Case Study

(Re)branding Amman: A 'lived' city's values, image and identity

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ABSTRACT   By addressing two separate branding exercises for Amman, Jordan, we investigate the links between the city's image and the visual image of its brand. We build on previous research by proposing a theoretical framework that combines city branding, Canter's theory of place and Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City*. We test this theoretical framework by contrasting the development of Amman's city brand in 2002 and its rebranding exercise in 2009. We address, first, how Amman's brand(s) and image(s) are linked, and second, how the city brand and its image influence and are influenced by the values Ammanis ascribe to their city. We find that while it incorporated intensive promotional campaigns and place-making interventions, the 2002 branding exercise excluded the residents of Amman; the ensuing brand image therefore failed to correspond to the residents' perceived values of Amman. Conversely, Amman's 2009 branding exercise aspired for an inclusive process ('inward branding'), which allowed the new brand and its ensuing image to be 'lived' by and to 'enliven' Ammanis. We thus trace how Amman's 2009 branding effort achieved more success among residents than the multidimensional branding exercise of 2002 simply by capturing the intricacies between residents' affective perceptions and the new brand image.

INTRODUCTION

Branding is a marketing activity that bestows a 'name, term, design, symbol or any other feature' on a product that distinguishes it from those offered by other providers of similar products (Bennett, 1998, p. 18). For decades, planners and policymakers have adapted

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the principles of branding to cities (Dinnie, 2011). City branding is 'a sub-field of place branding', one that 'emphasizes the marketing and branding of cities' (Merrilees *et al*, 2009, p. 362), yet remains distinct from the branding of goods and services (Anholt, 2007). City branding thus entails more than a marketing campaign (Kavaratzis, 2004) that uses 'the deliberate projection of favourable place images to potential customers, investors or residents' (Ashworth and Voogd, 1994, p. 39). According to Anholt (Anholt, 2008), city branding needs to be 'lived' by the people who call the place home. Indeed, evidence abounds that inward city branding, which primarily targets internal stakeholders, can be effective in improving investments (Middleton, 2011) and in boosting the sense of civic pride because it prioritizes the quality of life of the city's residents (Dinnie, 2011).

We investigate the validity of this claim that city branding should be lived. Specifically, by addressing two separate branding exercises for Amman, Jordan, we investigate the links between the city's image and the visual image of its brand. Earlier research established that where the former is perceived, the latter is intentionally designed (Qu *et al*, 2011, p. 467).

We build on this research by proposing a theoretical framework that combines city branding, Canter's theory of place (Canter, 1977) and Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City* (Lynch, 1960). We test this framework by contrasting the development of Amman's brand as a capital of culture in 2002 and its rebranding exercise in 2009. We address first how Amman's brand(s) and image(s) are linked, and second, how the brand of the city and this brand's image are influenced by and influence the values that Ammanis ascribe to their city.

Our findings reveal that while it incorporated intensive promotional campaigns and place-making interventions, the 2002 branding exercise excluded Amman's residents and overlooked the tangible and intangible urban characteristics that are of value to them. The ensuing brand image therefore did not correspond to the residents' perceived values of

Amman. Conversely, the 2009 branding exercise avoided intensive promotional activities and place making, and instead aspired for an organic process that involved the city's residents. By prioritizing inward branding (Middleton, 2011), this more recent branding exercise captured the values of the city as perceived by its residents, thus allowing the new brand and its ensuing image to be 'lived' by and to 'enliven' them. Therefore, we trace how Amman's 2009 branding effort achieved inward success simply by capturing and capitalizing on the intricacies between residents' affective perceptions and the new brand image. We find that because the image of the brand captured the values of residents, branding Amman in 2009 achieved more success among Ammanis than the multidimensional branding exercise of 2002.

THE INTERRELATIONS OF CITY BRANDING AND BRAND IMAGE

Branding and image are visual symbols that convey an encoded message of the city (Holcomb, 1999). Although the terms 'branding' and 'image' have been used in place marketing literature interchangeably (Speaks, 2002; van Synghel, 2002; Vermeulen, 2002; Kavaratzis, 2004; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005), there is a distinction that is worth noting. According to Cova (Cova, 1996, p. 20), 'Branding endows a product with a specific and more distinctive identity' that is 'not achieved through tangible aspects of the product'. Instead, this identity emerges from the perceived 'values' associated with 'intangible' factors such as packaging, name, presentation and brand personality (Cova, 1996, p. 20). Moilanen and Rainisto (2009, p. 6) consider this 'perceptual' dimension of the brand as 'the sum of all tangible and intangible elements, which makes the selection unique […] A brand is a *promise* of something'. As a marketing exercise, branding generates an augmented product whose added values inform its various functional benefits (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005, p. 510). Branding highlights the intangible values of cities; 'Nightlife for

Las Vegas' and 'Romance for Venice' are examples (Ward, 1998; Holcomb, 1999). Although these associations are not necessarily the deliberate creation of branding, they are often the consequence of intentionally planned efforts. Glasgow's 1990 branding as a Capital of Culture is an example (Ward, 1998; Holcomb, 1999).

Kavaratzis (2004) proposes that city branding ensues from the interaction between an internal and an external city. Whereas the former is based on physical structure (landmarks), the latter is embedded in the intangible characteristics (subjective perceptions) that unite complex mental messages about the city (Kavaratzis, 2004). Kavaratzis identifies three levels for communicating the city's image. The primary level communicates this image through the city's tangible elements (physical structure and infrastructure) and intangible characteristics (governance structure, social infrastructure and behavioral patterns such as vision and culture). The secondary level employs the four Ps of marketing: product, place, price and promotion. The tertiary level depends on word-of-mouth communication (Holloway and Robinson, 1995; Kavaratzis, 2004, pp. 67–69). Notably, only the second level results from intentionally designed branding, while the first and third levels are the perceived image of the city.

