# Towards Effective Place Brand Management

## Branding European Cities and Regions

*Edited by*

Gregory Ashworth

*Professor of Heritage Planning and Urban Tourism, University of Groningen, the Netherlands*

Mihalis Kavaratzis

*Associate Professor of Marketing and Tourism, International Business School – Budapest, Hungary*

**Mixed Sources**
Product group from well-managed
forests and other controlled sources
www.fsc.org  Cert no. SA-COC-1565
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

FSC

# Contents

# 6. Managing Otherness: the political economy of place images in the case of Tuscany

**Nicola Bellini, Anna Loffredo and Cecilia Pasquinelli**

## INTRODUCTION

Discussions about image and branding policies are usually placed in the framework of 'place marketing' and marketing literature helps in defining the features, components and main characters of image and of its relationship with local identity. We suggest, however, that managing images is also a political process with significant impact in supporting and shaping the scenario (perceptions and expectations) for innovation and economic policies (Bellini, 2004). The argument is supported by two different and complementary case studies from Tuscany (Italy).

The first one discusses the case of areas that show a divergence from the dominating pattern of social and economic development in the region. It is shown that 'managing otherness' is more than a communication problem and may reveal underlying ambiguities: at the same time, a request for supporting structurally disadvantaged areas and the affirmation of an alternative identity and of alternative development patterns. The second case study shows a different kind of 'otherness', concerning new industries and emerging social groups. Discussion shows that the branding process may imply a competition between images in order to control the representation of the past, present and future of an area. This competition aims at influencing the policy agenda by manipulating the gaps between image and identity.

## THE THEORY

### The Lessons from Marketing

Place image (the image of a region, of a city etc.) has come to the attention of both scholars and practitioners mostly within the framework of place marketing in its three main variations defined by its target (inward investors, tourists, residents) as well as with reference to country-of-origin effects on product image (Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Rainisto, 2003; Jaffe and Nebenzahl, 2006; van Ham, 2008). It is certainly a concept with a longer history, but it is marketing that has framed it in a consistent way and, above all, has tried to operationalize it. Place branding has been defined as the practice of applying brand strategy and other marketing techniques and disciplines to the economic, social, political and cultural development of cities, regions and countries. Marketing has thus provided 'a philosophy of place management' (Ashworth and Voogd, 1994:39) and place branding has attempted to transfer into local economic development not only some communication techniques, but also the identity-building power, the linking value and the emphasis on experience that 'post-modern' scholars attach to brands (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005; The Communication Group, 2006; Kavaratzis, 2007; Anholt, 2007). Without doubt, marketing has either strengthened or introduced some serious biases in the way we look at place images. The emphasis on distinctiveness and competitiveness has reflected an obsession with urban and regional 'entrepreneurialism' as well as with an easily misconceived 'customer orientation'. Furthermore marketing implies a competitive, quasi-mercantilist view of regional and local development that is increasingly unrealistic (or at least, partially misleading) in the network-like, 'coopetitive' scenario of today (cf. Kalandides, 2007a). Lastly, branding tends to be seen as a technocratic activity, representing the belief in the virtues of professionalism in public management, as opposed to old-fashioned politics.

On a more technical side, the dominance of marketing approaches aimed at attracting economic actors, such as tourists and inward investors, has led to emphasize strong, seductive images ('a special place to be'). The new priorities in the 'knowledge economy', and especially the emphasis on attractiveness with regard to residents belonging to certain social groups (such as the 'creative class'), imply to re-focus attention on the quality of everyday life and of the 'ordinary place'. Marketing lessons are nonetheless fundamental also from a policy perspective. As marketing teaches us, image is bound to have important effects which can be dangerous when they are not monitored or when they are not dealt with:

