important to keep an open mind on finding new documents, which could lead to serendipity (Merriam, 2009).

# 5 Value construction and value destruction in city brand communication

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In the analysis, the empirical material is examined through the lens of the theoretical framework. The first part of the analysis will discuss elements of the intended value construction of city brand communication in Trollhättan, Vänersborg and Uddevalla, by investigating the justification logics in the communication. The second part will identify value destruction in city brand communication by bringing forward prominent micro-practices of discursive closure (Deetz, 1992).

## 5.1 Value creation in city brand communication

Since a city brand needs to appeal to numerous stakeholders, the communication addresses several justification logics. However, when combining too many justification logics in one message, communication can become sprawling. In what follows, I discuss the justification logics in the cities' brand communication and the value created by each one of them. Figure 4 shows which themes are present in each city's brand communication; the themes are then further discussed and explained more in-depth.

Figure 4. *Each world of justification's prominent theme*

<i>Inspired</i>	<i>Domestic</i>	<i>Fame</i>	<i>Civic</i>	<i>Market</i>	<i>Industrial</i>	<i>Green</i>
Creative	Heritage	Creative	Community	Entrepreneurial	Entrepreneurial	Serenity
	Prosperity	Prosperity		Prosperity	Community	Prosperity
	Entrepreneurial				Prosperity	

### 5.1.1 The Inspired World

In the inspired world, the emotional involvement and expressions are significant assets, and people should be *creative*. According to Florida (2002), the creative cities are attracting younger people, and a creative class creates a flourishing, new economy. City brand

communication is hard to measure; it works as a way of trying to convey emotions and associations. It is hard to understand if the brand communication is helping achieving the goals, or if it is something else (Trollhättan, personal communication, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018). Creativity is unstable, and it is hard to predict the outcome of the communication before it has been communicated. Being creative is a trendy way of giving cities an attractive aura (Florida, 2002; Meyer, 2000; Baker, 2012; Govers & Go, 2009). This is also shown in the cities of this study. Being creative is usually about being unique, and one of a kind. When launching a new aspect of something - being first is essential - and creativity is necessary to be first on something. "(...) we work strategically, because that is important. We are trying to push that we always should be first to execute a new thing" (Uddevalla, personal communication, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018). Florida (2002) argues that cities need creative people, and they should strive for a creative economy, leaving the industrial economy behind. The force behind this shift is because we as humans value creativity and diversity more than ever in this information world. Creativity is "the decisive source of competitive advantage" (Florida, 2002, p. 5). Trollhättan seems to have adopted this idea when creating the core values of their brand communication. The entrepreneurial city is an extension of what used to be called the creative city. "We had a strategy [in 2004] which we now have modified, and that was built on creativity. Now we have developed this, and we have made it more specific, and the watchword is entrepreneurialism" (Trollhättan, personal communication, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018).

According to their website (Vänersborg, 2018), Vänersborg has a vision of being the best music city in Sweden, and they do not fear to do bold things to achieve this.

*If we can set the bar so high that we want to be the best music city in Sweden, then there has to be a touch of insanity and a great amount of creativity in the politicians, employees and the citizens (Vänersborg, 2018).*

This is a typical justification from the inspired world, setting the bar high, being creative and working with something that cannot be measured very easily. Nature, culture and environment, are things Vänersborg focuses explicitly on, even though there is no brand

platform or guidelines for how to work with it, and much of their cultural part of their communication derives from the inspired world.

By communicating using justifications of the inspired world, the cities want to be perceived as creative. This is because there is a trend of being a creative city, with for instance innovation technology, or entrepreneurialism as core values (Florida, 2002; Meyer, 2000; Baker, 2012; Govers & Go, 2009).

### **5.1.2 The Domestic World**

The justifications of the domestic world are about protecting the *heritage* and create a sense of identity from the past. In interviews with city strategists in Trollhättan, as well as in policy documents and on their webpage, their heritage is well-preserved and the tradition of being powerful, *entrepreneurial* and energetic lives on (e.g. Trollhättans stad, 2016; Trollhättan, personal communication, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018; Trollhättan, personal communication, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018; Trollhättan n.d.a).

*We are building a passage, and it will be named Gunnar V Andersson, the person who sold the first 500 engines to Russia, where they paid with gold bars. To get these stories gathered, so the people of Trollhättan can get a sense of the person behind the story is important. It is important to tie the history to present time.* (Trollhättan, personal communication, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018)

Through narratives and events using examples from the past, entrepreneurs are celebrated, and little is said about the people not being entrepreneurial. Justifications from the domestic world are creating a hierarchy with the entrepreneurial people being at the top of the hierarchy. By doing this, they communicate that the city is *prosperous*, and they have people achieving great things.

The city brand communication of Uddevalla is about positioning themselves as the capital of Bohuslän. The brand promise of the city is ‘Uddevalla – The Heart of Bohuslän’, which is closely linked to this core value. Uddevalla is the capital because for many reasons, which among others are: culture, sport, entrepreneurship, education, shopping and service, as well as

being the biggest city of the region and it is situated in the middle of the region (Uddevalla kommun, n.d.). By establishing themselves as the capital of the region, a hierarchy is formed, especially when the brand trust consists of the word 'heart'. For long, this city has been the economic hub of the region, and these historical aspects play a significant role in how the city wants to be perceived today. This justification serves as a way of setting order, and to create a relationship with superiors and inferiors. Uddevalla is the biggest city; it needs to be the most attractive one as well. By looking at the history, the city has been thriving throughout many centuries, and is nowadays working with the *heritage* to achieve their goals of the future.