Like other products, a city's brand is condensed into representational form – a logo, slogan and/or symbol – that evokes the values associated with the city's brand (Avraham, 2004), and associates the brand with certain values (Dinnie, 2011), thus conjures psychological and social connotative meanings (Danesi, 2006). For example, in addition to denoting the product, the BMW logo evokes safety (psychological association) and success (social association), symbolic and experiential values of the BMW product that transform its brand image into that of a car that belongs to successful people (Danesi, 2006). Thus, the brand image becomes 'the perception of the brand in the minds of people […] it is what people believe about the brand' (Bennett, 1998).

The fundamental difference between brand and image is therefore that of 'perspective': the image is the receivers' perception, the brand is the senders' intentional design (Qu *et al*, 2011, p. 467). Nevertheless, consumers who identify with the values of a particular brand are bound together by these values and, thus, by the brand itself (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). Appreciation of the brand's values binds the consumers of the product as members of the same community (Cova, 1997; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005; Balmer, 2008). Accordingly, similar to Anderson's imagined communities, which are based on a combination of tangible and intangible city elements (Anderson, 1991), we argue that brands also generate 'imagined' communities. However, we add that cities differ from other types of products in that they are consumed by their users for work, residence or leisure.

This atypical nature of the city as a product, together with its simultaneous but varying consumption, exacerbates the complexity of branding cities. Kavaratzis (2004) establishes that city branding is akin to corporate branding that highlights the corporation's values. This notion of values is linked to the city's identity, whereby a distinctive brand identity differentiates the city not only by underscoring its superior qualities above its competitors, but also by ensuring that the city is presented and consumed in a manner that matches its perceived values (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005, p. 510). These values directly influence the city's vision, culture and image (Hatch and Schultz, 2001, p. 130), and like corporate branding, the interactions among these elements contribute to the strength of a city's brand (Hatch and Schultz, 2001, p. 130). However, the complex nature of cities complicates the interdependent relations among them. Therefore, city branding prioritizes the identification of a wide array of images that are interwoven to present one coherent brand (Kavaratzis, 2004, p. 62; Grodach, 2009, p. 182) – also known as the 'umbrella brand' (Dinnie, 2011, p. 5) that is typically managed in conformity with the city's values

PLACE-MAKING AND PLACE BRANDING: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Wernerfelt (1988, p. 459) explains that a firm will 'use umbrella branding to send a noise-free credible signal about the quality of a new product'. Accordingly, umbrella branding takes place when 'a firm uses an established brand name in its advertising for a new experience good, for example, Diet Coke versus Tab, where experience goods are products whose quality cannot be determined by inspection, so that consumers need to buy the product to learn its quality' (p. 458). The identification of an umbrella brand is thus a challenging process (Freire, 2011) that seeks to establish consistency between the city's vision, culture, and its image and the visions, cultures and images of its many sub-communities. In Lisbon, Portugal, for example, the use of the 'Lisboa' as an umbrella brand proved controversial for its inhabitants. For them, Lisboa entailed more than Lisbon's physical boundaries, the activities contained within these boundaries, and consequently, the emergent images that lie beyond Lisbon's offerings (Freire, 2011).

We draw on environmental psychology, a sub-branch of architecture and urban design that addresses the lived experience and image of a place in order to develop a theoretical framework for city branding. Our proposed framework links the concepts of city branding to those of city making and experience, and thus enhances the links between the designed and the perceived image of the city.

In *Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch (Lynch, 1960) links the physical city to its perceived image. Lynch identifies five physical elements of the city as perceived by its inhabitants: its edges, districts, landmarks, paths and nodes (Lynch, 1960). This emphasis on the cognitive legibility in experiencing the city has triggered debates about the subjectivity of place experience and the elements that contribute to the unique identity of the place. Dubbed 'genius loci', Aldo Rossi (Rossi, 1984) and Christian Norberg-Schultz (Norberg-Schultz, 1991), for instance, discuss the links between the physical elements of the city and its unique identity. However, most useful is the work of David Canter (Canter, 1977), which extends place beyond physical elements to include the activities of its users and the meanings that they attribute to it.

Building on Anderson's imagined communities, we propose that city dwellers are united by their city's unique identity, which stems from its physical attributes, the activities within their city and the meanings that their city evokes among them.

Our proposed theoretical framework possesses many similarities to existing city branding frameworks. Specifically, according to Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005, p. 507), three processes evaluate people's urban experience's of city branding: 'planned interventions such as planning, urban design and so on; […] the way in which they or others use specific places; and […] various forms of place representations such as films, novels, paintings, [and] news reports' (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005, p. 507). We equate these to the three components that define place in Canter's (Canter, 1977) place theory: physical attributes, activities and meanings (Figure 1).

The implications of combining these theoretical frameworks are, first, they offer directions for gearing the development of the urban product and its brand toward increasing its likeability; second, they provide guidance as to which urban features are preferred as visual symbols in constructing the environmental rhetoric of promotional communication; and, finally, the combination of these frameworks with a strategic image management (SIM) approach facilitates the measurement and adaptation of the urban image for different target audiences (Kotler *et al*, 1993; Avraham, 2004). Kotler *et al* (1993, pp. 142–143) define the SIM approach as 'the ongoing process of researching a place's image among its audiences, segmenting and targeting its specific image and its demographic audiences, positioning the
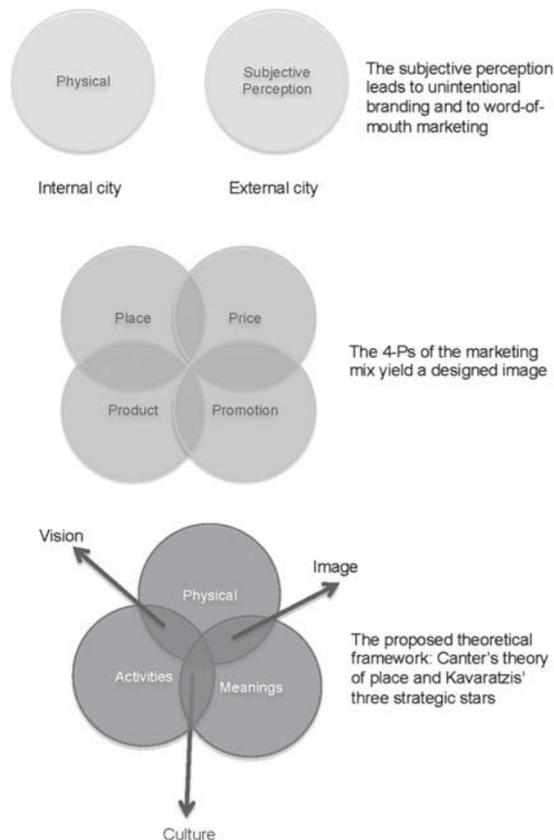
Figure 1: Our proposed theoretical framework links city branding and place making theories.