- image reflects and synthesizes the experiences and visions of individuals and groups, from which it derives. Two aspects co-exist: the *evaluative* component which reflects our experiences and what we perceive as real, and the *preferential* component which portrays the desires and motivations, in short, what we wish the area to be like (cf. Ashworth and Voogd,1990a:77 et seq.);
- image communicates and shapes expectations with respect to what the area can or should give to individuals. This concerns not only explicit expectations (those which, even though they are not necessarily realistic, clearly define problems and solutions), but also those – much more difficult to manage – which are implicit (taken for granted or which are not subject to discussion), or even fuzzy (as they are schematic, ideological, emotional, and not based on a clear understanding of what should be done concretely and how);
- image is a filter that influences the perception of the area, the quality of life and services, the level of development and the (individual and collective) expectations about the future. It obviously also filters communication: a positive image reinforces the credibility of messages, whereas a negative image reduces their credibility; a positive image allows minor problems not to be emphasized, but can result in underestimating emerging threats, whereas a negative image on the other hand can lead to the dramatization of marginal questions but can also raise attention in time by emphasizing weak signals;
- image is self-reinforcing through the activities of actors that conform to the expectations and through their subjective evaluations based on the relationship between perception and expectations (Figure 6.1). When an image has been consolidated, it is likely to be self-fulfilling.

## From Marketing to Policy

In our view, marketing is no substitute for policy. Still marketing can be functional to policy, especially when we consider it in a governance perspective. By the term 'governance' we mean a variety of guidance mechanisms, not necessarily restricted to public actors, whereby social processes are consciously directed in situations of interdependence. The concept that allows best to describe and understand the practical meaning and implications of governance is 'policy network'. We define policy networks as '(more or less) stable patterns of social relations between interdependent actors, which take shape around policy problems and/or policy programmers' (Kickert et al., 1997). Policy networks are therefore alternative to traditional ways of government (and, to a large extent, also to contemporary
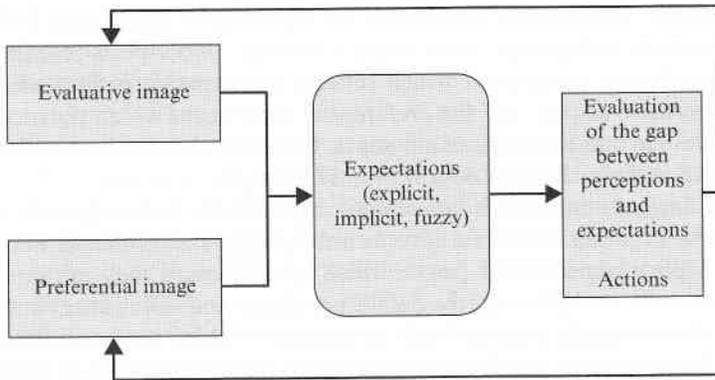
*Figure 6.1    Image, expectations and feedback mechanisms*

approaches of 'new' public management). The management of policy networks can take place at two different levels, using substantially different sets of tools. On the one hand, the structure of the network can be influenced, for example, through the composition, the number of actors, its openness, the internal rules, the introduction of new actors and the exclusion of some of the present actors, etc. Branding policies seem indeed highly dependent on the level and quality of available social capital: on the effectiveness of consensus-building, interactive procedures; on a substantial degree of inclusiveness and on the actors' restraining from opportunistic behaviour (Ward, 2000; Rizzi and Scaccheri, 2006).

On the other hand, at the cognitive level, it is possible to influence the perception, the views and expectations, to anticipate the exclusion of diverging ideas and views, to facilitate interaction and to promote a common language, to induce collective reflection and to prevent cognitive *lock-in* etc. Therefore the toolbox of industrial and innovation policies also includes a set of 'second generation' policy instruments, which impact on the cognitive dimensions of local networks in the attempt to govern their evolution through the formation of perceptions and expectations and which incorporate the management of regional/city images through branding (cf. Bellini and Landabaso, 2007).

This is especially true when policies deal with complex processes like innovation and economic development, which are characterized by risk, uncertainty and information asymmetries. Making sense of the place where we live and work, as well as of its present reality and future perspectives, is then essential:

. . . what is critical is how this information is processed, via mental processes of cognition, to form stable and learned images of place, which are the basis for our everyday interactions with the environment. It is the mental maps that individuals create that allow them to navigate through complex reality, because 'our surroundings are often more complex than the sense we make of them'. Branding deals specifically with such mental images. Place branding centres on people's perceptions and images and puts them at the heart of orchestrated activities, designed to shape the place and its future. Managing the place brand becomes an attempt to influence and treat those mental maps in a way that is deemed favourable to the present circumstances and future needs of the place (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005:507).