### **5.1.3 The World of Fame**

In the world of fame, it is essential to be renowned, and visible. It is important to communicate a sense of *prosperity* of the city, for the brand to be attractive. It serves as a form of self-fulfilling prophecy. The city brand communication shows only fragments of the whole brand, the best parts, which makes cities look more prosperous than reality says. The purpose of branding a city, and trying to convey a convincing identity and image, is to be visible, and by communicating prosperity, one becomes noticed. This is shown throughout all the empirical material, regardless of cities. The overall purpose of the city brand communication may serve as something to help achieve higher goals, such as reaching 70 000 inhabitants before the year of 2030 (Trollhättan, n.d.a), or to position the city on the map and try to achieve an inclusiveness among the citizens (Uddevalla Kommun, n.d.). However, the work of a city brand is to be visible and to tell others what to feel about the brand. These justifications are helping the cities to get high public exposure and to be visible and renown. As mentioned in the brand platform of Uddevalla (n.d., p. 3), "The more well known and popular a brand is, and the more knowledge there is about different target groups, the easier it is to attract more establishment, visitors and new citizens". A brand is what is being associated with the city, and everything that constitutes the city, which leads us to the fact that the brand can only live through the opinions of others. In the trend of being *creative*, cities are trying to become successful and renowned through creativity, which works in other success stories.

Furthermore, Vänersborg is also communicating a sense of wanting to be prosperous, and leading in some fields, also attempting a form of self-fulfilling prophecy. The city tries to be

the best music city in Sweden on a cultural level, and their vision is to be sustainable in all parts of society (Vänersborg, 2018b). On their Facebook page, they state: "We aim to be the best music city in Sweden, and that is noticeable, and it is heard" (Vänersborgs Kommun, 2018). According to one of the interviewees, they work hard with the city centre as well, trying to create a cosy atmosphere - having big ambitions – in an attempt to build the best city centre in Sweden (Vänersborg, personal communication, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

#### **5.1.4 The Civic World**

Justifications of the civic world want to convey a sense of *community*, by referring the collective good. Collaboration is something all cities proudly talk about, both internally and externally. When it comes to the image of the cities, and to attract tourists, the interviewees mentioned that they collaborate with an organisation called Turistrådet Västsverige (West Sweden Tourism Board), as well as Fyrbodals kommunalförbund (Local Government Federation). By creating a federation, and cooperate with other cities in the area, they refer to the justifications of the civic world, where the general will is the most important, and everybody is happy if the whole region is flourishing.

One of the city strategists of Trollhättan talked about external collaboration as something important, even though it is not the most important - internal collaboration is vital to reach your goals - external collaboration serves as a tool to help the region get prosperous, which in turn helps the cities individually.

*We cooperate on many different levels (...), and it is good for Trollhättan if IKEA is established in Uddevalla, (...), it is better for Trollhättan if it is established in Trollhättan, but if not, then it is better with a city close by than a city far away, so in that case we are collaborating (Trollhättan, personal communication, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018).*

However, in the end, it all comes down to the cities reputation as its own, which is said in many of the interviews, for example: "In the long-term, we collaborate, but we, of course, believe that it is one man for himself. The citizens and the companies are paying taxes to the city" (Trollhättan, personal communication, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018). Trollhättan's core values of

engagement, energy, heart and collaboration are all about creating a great living- and working environment in the city, which refer to the collective good.

Furthermore, Uddevalla wants to remove the label of being a city in crisis, which has lived on for many decades. Industrial Uddevalla was a success, having one of the biggest boatyards in Europe and the city was prosperous until the shutdown of it (Brand platform, Uddevalla n.d). To remove the crisis label, they created the core value of *collaboration & engagement – “we”*. When it comes to the collaboration, the brand platform (Uddevalla, n.d) describes an example of the famous promenade by the sea. This promenade serves as an example of how collaborations between citizens, companies and the local government create success, which is a clear justification belonging to the civic world. They rose from the ashes because they saw that the common good was more important than the individuals' success. “The beach walk is a great example of collaboration giving great results” (Uddevalla Kommun, n.d., p.11)

The urge to create a brand which is inclusive, and where people are feeling a sense of a *community*, is one of the most critical aspects of the cities' communication, and it is a way of showing the *solidarity* of the cities.

### **5.1.5 The Market World**

Where there is competitiveness, there are justifications of being desirable, and this does apply to city brand communication. The cities need to be desirable to attract new citizens or visitors, which make this way of thinking, belong to the market world. It is important to be desirable, and the state of worthiness is being valued in the market, which consists of many cities trying to attract the same things.

Trollhättan's brand communication of being the *entrepreneurial* city, the people as being entrepreneurial and the core value of innovation and energy also belong to the market world where competition is desired, and what is valued are the winners of the rivalry. There is a desire, and one succeeds by reaching for the desire, and with the core values, the desire is to be the entrepreneurial city. Trollhättan believes that few cities of the same size have the same energy and everything is possible.