Since the 1990s, several cities have sought to rebrand in attempts to change negative post–industrial perceptions and attract tourism (Bramwell and Rawding, 1996; Bennett and Savani, 2003). Rebranding is usually adopted when there is a sense that the existing place image fails to reflect current trends; when introducing an unknown place; when a place requires better targeting to reach appropriate audiences; when the attributes of its existing image are faulty or unhelpful; or when its image needs to highlight desirable place attributes (Anholt, 2008, pp. 97–98). However, the problem for many cities in the developing world is their rapid development, which make branding a moving target (Iwata and Del Rio, 2004). This raises the question – addressed in our analysis – of whether perceptions of the city change accordingly or whether established perceptions prevail.

City rebranding incorporates strategic and tactical undertakings that focus on the city's perceived and designed image (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). Strategically, rebranding involves 'the construction and the development of the new brand' and the visual image for this brand (Bennett and Savani, 2003, p. 74) via promotional campaigns and identity tools (for example logos) that evoke particular meanings and perceptions (Avraham, 2004; Kavaratzis, 2007, p. 703). However, tactically 'the new brand is *operationally* attached to the place product' (Bennett and Savani, 2003, p. 74), either through physical design interventions or organizing events and activities. While the latter introduce various activities within the city's urban scene (Kavaratzis, 2007, p. 703), the former enhance the physical urban landscape by prioritizing its edges, districts, landmarks, paths and nodes (Lynch, 1960). Cities may, for example, create new landmarks or improve existing ones; regenerate historic districts or construct new ones; manage their cultural heritage or emphasize contemporary development (Beriatos and Gospodini, 2004; Kavaratzis, 2007; Khirfan, 2010).

These strategic and tactical approaches strengthen our proposed links between Canter's

place's benefits to support an existing image or create a new image, and communicating those benefits to the target audiences'.

On the basis of the links between the city's perceived image(s) and its designed brand image, SIM thus feeds into brand management (Figure 1). This is particularly the case when image and brand contribute to a place management approach that seeks to change the perceptions of the city among existing and/or potential users (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005, p. 512). Indeed, Avraham (2004, p. 472) confirms that 'city marketing can be looked upon as a "refreshing" of urban identity or as the creation of new forms of identity'. According to our proposed model, the city's refreshed identity is shaped by physical interventions, events and activities, and place representations that are based as much on the city as on its consumers.

(Canter, 1977) theory of place and Kavaratzis and Ashworth's (2005) notions on city branding. Specifically, we argue that the strategic approach underscores the connotative meanings of the city, while the tactical approach addresses the city's physical attributes and the activities of its users. Accordingly, we propose that strategic and tactical undertakings of city branding parallel those of place-making (Figure 1).

RESEARCH METHODS

We investigate the relationship between Amman's umbrella brand, the city's image among its citizens, and the visual image of its brand, and how these images influenced and are influenced by the values that Ammanis ascribe to their city. We also address whether the perceptions of a rapidly growing city like Amman change accordingly, or whether established perceptions among its inhabitants prevail.

To achieve these objectives, we present Amman's two branding exercises through a descriptive case study analysis that 'cover[s] the scope and depth of the case' (Yin, 2003, p. 23), and adopts a strategy of mixed methods conducted at two phases: in 2002 and in 2010–2011. Specifically, we use secondary and primary data sources to obtain an in-depth description of the two branding processes. The secondary data sources included content analysis of planning documents obtained from the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) and from Syntax, the consultancy firm that carried out the 2009 re-branding exercise. Secondary data also included newspaper articles and Amman's two brand logo designs.

Primary data included in-depth interviews, an online survey questionnaire and focus groups. During October 2002 and December 2010, we conducted 20 in-depth interviews with the GAM officials who were directly involved in the rebranding processes, including Amman's Deputy Mayor during the 2002 branding and Amman's Mayor during the 2009 rebranding, Mr Omar Maani. Our interviews also included several of Mr Maani's

independent advisors, and appointed city councilors who influenced the decision-making process of Amman's branding project(s). Some councilors were in service during both branding exercises. Finally, we interviewed three elected officials with constituencies within Greater Amman. These interviews investigated the 2002 and 2009 branding exercises, and gauged the interviewees' perceptions of the level of public engagement during the planning process.

We also gauged the public's perception of their inclusion in the planning process and their opinion of the changes in Amman's urban landscape. We thus adopted a broad approach by conducting an online survey questionnaire using Qualtrics – a specialized company in this field. We limited the promotion of and access to this survey questionnaire through Google and Facebook adds to IP addresses within Greater Amman, and designed the survey questionnaire to begin with a series of questions, the answers to which clearly indicate whether the respondent resides within Greater Amman or not. Non-residents were excluded from continuing with the survey questionnaire via special tools provided by the Qualtrics system. As a result of our intensive promotional campaign, 2110 individuals responded; 514 completed all 20 questions. The questions included a map where respondents identified their location of residence as well as demographic questions (for example income-level, educational background, age and gender). Interestingly, and contrary to our expectations that the responses might be limited to the more affluent (and more connected) city districts, the survey questionnaire was completed by a wide spectrum of residents, the only exception being a higher proportion of respondents within the younger age range. To gauge respondents' perceptions of Amman's identity, values and image we used an array of questions including Likert scales and rankings (see below).

Finally, and to complement the findings from this online approach, we conducted 13 focus groups; each comprised 10–15 individuals and represented one cross-section of Amman's society. We recruited focus group participants

through professional and business associations and local NGOs, particularly among residents of disadvantaged areas in order to capture the views of those who would have had less access to the online survey questionnaire. Noteworthy of mentioning is that these focus groups are completely independent from the ones that were conducted by Syntax during their re-branding exercise.