The political relevance of place branding is twofold. First, the image of an area (region, city) reflects its identity. As such we are not dealing with objective, technical data, but with a social, historical and highly subjective (and sometimes even artificial) construct, which consists of the total of affective and rational images produced by individual actors or by groups of actors. These images show the values that the various groups connect to the area, to its characteristics and its identity. 'In defining their discourses of inclusion and exclusion that constitute identity, people call upon an affinity with places or, at least, with representation of places, which, in turn, are used to legitimate their claim to those places' (Ashworth and Graham, 2005:3). It is in this way that groups take possession of a geographic space, synthesizing their view of the area in stereotypes and 'labels' and creating 'myths' through the selective narration of the social, economic and historic characteristics of the area. Through appropriate governance processes this may lead to increased social and political cohesion about related policies, constructing a sustainable 'brand purpose' (Anholt, 2007).

However 'different people, at different times, for different reasons, create different narratives of belonging. Place images are thus user determined, polysemic and unstable through time' (Ashworth and Graham, 2005:3). When different images coexist at a certain time, there may then be a competition between images in order to control the representation of the past/present/future of a territory and therefore the policy agenda.

Secondly, in dynamic contexts there may be coherence or incoherence between 'image' and 'product' as a result of conscious manipulation. In some cases, a prevalence of preferential over evaluative components is generated in order to anticipate a change in a reasonably nearby future, which some social groups want to strive for: a 'better' area (city or region), more livable and/or wealthier and/or more modern than it effectively is. The imagery therefore overlaps and expresses the vision that those groups envisage and to which they are committed (cf. Hospers, 2004; 2006).

In other cases evaluative components are misleading. Situations of

political and cognitive lock-in in 'post-paradigmatic' areas can generate stereotypical images referring to historic production structures. These images are outdated and – which is worse – can hamper innovative changes. Emerging industries and social groups are not recognized or dismissed as transitional, non-credible and non-reliable phenomena.

## THE IMAGE OF TUSCANY

### Features and Components

By all standards Tuscany has a strong, high-profile and widely recognized image. According to a recent survey (Cavalieri, 2001), more than 90 per cent of German consumers know the brands 'Toscana' and 'Firenze'. 'Firenze' is also known by 75 per cent of consumers in US and Japan, while the recognition of 'Toscana' is lower, but still relevant (more than 40 per cent). In some countries the familiarity with Tuscany identifies social and even political groups. In British and American literature (as also reminded by movies such as 'A Room with a View', 'The English Patient' and 'Stealing Beauty') Tuscany is a sort of exotic dreamland where the beauty of landscape and art takes away inhibitions and frees the souls, so that visitors discover their own feelings, emotions and sensuality. In German political jargon the expression '*Toskana-fraktion*' is used to indicate a number of left-wing intellectuals, sharing a custom of spending holidays in Tuscan countryside and therefore suspected of mixing revolutionary ideals and hedonistic behaviour.

Tuscany's image is primarily linked to tourism. The tourist image of Tuscany is an unparalleled blend of intellectual and emotional components. History, culture and the past shape the region's image from the Etruscan Coast to the medieval villages and the renaissance cities. Thanks to its glorious past, a sense of nobility, greatness and magnificence is conveyed to the visitors: 'Tuscany: noble and great region'. Cities like Siena define themselves as a 'strip of land rich in coat of arms and nobility' and their distinctiveness is described as 'aristocratic exclusiveness'.

The reference to art is obvious, due to the extraordinary, internationally recognizable assets inherited from history with 'brands' such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Giotto, Brunelleschi, Piero della Francesca etc. Tuscany's streets are 'Houses of the Memory' of eminent figures in the history of knowledge, such as Dante Alighieri.

Complementary to history is Nature, that perfect symbiosis man–nature that is detectable in the famous Tuscan landscape: 'The ideal place to spend your holiday time'. The mix of nature and history makes Tuscany

'genuine': 'A glow of genuineness that surrounds everything with perfumes of Tuscany'. Within this overall 'Green Tourism' approach, man–nature interactions are varied. They are related to sport and to the availability of biking and walking itineraries, allowing for 'Slow Tourism'. So, for example, the White Streets in Siena are presented as the icon of tourism in Tuscany, because they are streets without cars, where people walk for hours. More recently promotion placed new emphasis on thermal baths, as connected with relaxation and health: 'Tuscany: the region of well-being'.