Furthermore, one of Uddevalla's core values (Uddevalla Kommun, n.d., p. 10) is collaboration & engagement, in which they say that the people are "proud, welcoming, entrepreneurial, creative, new-thinkers, courageous." These are justifications similar to Trollhättan's about being desirable. When creating core values about the citizens being collaborative, entrepreneurial and creative, cities communicate their desirability, and that is why with these justifications they want to convey a sense of being *entrepreneurial* and *prosper*.

### **5.1.6 The Industrial World**

Efficiency and productivity are highly valued in the industrial world. In Trollhättan, the brand communication focuses almost exclusively on *entrepreneurship*, and how the technical efficiency, the productivity and performance of the beings in this world are highly appreciated. Their brand promise is "Here we get things done," (Trollhättan, n.d.a, p. 15) their slogan is "the entrepreneurial city" (p. 13). The city has identified the citizens as being productive, and this is something useful since they want to communicate a sense of fighting back and to create a diversity of entrepreneurs and people making the city flourishing after all the setbacks. The explanations of the core values give examples consisting of people doing things such as innovative thinking, fighting spirit or a strong will to develop the city. "In Trollhättan, we have many go-getters who really wants to change Trollhättan. There exist people who want to change the city in the cultural-, business- and entertainment sphere" (Trollhättan, n.d.a, p. 11). Furthermore, the core value of engagement refers to the people's driving spirit. Moreover, the will is another core value, where they refer to the will of the people to develop a thriving city and a better place to live. These justifications can be drawn with the intention of being efficient, and especially productive, in order to reach the self-fulfilling prophecy of being *prosperous*.

The brand communication of Uddevalla also has aspects of entrepreneurialism, the core value *collaboration & engagement* – "we" describes the feeling of the citizens, and the entrepreneurial spirit they have. The efficiency, the will and decisiveness are essential aspects of how the city wants their citizens to be perceived. There is a pattern of cities mimicking

each other, and being entrepreneurial is according to city strategists considered as something positive.

It is also inevitable to talk about justifications from the industrial world without mentioning quality. According to one of the interviewees in Uddevalla, they communicate the word 'sea' to operate according to the needs of their citizens and target groups. "We have a maritime strategy, connected to the sea. We are trying to convey that Uddevalla is close to the sea, because as it is now, people do not see that connection, even if it is obvious" (Uddevalla, personal communication, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018).

The collaboration with the citizens, as well as potential tourists helped Uddevalla in creating one of its core values. There was a lack of understanding that Uddevalla was a coastal city, which they now address and the test of this industrial world was the launch of this particular core value, to see if it helped.

The justifications deriving from the industrial world are all helping in making the cities communicating that they are entrepreneurial, as well as having a sense of *community*, where people and corporations, as well as the local government are helping and collaborate.

### **5.1.7 The Green World**

Taking care of the environment, and decisions based on the general good of nature is what give people meaning in the green world. *Serenity* is an important, common theme occurring in these justifications and for these cities - in contradiction to the close, bigger cities such as Gothenburg and Oslo - which can offer a livelier, and thriving atmosphere.

*Let's say that we are a shopping city; we could say that we are a cosy shopping city, with a small city spirit and a history. You can go to the 100-year-old cheese store or a café, but we cannot compare to Ullared where you focus on the shopping as the main reason for going there. We cannot compete with Gothenburg at all, it is too big, and therefore we need to focus on the cosiness instead (Vänernsberg, personal communication, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).*

Vänersborg are currently updating their city brand, and during the collection of the empirical material, there was a focus on the older one, but it was stated that the new brand would lay value on the location next to Vänern, its nature and the calm small town atmosphere.

*In Vänersborg, we talk about culture, nature and environment. We are creating new core values, and they will be different, but they will still link to the location by Vänern, the beauty of nature, the closeness to the forest, as well as the calm small town idyll (Vänersborg, personal communication, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).*

Nature and culture are present in all of their channels, such as social media and their websites. In their visitors' guide (2018), they mention they work closely with nature, and experiences connected to nature. One of the cities' biggest attraction is the Eco park of Halle- & Hunneberg, which is truly a natural habitat for animals, especially the elks. The communication of the city coming from the Visitors' guides (Visit Trollhättan Vänersborg, 2018; Visit Trollhättan Vänersborg 2017), as well as their website (Västsverige, 2018), focuses on the environment, and they recommend visitors and citizens doing activities not harming the nature, such as biking, hiking and kayaking (Visit Trollhättan Vänersborg, 2018; Visit Trollhättan Vänersborg, 2017; Västsverige, 2018).

Trollhättan's communication is also showing justifications from the green world. But instead of leading it to serenity, they are showing their future thinking, again creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of being *prosperous*. "Here we have an expertise in automotive, aerospace technology, digital technology, sustainable development, film (...)" (Trollhättan, n.d.a, p. 11). By communicating an expertise in the most relevant business fields in today's society, they try to attract experts, which will perhaps make the city even more prosperous in the long term. In this case, they try to attract experts by referring to the green world of being sustainable and environmental.