AMMAN'S 2002 BRAND

This and the following section trace the two branding exercises carried out for Amman. In our analyses, we juxtapose our empirical primary data with the contemporaneous secondary data from the 2002 branding exercise and the subsequent 2009 re-branding activity. Our objective is, in analyzing the two branding exercises, to identify first, the links between Amman's brand and image as intended by the planners and policymakers in charge of the city's branding; and second, to identify the interrelated associations between the city's brand and image on the one hand, and the perceived values of Amman by its own residents. Embedded within this analysis is an attempt to pin down the relationship between the 2002 and the 2009 branding exercises.

Amman's first branding exercise has roots that go back to 1996, when, influenced by the European practice of the annual selection of a Capital of Culture, the Arab League and the United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) initiated a similar practice in 1996 (UNESCO, 2006). By the time Amman's turn came in 2002, the city had developed a cultural tourism brand and simultaneously emphasized marketing strategies and planning tactics that sought to improve Amman's image as such (Wishart, 1991; Reed, 1993; Ward, 1998; Holcomb, 1999). These included a marketing campaign that targeted international niche markets such as education (Kurdi, 1999), and one that also strove to showcase Amman as a destination for medical tourism (interview with Mr Marwan Khouri, Director of the Jordan Tourism Board 1996–2004; (Al Wakeel, 2002).

Tactical undertakings were an integral component of the 2002 branding campaign, and combined physical interventions and cultural events – both of which sought to emphasize Amman's image as a hub of cultural activities. The physical interventions took the form of mega-scale urban design and civic projects, of which the King Hussein Cultural Center is a prime example. This project housed a cultural complex with exhibition halls, a conference center, parks (the Palms Plaza) and theaters. This mega-complex also housed the new GAM headquarters as well as a newly constructed national museum dubbed the 'Jordan Museum'[1] (Ibrahim, 1999; Khadra, 1999; Sarhan, 2001). Beyond Amman's downtown core, another major urban design intervention was the conversion of a main street in the affluent Shmeisani neighborhood into a 'Cultural Street', which comprised several art galleries and artists' kiosks (ArchNet, 2011a). These major civic projects also paralleled several mega-infrastructure projects mostly, road infrastructure such as bridges and tunnels that Christopher Parker (Parker, 2009) dubs 'tunnel bypasses'.

Concurrently, cultural events were also organized, including arts competitions hosted in restored houses dating back to early in the twentieth century (interview with Deputy Mayor Abdul Rahim Boucai, 2002; Freij, 2009). Amman also hosted several conferences such as the Arab Summit of 1999, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature conference 2001, and the Peace through Tourism Conference in November 2000 (International Institute for Peace through Tourism, 1999–2008; Khirfan, 2004).

Interestingly, this emphasis on Amman's contemporary culture stands in contrast to Amman's previous brand that preceded the 2002 branding campaign. The older brand focused on Amman's ancient history particularly, its Greco-Roman heritage including its name at the time (that is Philadelphia) and its archaeological remains. In fact, a review of official marketing media issued by the Jordan Tourism Board also reveals that the primary image that was associated with this older brand
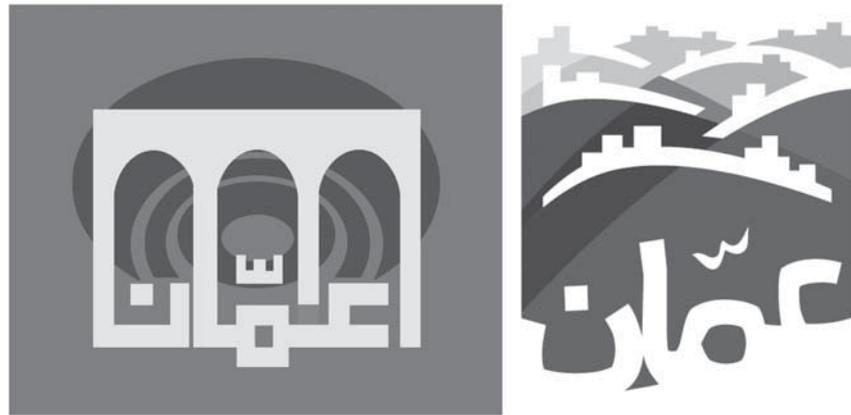
Figure 2: Amman's previous and current logos.

was Amman's Hellenistic theater (332BC–63AD). Having said that, it seems that in the 2002 branding campaign, history continued to play a dominant role. For instance, select archaeological sites in and around Amman received 'face-lift' treatments (Mekki, 2001; ArchNet, 2011b). Furthermore, motifs from these ancient relics were used in the image associated with Amman as an Arab Cultural Capital. The resulting city logo therefore depicted Amman's Hellenistic theater but also juxtaposed it with three horseshoe arches in an attempt to include what was perceived by policymakers as an 'Islamic' architectural motif.[2] These arches were used to connote an 'Arab' and 'Muslim' identity for Amman – one that is not unlike the historic capitals of Damascus, Baghdad and Cairo (Figure 2).

Notably, the activities of the 2002 branding campaign focused on international and regional Arab markets, particularly the USA, Western Europe and oil-rich Arab Gulf States (interviews with Mr Marwan Khouri, Director of the JTB 1996–2004 and Ms Malia Asfour, JTB representative, Washington DC) (Al Wakeel, 2002). Indeed, the absence of internal marketing resulted in a lack of awareness of the city's brand among its own citizens who seemed unaware of Amman's status as a Capital of Culture, and who were uninvolved in the cultural activities that accompanied it (Khirfan, 2004). Regional geopolitical instability during

2002 and 2003 also overshadowed internal marketing of these events through newspaper and televised reports, and because only a few residents attended these events, the initiatives and brand of the Capital of Culture alienated Amman's intellectual community of novelists, performers and artists, who felt their work was irrelevant to their community. Some questioned the logic of the expenditures used to prepare for Amman's designation as the Arab Capital of Culture given that most of its cultural activists lived below the poverty line (Khader, 2002). During several interviews conducted in 2002, respondents, who were citizens of Amman, were critical of the exponential expenditures for archaeological conservation and urban design interventions (interviews, Amman residents 2002). In fact, these claims by Amman's citizens are substantiated by official press releases. In 2001, when the GAM announced the aforementioned 'face-lift' for Amman in preparation for its new status as Cultural Capital, it also revealed that this face-lift was expected to cost US$58.8 million, part of which was funded through a Japanese loan to be paid over the next 20 years (Mekki, 2001). In addition, the costs of preparation for the conferences held throughout the 2002 branding campaign were perceived by residents to outweigh any measured benefit (Khirfan, 2004). Likewise, the Cultural Street project raised many objections from business owners and

Ammani intellectuals, who argued that it was actually devoid of culture (Mafadleh, 2011).