A fundamental field of interaction between man and nature is food. In Tuscany there is an obvious link between green, slow tourism, on one hand, and wine and food, on the other. Along Tuscany's 'Wine Roads', innumerable opportunities to 'taste local culture' are available to the educated gourmet: 'About a territory, as ours is, we can say that's sufficient shaking it to make good food and products fall down. . . if you shake it a little more, you make theatre fall down'. Wine is 'the flag bearer of Tuscany in the world', 'the faithful image of Tuscan culture and tradition'. Nature, food, art, a human dimension of living distant from stressful contemporary world make up for a sweet life, the *dolce vita* (an expression usually kept in the original Italian) (Cavalieri, 2001:35). Moreover, Tuscany does not change. In some cases 'timeless images' are proposed, but more often the reference to key phases of Tuscan history is explicit. The preservation of the 'real Tuscany' through centuries is presented as a fundamental value: 'Time seems to have stopped'. Visiting Tuscany is experiencing history. In the case of Siena, the rite of the 'Palio' game brings history into real life: 'Siena is an itinerary that joins past and future'; 'A scrap of history that shows up in the present'. Food and wine also show their deep historic roots, as they are connected with traditional know-how of rural areas: 'Oil production goes back to seventh century BC'; Sangiovese was the grapevine of the Etruscan people; etc. Food and wine speak about history.

## The Weaknesses of a Strong Image

The Tuscan case proves the 'weaknesses of strong images'. Tuscany's images can be confused and ambiguous as much as they are obvious and stereotypical. This is clearly shown by the many 'missing links' that are often revealed between different place brands: is Florence in Tuscany? is Florence the same as Tuscany? where is the leaning tower of Pisa? Tuscany's identity runs serious risks of 'commodification' (cf. Simon, 2005:32 et seq.), as shown by the emergence of alternative tourist locations labelled as 'the new Tuscany'. According to the New York Times, the Italian Region *Le Marche* may be 'the next Tuscany', with advantages compared to the real one such as being less crowded, not yet discovered

('secret'), quiet and unused to tourism, while offering similar postcard features (converted farmhouses, small and picturesque Italian towns, traditional products and wines, rolling vineyards, hills, golden grain fields topped by crumbling castles, simple people rooted in the territory, rural life, sunflower fields etc.). It is suggested that this is an 'Authentic Italy that's vanishing from other parts of his homeland'. It is 'what Tuscany was': 'This is what Tuscany must have felt like 10 or 20 years ago, before it was discovered by tour groups and their omnipresent buses, carrying thousands and thousands of travellers who flock there each year to try to recreate the pleasure of "Under the Tuscan Sun", a Tuscany so crowded with British expatriates and second-home owners that that country's press calls it Chianti-shire. . . Tuscany is an increasingly challenging place to have an intimate encounter with true Italy'.

Significant challenges come from other countries. Again the New York Times finds 'The Tuscan Life' in Croatia and its cheaper second-home market. According to this report, 'the government would like the region to resemble a mix of Tuscany and Provence. . . somehow more honest and much more user-friendly. (. . .) We heard this was the New Tuscany. But you can't get places in Tuscany like this any more'. In Bulgaria (namely in Veliko Tarnovo Region, Gabrovo Region and Lovech Region), a growing real estate market, rurality, nature, a unique culture in vibrant old towns, exquisite landscape, rural traditions, timber-and-stone houses legitimate an active real estate agency to be named 'The New Tuscany Ltd'. Also in Alentejo (Portugal) and Priorat (Catalonia) being 'like Tuscany' is a positive element to be emphasized in area marketing.

To sum up, the idea of being 'like Tuscany', the 'new Tuscany', the 'next Tuscany' seems to be spreading rapidly. Adding to a more or less vague physical resemblance to the original, all 'other Tuscanies' seem to provide an increasingly generic, globalized 'authentic experience' based on some 'uniqueness of culture', a 'theme park' that gives tourists the 'feel of Tuscany'.

# TUSCANIES

### Not Just Florence

'Tuscany' is also unable to represent the different 'Tuscanies' (Cavalieri, 1999). The variety of landscapes and societies that make up the present Region of Tuscany is hardly reflected in the 'strong image' that is known worldwide. Thus we often find the need to define or brand parts of the region as the 'other Tuscany'.