In the brand communication of Uddevalla, the third core value is *the quality of life by the sea*. This core value represent many of the activities set in the nature around the city, the diversity of environments creates many ways of engaging in environmental activities, such as swimming, hiking, biking, or take a tour with the boats going around the archipelago, since

they will in the nearest future function with only electricity. "We use to say, to put it simply, that you can both live and be on vacation at the same time in Uddevalla" (Uddevalla, personal communication, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018). The quote illustrates serenity in its purest form, and by being located by the sea, and the archipelago, the citizens can relax and enjoy their life in an otherwise stressful everyday life. The quality of life also applies to the city's offerings of service, such as cafés and restaurants, as well as events and living standards. Justifications from the green world in Uddevalla's brand communication is closely connected to their activities set in the nature, such as going with the soon to be electric boats in the archipelago, as well as having restaurants focusing on local and environmentally friendly products.

Nevertheless, attracting more tourists is not environmental, because of the travelling to the city and its surroundings. However, the green justifications work when people already are in the city, which is a first step of being entirely environmentally friendly. It is a balance between attracting visitors from all over the world to a place and at the same time be environmentally friendly, but a city needs to start from the inside even here, as much as they have to start with the inside when creating the brand.

*With the growth of visitors coming, we have to think from a sustainable perspective; we need to develop this once people are in the city - because flying here is not environmental, but it is a very tough question in tourism* (Uddevalla, personal communication, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018).

As we can see here, the green world is creating tranquillity and future thinking. Being green is about making statements that you are ready for the future, it is also something necessary in today's world because the demands of being environmentally friendly are increasing, these logics instead becomes a need if the brand communication wants to stay in position, and being prosperous.

### **5.1.8 Conclusion of value construction**

Looking at the value construction of the cities, from the worlds of justification, different categories have now been identified, which is shown in figure 4. Deriving from this analysis, a scale was defined, looking at where the cities put the most effort in their value construction. The scale below shows where the cities' brand communication is from people-oriented to

place-oriented. It shows whether the intended value creation of the brand communication when forming an identity lies in the people of the cities, or the location and its surroundings.

Figure 5. *City brand scale ranging from people-oriented to place-oriented*

<b>People-oriented</b>		<b>Place-oriented</b>
<i>Trollhättan</i>	<i>Uddevalla</i>	<i>Vänersborg</i>

When establishing the cities in the abovementioned model, the essence of the city brand communication was taken into consideration, as well as the brand promise, the core value and the slogan. Being people-oriented means that the justifications are closely related to the people, and the values of the brand derive from the spirit of the people. On the contrary, being place-oriented means the brand values derive from the spirit of the place, and where it is located. This scale shows where the cities put the most value in regards to the justification logics, and how they create meaning.

## 5.2 Value destruction in city brand communication

It is important to understand that all the micro-practices exist in one way or another because it is the natural step in a process where not the whole brand can be shown. However, all of them are not visible when looking solely at the communication. Moreover, some micro-practices are more prominent than other, and in this analysis, there are four micro-practices, which will be scrutinised in-depth. In the following table, the prominent micro-practices are shown, and which values they destroy.

Figure 6. *Discursive closure and the destruction of value*

<i>Disqualification</i>	<i>Neutralization</i>	<i>Meaning Denial &amp; Plausible Deniability</i>	<i>Topical Avoidance</i>
Solidarity	Solidarity	Clarity	Authenticity
Engagement	Engagement	Shared identity	Shared identity
Authenticity	Authenticity		
Shared identity			

### 5.2.1 Disqualification

In Trollhättan, there is a disqualification of the citizens not being able to identify with the message of being entrepreneurial, or innovative. All these values derive from major setbacks, especially the bankruptcy of SAAB. The city of Trollhättan is known for being a dual and segregated city (Sahlback, 2016), and it is important to create a diverse brand, appealing to all parts of society. However, the focus of the brand is now on entrepreneurialism. The big heart and their welcoming spirit are mentioned, but not an inclusion of all parts of society. By only appealing to the creative part of the city, there can be no unifying identity. In 2017, according to Sveriges Radio, the unemployment rate in Trollhättan was 10.9 % (Sveriges Radio, 2017), which means this is an exclusion of almost 11% of the citizens when focusing on entrepreneurialism. Creating a specific message can create control, but what happens with the diversity when a produced identity is being forced upon its citizens? When doing research, laying the ground for the brand platform, one of the city strategists said: "we have had focus groups with many different entrepreneurs and companies, and so forth, we have also done research in how we are perceived today" (Trollhättan, personal communication, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018). The majority of the examples made in the interviews and their brochures (Trollhättan n.d.a; Trollhättan, n.d.b; Trollhättan, n.d.c), consists of entrepreneurial spirit, and how the companies of Trollhättan contribute. Thus, as much as they create solidarity, they also destroy solidarity by excluding groups and opinions the way they do.

The disqualification does not lie in the people not identifying with the entrepreneurial spirit; instead, the disqualification of groups in Uddevalla lies in their lack of a clear identity to the

people. As seen in figure 5, there is a significant focus on where Uddevalla is located, and less on the people it consists of. However, even though the city brand communication on their platforms are not as people-oriented as in Trollhättan, there is still a focus on what the people can offer, such as food and cultural events, as well as entrepreneurs making the city a place worth to visit or live in. According to the brand communication, value is mostly found in the entrepreneurial spirit and creative citizens (Uddevalla Kommun, n.d.). On a holistic perspective, the focus on Uddevalla's brand communication is to change the image, instead of the identity. The core value of collaboration and engagement is ambiguous, ranging from service-minded people, entrepreneurial people, to monuments, proudness, and diversity, but there is a need to clarify the identity of the citizens, instead of the image from people outside the city.