Furthermore, the concerns raised by Ammanis during 2001–2002 and which argue that the branding campaign overwhelmingly focuses on tourist attractions (Khirfan, 2004) are substantiated by the articles published in contemporaneous newspapers. For example, in announcing the 'facelift' of downtown Amman, Mekki (2001) quotes the then Mayor Nedal Hadeed as justifying the multimillion dollar Japanese loan by stating that: 'Through this scheme we hope to promote tourism and encourage visitors to extend their stay in Jordan'. Our empirical findings reveal that this pattern of prioritizing tourists' needs seems to be persistent to this day. During a focus group that we held on 12 December 2010 with representatives of the merchants of Amman's downtown, one participant underscored how the contemporary mayor of Amman is following into the footsteps of previous mayors by giving precedence to the needs of tourists over those of local residents. In reference to the more recent downtown projects such as the Hashemite Plaza and Faisal Street, this participant said: 'I could say that the Greater Amman Municipality develops without consulting us, in 1985 we had a Mayor who [...] did the Hashsmite plaza [and] we asked him to do a parking lot[3] but he didn't listen to us [...] the current Mayor is doing the Hashemite plaza and he is not listening to us [and] harmed us greatly with the Faisal Street project' (Focus group, 12 December 2010). Even the children of Amman are aware of, and disagree with, the prioritization of tourists' needs. During a focus group with children who live in the Citadel Hill, one of the children lamented the new development around the Citadel area 'I don't like the development because the [proposed] teleferique will demolish my grandfather's house. They want to make the community of Jabal Al Qala'a (the Citadel Hill) sad just to satisfy the foreigners. I don't want them to go forth with it' (Focus groups with Amman's children, 10–11 December 2010).

Equally important at the time is the Ammanis' criticism of the authorities' prioritizing of the city's ancient heritage (Greco-Roman and early Islamic) at the expense of Amman's urban architectural heritage (interviews, Amman residents, 2002; Khirfan, 2004). Indeed, our empirical data reveal that this perception holds true to this day. During the focus group with representatives of Amman's downtown merchants, the participants complained that they 'now hear that they [GAM] intend to demolish the entire downtown strip. Downtown is our ancestors' and grandparents' [place] … many said that they [GAM] will demolish many symbols in our Downtown, and we are talking big numbers'. Khirfan's (2004) research showed great enthusiasm toward Amman's architectural heritage[4] and its preservation[5] among residents and revealed their dismay of the city's emphasis on new mega-infrastructure at the expense of maintaining Amman's cultural integrity (Quna, 2002). Again, this emphasis on contemporary mega-projects seems to be still on-going in Amman where during one of our focus groups with Jordanian real estate developers, one of the participants underscored the impact of such an approach on Amman's image: '… what happened recently with haphazard development in Amman, has in my personal opinion, began to distort Amman's image … Amman is homogeneous, which is great, and great nature and made of past organizational planning [and] development … . We need to reduce haphazard development and the generosity that was given to foreign investors in the previous times needs to decrease since they initiate mega projects that they cannot finish, cannot commit to, and they ruined the image of Amman; this affects Jordan's economy and its development' (Focus group with Jordanian real estate developers, held in Amman on 12 December 2010). Even the children who live in the Citadel Hill, considered to be one of Amman's oldest neighborhoods, were aware of their city's architectural heritage – one of them

commented that 'There are many tourists who come to see the old buildings, yet they [GAM] are tearing them down to build new buildings although the tourists do not want to see new buildings' (Focus groups with Amman's children, 10 and 11 December 2010).

Not surprisingly then, in the wake of the 2002 branding campaign, which became increasingly irrelevant to Amman's citizens, Amman witnessed the emergence of several NGOs dedicated for the preservation of its more recent architectural heritage (Quna, 2002). Also, not surprisingly, then that policymakers and planners approached the 2009 re-branding campaign differently.

(RE)BRANDING AMMAN 2009

The disengagement between Amman's brand as Arab Cultural Capital and the associated image (Figure 2) soon became apparent to city officials. Accordingly, the then mayor Nidal al-Hadeed announced the need to devise a new city brand for Amman – a bid that Syntax, a Jordanian media consultancy firm, won. Toward the end of Mayor al-Hadeed's tenure in 2006, the city accepted a strategic approach to construct a new brand image for Amman. This coincided with a change of mayors in Amman and the appointment of Omar Maani as a new mayor. During an interview in 2011, Maani referred to 'the directives of His Majesty [King Abdullah the Second] when he appointed me in April 2006 five years ago, and we had a chat. His directive was very clear, that Amman is at a crossroads, growth is uncontrolled, the city is losing its identity' (interview with Mayor of Amman, Omar Maani on 2 January 2011). This focus on Amman's identity geared the rebranding exercise in a direction different from the 2002 branding and therefore, the tactical undertakings received minimal consideration with no major urban or civic design projects, while only one major event, a parade commemorating Amman's centennial, was scheduled in 2009 (Jor1, 2009). This focus by the GAM on Amman's identity is indeed novel as the local architect, Rami Daher, explained 'historically

speaking, and I think this is very important, the municipality was seen as an agency that provides utilities – that is, their basic job is to provide water, solid waste management, road construction and so on. For the Municipality to view its role as dealing with the identity of the city, and with its future is actually something new and very important' (interview on 14 December 2010).