Firenze/Florence is the dominating brand, standing out of the crowd of the other Tuscan images. Quality, centrality, excellence, traditions, taste, culture as well as the mix of urban features and countryside fascination (the 'Chianti-shire') make this city a high-value 'oasis' compared to the rest of Tuscany (as suggested by local place marketing). Only 50 per cent of German consumers know about other Tuscan cities: Siena, Pisa, Lucca. Only 8 per cent of Americans and Japanese know about other cities, namely Siena and Pisa. Due to the successful development of the local airport as gateway for an increasing number of international visitors, the image of Pisa is very often one with the image of Tuscany. In their schedules, major international airlines prefer to name the airport not Pisa, but 'Pisa Florence' (Ryanair), 'Pisa/Tuscany' (Delta) or 'Pisa (Tuscany)' (Easyjet).

Then, there is the 'other' Tuscany. As a communication device in tourism marketing, 'other' is used to suggest the opportunity to look for alternative/minor destinations, that are still unknown, not yet discovered and crowded by major flows of tourists: little medieval towns, wine areas not as celebrated as Chianti etc. But 'other' does not necessarily reflect positive values: it may mean separate, distant, backward, discriminated. . . At least two areas in the Region are 'other': Lunigiana in the North and Maremma in the South. The latter case is discussed in the following pages.

## Maremma

The Province of Grosseto (Figure 6.2) occupies the southern extremity of Tuscany and is the largest province of Tuscany (4504 sq km). The number of inhabitants (220 742 in 2006) makes it one of the provinces with the lowest population density per square kilometre (49 inhab./sq km). The Province administers a total of 28 towns spread over hilly inland areas, isolated mountains (such as the eastern part occupied by Monte Amiata) and, near the coastal zone, a plain better known as 'Maremma', which is crossed by rivers, interrupted by promontories (rocky coastlines) and characterized by wetlands and marshland. The southern islands of the Tuscan Archipelago (such as Giglio and Giannutri) are also part of the Province.

The provincial economy shows characters and performance that clearly differ from the rest of Tuscany, a Region that, starting from the second half of the twentieth century, has joined the North of Italy as one of the most advanced areas in the country (Table 6.1).

Already in 1969, a renowned economist, Barucci, concluded a report on the local economy by stating that 'also Tuscany has its South. A great part of this depressed Tuscany is Grosseto' (Barucci, 1969). IRPET
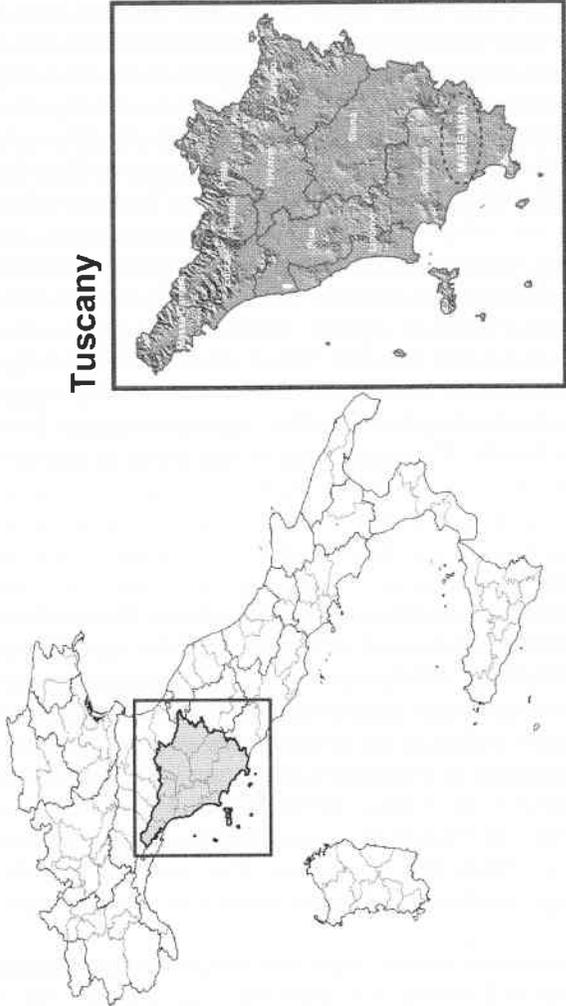
Tuscany

*Source:*  Regional Institute for Economic Planning of Tuscany. Copyright held by author.