In Vänersborg, the disqualification of specific groups was explicitly mentioned in one of the interviews, when asked if there are any groups they do not target at all when it comes to the destination brand of the city. "Yes, we have very few adolescents as I mentioned earlier, that is the way it is. We do not have many clubs, and we do not have the nightlife they might demand" (Vänersborg, personal communication, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018). The disqualification is a well-defined strategy they use to focus on people visiting the city. However, the interviewee further mentioned that younger groups are coming, but instead to wander in nature. This is a way of seeing the adolescents as one entity, instead of understanding that there are several interests within one group.

### **5.2.2 Neutralization**

Neutralization exists in the brand communication of Trollhättan, where one possible value is treated as the only value possible. This micro practice is also related to the fact that the brand communication only shows fragments of the whole brand. By creating a specific message, and a particular brand promise, the city uses 'the entrepreneurial city' as the essential value. When trying to establish this socially constructed value, the city brand communication refers to it as the real value of the city. Another aspect of neutralization is that one treats something with value as value-free. Being entrepreneurial is something treated in their city brand communication as something positive; however, this is not always the case. Being entrepreneurial and energetic bear negative connotations for some. Uddevalla has the same

problem of neutralization, one of their core values is people-oriented, where engagement, entrepreneurialism and collaboration is the essence. Treating the city in one way does not make it the only way. A brand platform is only a fragment of the whole city, and this fragment is what the people creating the platform regards as the best. When describing what the value of collaboration and engagement mean, they use words such as sustainable development, will, courage and decisiveness (Uddevalla Kommun, n.d., p. 10). There are more to the citizens than being entrepreneurial and energetic. This trend of trying to establish a creative city might bear negative side effects, as well as it produces long-term suppressions of groups and opinions.

In city brand communication in general, it is important to discuss equality. One of the strategists from Uddevalla said that a city has to work with all parts it consists of. However, even though they are aware of this principle, they do not seem to understand that the fragments used in their brand communication have values as well. Many strategists have the understanding that a creative, entrepreneurial and energetic city appeals to a whole population. However, being entrepreneurial is not a neutral word, it comes with many associations, and the entire population usually do not identify with these associations. As Banet-Weiser (2012) discusses, the trendy focus on entrepreneurialism and creativity changes the focus of the brand communication from a management perspective to peoples' perspective, and people that are not seen as entrepreneurs or creative class are excluded. This contradicts their original thought of bringing the citizens and other stakeholders together to create solidarity. This does also confirm that cities do not really understand the value of minimising value destruction because many are not aware that it exists.

### **5.2.3 Meaning denial & Plausible deniability**

When creating a brand platform, it is essential to be as clear as possible for stakeholders to comprehend and accept the message; therefore, it cannot be too vague or too generic.

In Trollhättan, brand strategists regard their brand communication as communicating the best side of the city, while at the same time stating that the brand is what characterises Trollhättan. On the one hand, it is a fragment of the city; on the other hand, it is what characterise and

constitutes the whole city - which is a practice of meaning denial and plausible deniability. The following quote shows an ambiguous message.

*Several mutual factors characterise us. These factors really describe Trollhättan from its best side and the unique and positive spirit existing here. These factors are our core values, and they describe who we are, and how we do things. Simply put, the things that characterise Trollhättan (Trollhättan, n.d.a, p. 10).*

Another ambiguous message of the city brand communication of Trollhättan is how the city is trying to convey to the broader mass about being entrepreneurial, and being in the front when it comes to technology in various areas. In many ways, the city is showing its prosperity, while at the same time taking an underdog perspective, where they are rising from the ashes and trying to be perceived as a city that never gives up - no matter how many bankruptcies or other severe events are happening. Trollhättan communicate the city as being a big business hub in the region. Simultaneously, the city intends to create a sense of proximity to the real business hub, Gothenburg, which is only 35 minutes away. There is, of course, a possibility to distinguish that these are different regions, but at the same time, many of the interviewees mentioned the close connection to the biggest city of the region and that Trollhättan is even a part of the working region of Gothenburg. This is also a way of saying one thing, meaning another. Trollhättan has an evident vision of what the brand should be like. However, the way they communicate it is in some cases vague and lacks clarity. It is hard to understand whether they see their brand as a fragment, showing their best sides, or if it is the whole brand, showing the essence and characteristics.

By not having a brand platform, or being in a state in between different brand solutions, there can be no clarity. Vänersborg mentions that the city is small enough to offer the traditional cosiness of a small town, as well as it is big enough to provide most of what the bigger cities are offering (Vänersborg, 2017). This statement is somewhat ambiguous, and as much as it means something, the message is present, and later disclaimed. This is a mean of control, and by not saying too much, the statement covers many spectres of what the city can offer. The city also wants to be perceived as the best music city in Sweden, as well as being the city with the best and most beautiful city centre. Their vision is about being sustainable in all parts of

society. However, the high ambitions need to be addressed in a precise manner. Because there is no brand platform and no unified strategic message to work from, there is no real clarity in what the city wants. The goals need to be addressed in a precise manner, so the messages do not contradict. The lack of clarity also contradicts to the communication of the image and attracting tourists, which is a lot clearer. In the tourism communication, they have guidelines and specific themes to follow.