Thus from the outset, the 2009 re-branding exercise attempted to (re)define Amman's identity. A common theme among local architects like Rami Daher (interview, 14 December 2010), intellectuals like Abdul Rahman Munif (Munif, 1996) and anthropologists like Setenay Shami (Shami, 2007) was about the city's rich origins – how contemporary Amman developed from a diversity of backgrounds, including East Jordanians, Circassians, Armenians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese among others. The Syntax team took Shami's article, *Amman is not a City* to heart (interview with Ahmad Humeid, Syntax CEO, 21 December 2010), in which Shami discusses how the 'cityness' of Amman has been undermined by its cultural elite and how Amman is compared to other cities rather than appreciated for its own 'placeness' (Shami, 2007). Shami's work resonated with the rebranding team, who admitted during our interviews with them in December of 2010, that like most other Ammanis, they themselves primarily identified with their cities of origin rather than with Amman. This motivated them to look beyond branding Amman as a 'collage' of people (that is a mixture of city dwellers whose origins and roots are elsewhere) because, they believed, this perception of Amman fragmented its identity and downplayed the diversity of its residents.

Furthermore, it seems that, if anything, the most valuable lesson learnt from the 2002 branding campaign is to take into account the values of Amman's citizens in shaping the new brand and its image. During his interview, Mayor Omar Maani emphasized how he is 'bullish' on taking steps to integrate public participation in the GAM's initiatives – which

to this day has to yet be institutionalized. This signified an important turning point in the rhetoric of the 2009 rebranding for Amman, in which the internal audience became the primary target for the new brand right at the outset. The mayor's stance, and the lessons from previous branding campaigns motivated Syntax to adopt a citizen-centered approach in their 2009 re-branding exercise and they conducted their own in-depth interviews with intellectuals, publishers and business owners as well as their own focus groups in which they sought a representation of the Amman's varying socio-economic strata. When we interviewed the Syntax team for the purposes of this article, they relayed how they videotaped these sessions and included them in a research record that was reviewed by then Mayor Omar Maani.[6] At the time, Mr Maani was quite affected by what people had to say about life in Amman, particularly those who were critical, yet passionate about their city (personal interviews with Mayor Maani and with the Syntax team during December 2010).

Indeed, our empirical data reveal this combination of passion and criticism. During one of our focus groups with young professionals in Amman, one participant elicited agreement around the table by stating that 'Amman has nothing that makes it stand out from any other city; it has no identity and nothing distinctive' (Focus group with young Ammani professionals on 13 December 2010). Simultaneously, what was truly surprising to the Syntax team was how younger Ammanis were rediscovering their city via the emergence of cultural venues like Darat al Funun and Books@Café located in the heart of Amman's older districts (interviews with the Syntax team on 21 December 2010). Our observations of Amman's public spaces certainly confirm this re-emerging appreciation of Amman's more recent heritage especially in the older districts such as Jabal Amman's Rainbow Street and also Jabal Al Weibde (also see Reporter, 2012).

This engagement with the city and its life represents an important shift in Amman toward what we dub an 'urban nostalgia', a process whereby people return to older city districts attributed to a sense of connection to those places. Our findings reveal that Ammanis consider these districts as more representative of Amman's identity than the more contemporary ones. For example, a focus group with young Ammani professionals highlighted this urban nostalgia where one participant relayed how 'Jabal Al Weibde is like the undiscovered treasure. Rainbow Street started [developing], but Jabal Al Weibde is still undiscovered with its old buildings and houses' while another stated that 'Jabal Amman and Fuhays' assume significance and explained their preference for Fuhays 'because you feel that [Fuhays] is still in touch with its roots and was not affected [by development]' (Focus group with young Ammani professionals, 13 December 2010). Another focus group with representatives of Amman's citizens also revealed they perceive the old downtown core as representative of Amman's identity. One of the participants emphasized that while 'Most of the discussion is about buildings and construction, our lives do not happen in a building but in a street. And that is why Downtown [Amman] is so great because it is holistic. You can appreciate cities but admire how people live beautifully in them' (Focus group with Ammanis on 12 December 2010).

Notwithstanding their criticisms of Amman, Ammanis in fact value their city's contradictions. One of the participants in the young Ammani professionals focus group relayed 'I see Amman a combination of so many contradictory things; poverty and wealth, ignorance and education, illiteracy and knowledge. There are nice areas and organized and haphazard areas, and this sort of reflects on the people, and creates a sort of segregation where the areas become the identity, so they share the identity of the geographic area that they live in'.

However, by the same coin, our respondents argued that unity may be achieved through the active search for commonalities versus differences. One of the participants in a focus group that targeted urban planners with the

Amman Institute for Urban Development stated that 'the citizen needs to emancipate from the individuality and from treating their city individually because the city accommodates everybody and not just one person' (Focus group with the Amman Institute planners, 12 December 2010).

This emphasis on Amman's contemporary identity – both the positive and negative aspects of it – contradicted Amman's previous brands as an historic and Arab-Islamic city. During their interviews, the Syntax team relayed how they were compelled to urge the GAM officials to embrace Amman's contemporary identity without dismissing its 10 000-year history. Armed with the video recordings of their interviews, the Syntax team thus convinced the city officials that while the relics of the past are a significant component of Amman, they do not themselves define the city's contemporary identity.

The next step entailed a search for a brand image that would reflect Amman's identity as perceived by Ammanis. During the focus groups that we conducted for the purposes of this article between December 2010 and January 2011, our participants repeatedly referred to specific characteristics that they valued most about Amman. Specifically, the respondents highlighted Amman's climate and geography; its diversity; its resilience, initiatives and entrepreneurship; its intimacy and connectivity; and lastly, its stability and safety as a city that enjoys higher levels of freedom than neighboring Arab capitals (several focus groups held in Amman between December 2010 and January 2011). Furthermore, one of the questions in our on-line survey questionnaire asked the respondents to rank five photographs according to their perception of what represents Amman. The majority of participants (191 respondents) ranked a view of the older hills and their neighborhoods that are characterized by their homogenous architecture, as their first choice. The second choice was the Saada Street – the major street in downtown Amman (109 respondents), while photographs depicting the more contemporary aspects of

Amman received lower rankings. Such findings further augment the aforementioned 'urban nostalgia' theme that underscores this idealization of the older districts of the city. One of the participants in the young Ammani professionals focus group interestingly articulated this idealization by stating that 'Jabal Amman and Rainbow Street … these areas have innocence and heritage. I feel people here are clean and genuine; they have principles' (Focus group with young Ammani professionals on 13 December 2010).