*Figure 6.2   The Province of Grosseto in Italy and Tuscany*

*Table 6.1      Added value in the economic sectors in the Province of Grosseto*
*             – 2003*

| Sectors | % in the Province of Grosseto | % in the Region of Tuscany |
|---|---|---|
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing | *5.90* | 1.70 |
| Fashion industry | *1.20* | 6.20 |
| Mechanics | *1.10* | 4.60 |
| Other manufactures | *7.00* | 12.30 |
| Construction | *5.10* | 4.70 |
| Trade | *24.40* | 18.50 |
| Services | *33.10* | 32.80 |
| Public administration, education, health, other services | *22.20* | 19.20 |
| Total | *100.00* | 100.00 |

*Source:*   IRPET 2005.

(2003), the regional research institute for economic planning, openly stressed the diversity in an official report entitled *'La Provincia di Grosseto: l'altra Toscana?'* (Grosseto Province: the other Tuscany?). In the report Grosseto's 'otherness' is based on economic grounds: a development model different from the 'classic' model followed by the rest of Tuscany ('pre-industrial . . . or rather non industrial'; statistical economic indexes (population, employment rate, income. . .) that are consistently lower than the rest of the region; distance from the core of regional development (the Arno valley axis), emphasized by the lack of adequate infrastructures.

The growth of the economy in Grosseto is constrained by major structural deficits. Most often Grosseto ranks last in Tuscany with regard to infrastructures: setting an index equal to 100 for Italy, the province of Grosseto reaches 48.8 for the road network (Tuscany = 100.6), 77.1 for the rail network (Tuscany = 128.5), 71.3 for the airports (Tuscany = 100.4) and only 33.6 for the port network (Tuscany = 128.8). This infrastructural gap (that worsened in the last fifteen years) makes Grosseto, despite its geographical position, a kind of 'island' within an otherwise advanced region. The demographic trend shows an ageing population, with a consequent reduction in productivity: the category over 64 rose from 20.6 per cent in 1991 to 24.9 per cent in 2005, leading to a reduction in weight of the working age population (15–64 years) from 68 per cent in 1991 to 64.1 per cent in 2005. The viability (and identity) of an economy still based on rurality is clearly in danger when 45 per cent of farmers are over 65 years old and 96 per cent of entrepreneurs are over 60.

*Table 6.2    Employment in the high-tech sector in the Province of Grosseto*

| % | Grosseto | Tot. Region | Tot. Italy |
|---|---|---|---|
| % HT employment on total employment of the Province of Grosseto (1991) | 3.4 | 4.2 | 5.9 |
| % HT employment on total employment of the Province of Grosseto (2001) | 3.0 | 4.6 | 6.1 |
| % change of the HT employment 1991–2001 | −9.7 | 16.6 | 11.3 |
| % change of total employment 1991–2001 | 2.4 | 4.7 | 8.0 |

*Source:*   Istat.

*Table 6.3    The openness of Grosseto economy*

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Grosseto* | 9.2 | 8.5 | 7.8 |
| *TUSCANY* | 39.6 | 40.2 | 41.2 |
| ITALY | 39.5 | 41.0 | 43.0 |

*Source:*   Istituto G. Tagliacarne.

Parallel to this, Grosseto shows a serious gap in all innovation-related indexes, especially compared to a dynamic high-tech Tuscany. Grosseto has no university, but just a small teaching branch of the University of Siena, and only a few, minor research centres. R&D expenditure as percentage of local GDP is estimated to be only 0.22 (as against 1.06 for Tuscany and 3.50 for Pisa, ranking first in the Region). Employment in high-tech companies is at the bottom end in the ranking of Tuscan provinces and even shows a negative trend between 1991 and 2001 in sharp contrast with the rest of the Region (Table 6.2).

Looking at more fashionable indices does not improve the outlook for Grosseto. With respect to the 'Creativity Index' *à la* Florida, Grosseto ranks 40th in Italy (63rd for talent, 54th for technology, 30th for tolerance), while Firenze ranks 5th and Pisa ranks 13th (Tinagli and Florida, 2005). Last but not least, the development of the Province is affected by the low openness to the international economy (Table 6.3).