There are also ambiguous messages in the brand platform of Uddevalla, leading to confusion among employees working with it. According to one of the interviewees in Uddevalla, the brand platform has to be updated.

*What we can say about the brand platform is that we consider it to be out-dated. (...) it has not been working, but we have to make the most out of the situation. We use and are always trying to use the 'Heart of Bohuslän', especially with the logo, but it is hard to implement, both on printed material, as well as on the web (Uddevalla, personal communication, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).*

The groundwork is stable, but it is hard to implement in some of the areas owned by the municipality. There needs to be a strategy for how to use this platform practically.

*There have been many discussion regarding this [The Brand platform], if we are trying to be more aggressive in our communication, and have a clear message, we cannot implement the heart, it will become very misplaced, it will not be good at all (Uddevalla, personal communication, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).*

This quote shows two possible things: a) The brand platform is not designed so that it can be used in all different kinds of areas, or b) Strategies for implementation of the brand is not clear enough, because then people would understand not to use aggressive messages for example. Additionally, the interviewee mentioned that it is also unclear how the brand platform is used in regards to the later developed brand of Bohuslän (Västsvenska Turistrådet, 2014). Uddevalla has a close collaboration with its region, Bohuslän, and the brand platform

of Uddevalla, and the platform of Bohuslän does not align very well according to the interviewee (Uddevalla, personal communication, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018). Even though there are areas where the brand works smoothly, it has to be able to be implemented in all of the areas where it is necessary to use it. One business, which is using the brand platform extensively, has developed further and has twisted it so that it fits more in line with the tourism sphere, and this also shows that it might be updated and more thorough. “We have not created our own brand, everything is connected with the brand of Uddevalla, with the same core values. It is just that we have extended it and have made the brand more extensive towards the tourism sphere” (Uddevalla, personal communication, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018).

Uddevalla is focusing on the city as a place and the location and closeness to many bigger cities. Even though all the interviewees mentioned the importance of the citizens in a city brand, their primary channel for creating an identity to its citizens is a magazine (Destination Uddevalla, 2017a; Destination Uddevalla, 2017b), published twice per year, one in the spring and one in the winter. The magazine contains stories about people with a driving spirit, entrepreneurial people, as well as what to do in the city and interesting places to visit. This magazine is both directed to tourists and the citizens (Uddevalla, personal communication, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018). It is clear that even though the city wants its citizens to be ambassadors, it does not work fully. “If we could get all the inhabitants to talk about it [the brand], it would be stronger than ever before” (Uddevalla, personal communication, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018). It is not enough to send a magazine twice per year to strengthen the identity of the people, and it is not enough to talk about the citizens as entrepreneurs with a collaborative and energetic spirit. The brand has to be integrated with the citizens, and it must be explained more in-depth for the citizens to talk about it, and become ambassadors. The purpose of establishing a city brand of Uddevalla was, in the beginning, to find common ground within the city, with its citizens, local government, companies, as well as creating a long-lasting and healthy image of the city.

*We emphasise this [the city brand] on many occasions, people and organisations can gather around it, and use it on different occasions and activities, it is a way of bringing people together. (...) With the mutual name of 'The Heart of Bohuslän', people think it is astonishing, and that you can use it as an umbrella term in which you can put several things under (Uddevalla, personal communication, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018).*

However, it is clear that they do not succeed with this purpose. Uddevalla's brand platform is more about how they want to be in the future, they do not convey any identity in the present, but instead trying to form a vision of what they want to become. "Our core values conclude what we want to be and what we aim to be. These are our common watchwords for our development and communication, and this is steering us in how we behave towards each other" (Uddevalla Kommun, n.d., p. 11).

#### **5.2.4 Topical avoidance**

Topical avoidance exists everywhere because it is impossible to cover all topics existing. However, this part refers to relevant topics avoided, topics that is a natural part of the city but is not shown in the brand communication. Uddevalla uses topical avoidance when they avoid being labelled as something specific. They have a history of being marked for instance a sports city, culture city or music city. "There have been many discussions of not label the city as something specific because it is important not to lose that label then. An event city without any events does not sound good" (Uddevalla, personal communication, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018). The risk of avoiding this is that something more in line with the real identity is being precluded in favour of their current strategy. This is also a state of not being too specific, but instead keeping it on a general level, due to the fear of not living up to the standards. This topical avoidance is destroying the authenticity of the city, because of the creation of a generic strategy.

One interesting aspect is that city branding has trends, and the latest trend is to be creative, in the sense of being entrepreneurial (Florida, 2002; Banet-Weiser, 2012). Furthermore, the isomorphism existing within this field is also high. Cities are mimicking other cities, and they find inspiration in what is a good way of practising a new brand in a state of change. Previous post-industrial cities are now creative cities attracting companies and entrepreneurs. By creating trends, and mimicking each other, cities are seeing patterns in what is successful. However, each city is unique, and by applying the same messages, the authenticity is lacking. Cities need to find what is unique, and not only use buzzwords working for other cities. Both Trollhättan and Uddevalla are utilising the entrepreneurialism, the will and the decisiveness of the citizens to create a brand, but this seems instead as a way of inspiring the citizens to feel a

certain way, not as it actually is. The cities potentially avoid the topic of talking about their true identity - instead of following trends – which is also a way of destroying authenticity.