Not surprisingly then, Ammanis' choice of a brand image for Amman (Figure 2) depicts its iconic hills. True to his word, Mayor Maani's participatory bullishness extended to the selection of a brand image, where four proposed designs for a new brand image were exhibited at the Hussein Cultural Center (built during the 2002 branding campaign) and Ammanis were involved in the selection of the preferred one. Approximately 100 attendees voted for their choice, while Syntax conducted an additional 300 surveys in various parts of the city, the findings of which supported the initial vote. The process of voting further augments the fact that the 2009 re-branding targeted the internal local market as opposed to the external tourist market in the 2002 campaign. It also imbibes a sense of ownership of the city's brand and its image among the city's citizens as one of the participants in the Amman Institute focus group articulated '… to make [people] feel responsible and give them a sense of ownership for the project. To feel the importance of the implementation of this project and how it will benefit them, so they need to feel as part of the design or the implementation … . Through for example, voting … Greater Amman Municipality tried that with the Municipality logo. Where there was great acceptance from all of Amman to vote for the new Amman logo. It is a very small and simple thing, but it proved successful because it showed that people can come to vote on a specific idea or a concept to go down as a project' (Focus group with the planners of the Amman Institute, 12 December 2010).

The chosen brand image uses vibrant colors and cartoonish lines to connote contemporary Amman. One word that reads 'Amman' in Arabic is placed in a square-like font, which was designed especially for the purpose to be reminiscent of Amman's cube-shaped buildings and skyline. The accent over the letter 'm' resembles a bird, a symbol of peace and the dynamism of life in Amman. Beauregard and Marpillero-Colomina (2011, p. 68) observe that the informality of this new brand image conveys the youthfulness of Amman's society, yet embraces its ancient heritage and, hence, represents Amman as it is 'perceived and imagined' by its residents.

REBRANDING TACTICS: URBAN DEBATE BRINGS CONTEMPORARY AMMAN TO THE FOREFRONT

Amman's re-branding coincided with another major milestone for the city. In 2007, and upon the King's request for a new city master plan (Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein, 2006), several Canadian planners helped to draft the new Amman Master Plan (AMP) and the Master Growth Plan (MGP). These two plans were triggered by the need to regulate the construction of high-rise towers that had resulted from an influx of investments from oil-rich Arab countries (Greater Amman Municipality, 2007a, b, c). Interestingly, by regulating these towers, the AMP and the MGP embraced Syntax's findings that Ammanis disapproved of such developments (Greater Amman Municipality, 2008) – a perspective that our findings confirm. During the focus groups that we organized in 2010 and 2011, the comments about the Amman Gate towers, which were built before the new legislation sought to regulate high-rise development, were mostly negative such as 'The Jordan Gates are horrible', and 'I don't see the two towers [fitting] in a residential neighborhood. [They are] something against nature' and also 'Even business wise, I don't think they will be rented, they are not attractive here'. The towers are also seen as incongruous to the existing image of the city 'everywhere in the world, the tower area is the area of entering the city like in New York city and in other countries; where it gives a development image of the country, but not in an area that would distort its image' (a participant in a focus group with Jordanian real estate developers, held in Amman on 12 December 2010). The long-term urban development in Amman has indeed cost a loss of valuable geographic heritage of the city as another participant in the same focus group with real estate developers recalled 'I remember Amman between the First Circle and the Dahiyat al-Hussein neighborhood when it was all plants and it was agricultural. So from one side, Amman was ruined after the 1960s when the agricultural areas in West Amman were built up, and the built areas in East Amman were abandoned like Marka. I remember people would go to Abdoun to pick tomatoes from the fields. There was also the Cabbage Hill in Jabal Amman. So there is haphazard development and the city, Amman, was abandoned. We had in front of us great potential but this is gone'.

Therefore, unlike the mega-scale physical interventions of the 2002 branding campaign, the 2009 branding embraced tactical undertakings only at the local scale such as the urban design improvements to the Rainbow Street, one of the oldest streets in the historic Jabal Amman district. These improvements that included pedestrian friendly areas, panoramic lookouts and public spaces were all designed with the needs of the local community in mind according to Dr Rami Daher, the architect who was commissioned for this project (personal interview, 14 December 2010). Also, the 2009 branding campaign took a local perspective when the GAM supported local initiatives such as the Jabal Amman Resident Association (JARA), and facilitated their organization of the Souq Jara weekly market (JARA, 2008). A participant in the young Ammani professionals focus group (13 December 2010) said 'the Rainbow Street is good since they preserved and revitalized it; and maybe we need more of these projects'.

However, the GAM-organized centennial parade triggered debate among Ammanis. Opposition centered around its inaccurate representation of Amman as uninhabited before 1909 and against its costs, which many argued should have been used for much needed city projects and services (Assawsana, 2009; Jor1, 2009). GAM also launched a website to commemorate Amman's centennial, *Stories by Ammanis*: *Amman's story is the story of its people*, which invited Ammanis to post stories of their own experiences of Amman (Syntax, 2009). This is of importance because the cultural experiences of the city's citizens are intrinsically tied to their perception of the city as one of the participants in our focus group with Amman's citizens (12 December 2010) said 'Amman without people is not Amman; Amman is the life, the beat of the street, the merchants, the mosque the vegetable shops, this is Amman'.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005) examine the similarities between a city and a corporation and find that both are comprised of diverse sub-identities that, if managed appropriately, can coexist. Cities also accommodate a multitude of activities by users (for example residential, commercial, tourism and so on). Accordingly, 'the city becomes a multitude of brands' that are planned, designed and sold to the various consumer segments (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005, p. 512). Yet, while Amman's two branding exercises do not deviate from the need to address different consumer segments, their comparison contradicts Kvaratzis and Ashworth's statement of coexistence. Indeed, Amman's 2009 brand prioritized the affective perceptions of its local residents. This choice for the brand's visual image was made against the option to evoke what is unique about Amman's urban landscape (for example the historic theater), or its cognitive meanings (for example Arab-Islamic history). Our findings suggest that because the new brand captures the values of local residents, it successfully connotes several sub-identities (or brands) for