A big part of creating a brand platform is about unifying the city into one identity, and one image, that aligns. Kavatzis & Ashworth (2006) argues that value, awareness and identity are what a city brand possesses. However, if the city brand communication lacks clarity, the brand also lacks a shared and united identity. For example, Vänersborg has high ambitions in many different levels of the society, the city wants to have goals of having the most beautiful city centre in Sweden, being the best music city in Sweden, as well as being sustainable in all parts of society. Furthermore, nature is highly regarded. Being too sprawling in the message does not create a shared identity, some people feel more attracted to one aspect, while other people feel more attracted to other elements. It can create a tension between the different projects, and they should instead create projects with a mutual and common ground, to preserve a shared identity. The topical avoidance, in this case, is on a higher level, where they avoid the topic of creating a brand and keep things open, which leads to a sprawling message. However, they are taking care of this by currently working on a city brand, which could be a long-term solution.

### 5.3 The mutual relationship between value construction and value destruction

The results of the analysis show that branding is a form of distorted communication where several ways of excluding groups are present. The brand communication is a way of beautifying a city. However, the results also showed that value destruction is an important aspect when branding a city because even if branding is about beautifying cities, there is a destructive side as well. When creating a brand where only the good sides are visible, and the less attractive side of the city is avoided in the communication, several groups are excluded, and that is why the destructive side is an equally important aspect to consider. Cities want to be associated with trendy associations, and previous research has shown that creative cities, with innovation, technology and entrepreneurial spirits are attractive in present time. Therefore, cities mimic other successful cities with their branding from a post-industrial society, into a creative ditto. This also shows what other cities find valuable, and what they find is less valuable. It is always a matter of what is going to be excluded from the

communication, and what is being included, and now it is values related to being creative. However, all cities cannot benefit from this, because every city is unique, and framing the communication in a way to follow the trend is not always successful.

The cases used in the study showed that the value construction and value destruction has a mutual relationship. In many ways, the cities' communication shows solidarity and a sense of belonging, creating an identity of the city, where citizens and other stakeholders can gather. However, at the same time, by communicating the way they do - without noticing the destructive effects - solidarity, the sense of belonging, and the shared identity are also partly destroyed, especially in excluded groups. It is challenging to balance between creating a long-term brand identity and image, while simultaneously appeal to the broader mass. Choices of what is important in a city, and what characterises the city are essential, and it is crucial to understand that not only is it a matter of maximising the value construction - but also to minimise the value destruction. The mutual relationship between the value construction and destruction comes from brand communication being distorted, and while trying to maximise the value construction, there are groups excluded, and the same values that are constructed, are usually the values that will also be destroyed.

## 6 Discussion & Conclusions

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This study has argued that the value creation in city branding has been overemphasized; cities lack a comprehension of value destruction when creating a city brand. The practice of city brand communication has been regarded as something to strengthen the identity and image of a city in an unproblematic manner. It is also shown that post-industrial cities - which are trying to transform their identity - do so by saying they are creative and entrepreneurial. Mostly because there is a shift in our economy from an industrial landscape to a more innovative, technological and creative one, and cities want to attract new establishments and citizens. This study has suggested a new way of looking at value in city brand communication - drawing from Bertilsson & Rennstam's (2018) call for further research - and the aim has been to examine the mutual relationship between value construction and destruction. To do so the following research questions were asked:

1) *Which justification logics can be found in the city brand communication?*

(a) *How are they being used when constructing value?*

2) *Which types of discursive closure exist in the city brand communication?*

(a) *In which ways are they destroying value?*

By analysing the brand communication using the theoretical framework, the study found that there existed justification logics deriving from all the worlds of justification (*inspired, domestic, fame, civic, market, industrial and green*). These logics constructed values divided into six themes, namely: *serenity, creativity, heritage, prosperity, community* and *being entrepreneurial*. The analysis further shows that there exists discursive closure of *disqualification, neutralization, topical avoidance* and *meaning denial & plausible deniability*. These practices of discursive closure destroyed value, which was also divided into themes: *Solidarity, engagement, authenticity, clarity* and *shared identity*.

Even though especially Trollhättan and Uddevalla has come far in their brand communication, all of the cities still have things to learn when it comes to the mutual relationship of value construction and destruction, and how communication mechanisms are

affecting the message. Value can change people's perception of a place, it has been done many times before, and brand communication is a thriving practice when done right. In many ways, the brand communication of Uddevalla, Vänersborg and Trollhättan are successful. However, when understanding that value in a city brand context is not only about creating strong brand equity but instead to create meaning and social values, they can get even more successful.

All of the worlds of justification existed in the city brand communication of the cities, some of them more than others. Justification logics deriving from the world of fame and the world of inspiration are natural when it comes to branding since it is about creating a feeling and get in contact with the stakeholders through their emotions, to develop active ambassadors. The justification logics clashes both between the brand communication in itself internally, as well as with the stakeholders externally. Therefore, it is even harder to balance the decisions and to make a thorough and inclusive city brand. Furthermore, when talking about the city as a public entity - which has to be inclusive and embracing - the world of fame and the inspired world clashed with the civic world, where all are equal and should be included. The analysis showed that at least Uddevalla and Trollhättan both used the energetic and entrepreneurial citizen as a mean to attract the whole population, but instead created the discursive closure of neutralization, as well as disqualification. Their focus is also showing the significant impact of trends, and that cities are following trends produced by other cities in the world. Being creative, innovative, technological and entrepreneurial among others is something the majority of the cities wish to be these days, even though most of the cities are different, which sometimes leads to trouble.