Amman. For example, Amman's new brand caters to tourists seeking a destination with an ancient heritage (Grissom, 2000), but without the stigma of the unchanged (Echtner and Prasad, 2003). This new brand also caters to those seeking the contemporary about Amman. Indeed, Amman is home to most of Jordan's 61 hospitals, which place Jordan (read: Amman) among the world's top five destinations for medical tourism (Malkawi, 2011).

Kavaratzis' (2004) internal (physical attributes) and external (subjective perceptions) in cities merge in Amman's 2009 brand, which becomes evident when we gauge it against the 2002 branding exercise. The launching of the 2002 brand incorporated strategies (marketing and promotion) and tactics (urban design, civic architecture and events) that sought to cater to external markets, particularly foreign tourists and investors. Conversely, the 2009 rebranding prioritized strategic and tactical undertakings that stemmed from a local perspective. Most importantly, contrary to research that finds that successful place branding is strongly linked to place-making initiatives (Beriatos and Gospodini, 2004; Kavaratzis, 2007; Khirfan, 2010), we propose that Amman's 2009 rebranding succeeded precisely because of the lack of conspicuous interventions in the physical fabric of the city. Amman's case proves that it is place and its image that lie at the heart of place branding, whereby image is comprised of the physical attributes, activities and meanings of the place. These findings confirm Firat and Venkatesh's (1993) interpretation of the relationship between values, product and image, where 'the image does not represent the product, but […] the product represents the image' (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993, p. 244 emphases original). Indeed, one of the planners of the Amman Institute stated 'I think that communicating with the community should be more visual. All psychological studies show that when images are more visual, less words and more images convey the point' (Focus group with the planners of the Amman Institute, 12 December 2010). More recent research that examines the challenges planners face

in their attempts to change established place images also confirms such findings (Bellini *et al*, 2010).

Yet, Amman's re-branding process was not unproblematic. There were shortfalls in terms of the implementation of the branding within the GAM – indeed, Syntax expressed concerns regarding its ineffective marketing department – and issues concerning those who are using the brand incorrectly. Furthermore, there has been criticism regarding the informality of the logo, especially by older Ammanis. Finally, both branding exercises, like other city branding projects, highlight only positive perceptions of the city. This is similar to Glasgow's branding as Capital of Culture in 1990, which was seen as detached from the realities of a city with a struggling economy and whose blue collar inhabitants have little association with its high-end cultural venues (Wishart, 1991; Reed, 1993; Dyer, 1996; *The Economist*, 2001). Indeed, our research revealed that Ammanis have conflicting and often contradictory perceptions of their city, such as the perceived strong socio-economic divide between East and West Amman. According to one of the participants in our focus groups 'some areas in East and West Amman have East and West qualities in them, so they complete each other and are balanced … . There is a bit of both in each of the East and West areas. We cannot say that Amman is more distinctive than other neighboring countries, on the contrary, Amman is a contradiction' (Focus group with media representatives in Amman, 14 December 2010).

There also appears to be ambiguity among Ammanis regarding what they perceive to be the reality of their city. As one participant articulated 'I don't know if we are clear on what we are and who we are and what we want to be; we are just copying other cities. Some areas don't feel like Amman but don't even feel like America; only a copy of a western place with big malls and parking. I don't think [that is a representation] of [the] local ideas. We copy them because we think the West is great, but I don't think that these

areas are great, and we are doing this without checking if that works for us [or doesn't]' (Focus group with Ammanis on 12 December 2010). Also, the perception of Amman's children of their city was indeed interesting. When asked to draw their impressions of Amman, many of the children who participated in our focus groups (10–11 December 2010) depicted street congestion and automobile accidents.

Finally, but most importantly, there are contradictions in the identity rhetoric of Amman between the official and the local views. One of the participants explained 'For example, when you hear the online commercial of the Abdaly,[7] the commentator starts nicely by talking about Amman and Downtown and its history, but they end with a contradiction stating Abdaly is the new Downtown' (Focus group with Ammanis on 12 December 2010).

Nevertheless, our findings reveal that the new brand image for Amman represents the values that unify Ammanis, who hail from a diversity of origins. Its focus on those values that trigger urban nostalgia to the older districts of the city among Ammanis, the umbrella brand of Amman, sends a 'credible signal' that highlights these intangible and experiential qualities of old Amman (Wernerfelt, 1988, p. 459).

NOTES

1   The Jordan Museum, which in 2001 was estimated to cost US$17.5 million, has not yet opened its doors to the public (The Jordan Museum, 2012).
2   In fact, these horseshoe arches are a Roman, not Islamic, architectural motif (Sear, 1982)
3   Similar to the complaints of most business owners in many a downtown core around the world, these downtown merchants were complaining that the primary cause of decline in the economic activity in downtown Amman is attributed to Ammanis shying away from going to the downtown owing to the lack of parking (Focus group with downtown merchants, 12 December 2010).

4 Ninety per cent of the sample in Khirfan's (2004) study said they liked the older parts of Amman compared to only 3.3 per cent who did not like them (6.7 per cent remained neutral to them).

5 A majority of Khirfan's (2004) sample (86.7 per cent) either agreed (20 per cent) or strongly agreed (66.7 per cent) that government agencies should spend more money on preserving the older parts of Amman.

6 The authors of this article did not request access to these data and depended in the writing of this article on our own primary sources of data including interviews with the Syntax team on 21 December 2010.

7 Abdali is a public–private mega-project in Amman.

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