Henceforth, the people/place-orientation in city brand communication is worthy of discussion as well; this study found that cities are using different tactics, appealing to different levels of society. Trollhättan has a brand that almost exclusively derives from the attitudes of a particular group of their citizens, while Uddevalla has considered its location, the proximity to the sea and the serenity more than the attitudes and behaviour of the citizens. Vänersborg does not have a brand strategy but is focusing on various aspects of the society, including nature, the proximity to Vänern, as well as their cosy city centre. On the one hand, when having a people-oriented brand communication, there is a higher risk of creating a dual city, because

the communication appeals to a specific group. On the other hand, having a place-oriented brand communication might instead cause problems with creating awareness since the citizens, or stakeholders do not identify only with the location of the place. Most of the times, it is a matter of finding a balance, in which a specific city benefits the most - and again - being aware of the destructive side of branding is a great benefit, because it will always be of interest to minimise the risks.

This study has shown that cities have a lot to learn when discussing value. From the worlds of justification, we can learn what justifications go well together, and we can get a hint of how the messages will be perceived. Furthermore, the discursive closure taught us how different parts of society will be excluded and how this can destroy value. On a general level, this study can show us that value does not have to be monetised, or should not be solely monetised; instead, it needs to serve as a way to create meaning through for instance social justice. Post-industrial cities need to be aware of the consequences when following the trends because their stakeholders might not produce the same values and meanings out of the brand communication's messages the way other cities can handle it. Instead, it is a matter of finding the core of the spirit of the city, which all people can gather around, and tourists can identify with.

## 6.1 Contributions to the field

The contribution of this study to the field of strategic communication lies in addressing an alternative way of looking at value in city branding, and how important it is to understand how a city brand communication affects value strategically. Through the perspective of value as something being meaningful, desirable and essential, the study showed that not only can a city brand construct value, but also in the meantime destroy value. City brand communication is distorted, and this study has shown that this has negative sides. Cities are not required to focus on capitalising the brand equity; this is something they have chosen to do. By using the theoretical framework, this study has also provided an extension of how to look at value in city brand communication, not only focusing on the capitalisation of a place. Moreover, this study acts as a critical voice, showing that the social aspects of city brand communication are essential, and that value destruction is something to be considered as much as value creation.

By communicating more holistically, the brand communication can instead act as a tool in uniting the people getting in touch with the brand.

Furthermore, it is vital not to undermine the complexity of city brand communication; value destruction in city branding is inevitable. Instead, the challenge lies in minimising it as much as possible, and this study is a way of developing the strategy, and the purposeful use of communication. This multiple case study can help to put forward criticism on how post-industrial cities work with following the trends, trying to create value without understanding the destructive side. Because a city brand is a social actor, and city brand communication is about strategically changing the perception of the people, thus, this study is important to consider when trying changing an identity or an image of a city. It helps to understand that there is a mutual relationship between value construction and value destruction, and being aware of this is vital in creating a successful city brand.

## 6.2 Limitations

Although this thesis has been carefully conducted, I am aware of its limitations. Firstly, my experiences as a researcher are limited, which can negatively affect the study. Secondly, the regional focus of the study makes it only applicable to cities studied. However, I suggest further research to investigate other post-industrial cities in Sweden. Thirdly, the scope of interviewees could be extended to people working in agencies helping the cities with their brand strategy. In this case, the data would be broader, and the study would get new approach angles. Furthermore, since my experiences in data collection and interviews are limited, there is a possibility that the data collection is flawed.

## 6.3 Further research

This study has had a focus on the city brand communication, and how it constructs and destroys value in Swedish smaller post-industrial cities, and one of the findings was that the city strategists valued their citizens, and wanted them to be ambassadors of the brand. Therefore, further research could investigate the perceptions of the city brand communication of the citizens. Firstly, it is essential to see if they are aware of the city brand communication. When talking with the citizens concerning this study, merely out of curiosity of the subject,

many of them had not invested any time in actually understanding the brand. There seems to be a negative attitude towards the brand communication in the initial state. What needs to be done strategically in the communication to improve the awareness? Secondly, which perceptions do the citizens have of the city brand communication overall? What patterns are likely to be found? By doing this, the study can show how the value destruction influences the citizens, as an extension of this study. Consequently, further research could investigate city brand communication from a broader perspective, conducting a study to categorise Swedish cities in being place-oriented or people-oriented.

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# Appendix 1

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## Interview guide

- Please describe what your overall work is with the city brand communication of the city
- What is the cities' main purpose of the brand communication?
- Who are your target groups and stakeholders?
- What type of city do you consider this to be (Industrial, entrepreneurial, et cetera.)?  
How do you convey this to your target groups?
- How does your brand differ from other city brands in Sweden?
- What is your perception of working with a commercial practice such as branding, in a public entity where solidarity is highly valued?
- What is your perception of constructing value to your target groups through the brand communication?