The uncertain urban characters of the city of Grosseto are one of the main features of the area and, according to some, one of the most serious handicaps for its economic development. The weaknesses of Grosseto have deep roots in history. Until the Italian unification (1861), Grosseto never

had a real autonomy nor a local noble class (being therefore 'directed' by outsiders from the neighbouring city of Siena or from Florence). Even when becoming provincial capital within the new Kingdom of Italy, the city maintained its non-urban, predominantly rural characters. It was considered an uncomfortable place to live and work. When the summer heat was at its peak, public offices were moved to a neighbouring village, with a better climate.

The rural character was further emphasized during Fascism for political and ideological reasons. Grosseto and its province were often referred to as the example of the 'sound' rural Italy. As Mussolini himself put it in 1930, 'within five or ten years, all of your province must be ploughed by roads, hundreds of houses must rise and will rise to host the rural population'.

After War World II, Grosseto remained what was defined as a 'city notwithstanding' ('*Città malgrado*': Elia, 2003). The city grew essentially by attracting people from the countryside, but never worked as a real 'melting pot' and never gave birth to some kind of new identity. Other migrations to Grosseto and its province were on the contrary directed from outside: the people from Veneto region to settle in the reclaimed areas of Maremma; the military personnel in the barracks of the city of Grosseto; and now also tourists themselves in their 'second houses'. At the same time, intellectuals and the potential members of new elites have been flowing away from the city to look for greater opportunities in bigger towns.

## Being the 'Other Tuscany'

Thus, the image of Grosseto Province is shaped by the wide, intact, rural spaces of Maremma, the area surrounding the city. Traditionally the landscape has been the dominating element emphasized by travellers. One of the masterworks of Italian cinema ('Il sorpasso', 1962), a kind of 'road movie', has passed on the image of a land to travel through, to be looked at from a car's window. 'This is a land where man has lived in respectful admiration for centuries', a land where nature has dominated man, rather than the other way around.

The main icon is provided by the *buttero*, a local cowboy bravely facing wild nature. A statue was dedicated to him in the rail station square, welcoming travellers arriving to the city (Figure 6.3). The myth has survived the end of his economic role. Old stories narrate about the legendary challenge of the *butteri* to the American cowboys, touring Italy with Buffalo Bill in 1890. To be a *buttero* is a way of life: still today the *buttero* symbolizes the values of hard work and respect for traditions.

A very powerful image of the area derives from a book written in 1957 by a local writer, Luciano Bianciardi (Bianciardi, 1957). In this peculiar

*Figure 6.3    The statue of the* buttero

work (indeed an essay in a novel's style) the author sketches an animated discussion between 'erudite' locals about the origins of the city of Grosseto: '. . .in our city there were learned, erudite and intellectual people who were looking for its origins'. 'Medievalists' set the birth of the city exactly in 1138 when Grosseto became a diocese. On the contrary, 'archaeologists' believed in an undoubted and illustrious Etruscan origin: 'Our city was born in the heart of the Etruscan civilization, who was set up here for the healthy air, richness of forests and fertile lands'. Provocatively, to the younger generation, 'determined to break with tradition', the year of its foundation was 1944: 'The origins of the city? The year of its foundation? But it was 1944, no doubt. Before that time, it did not exist, the Americans had established it. . .'.

In the same essay a young American visitor suggests that Grosseto looks very much like his own town, Kansas City, a town 'open to the wind and to the foreigners', 'not resembling any other Italian town'. Such

imagery has been very successful, although one can hardly figure out anything more distant from the standard Tuscan stereotype. Grosseto/Kansas City is a borderline town, with an uncertain identity. Grosseto, like Kansas City and unlike the 'great Tuscany', is a 'cowtown': simple, small, isolated, unsophisticated. Grosseto, like Kansas City and unlike the 'noble Tuscany', forgets its past and concentrates on recent history, when its city status was recognized. To sum up, Grosseto, like Kansas City, is an open city, meaning there is a lack of 'owners' of its identity.

Grosseto is 'periphery'. In fact the idea itself of being a periphery is cultural and psychological much more than 'objective'. It is related to the new dependence of Grosseto from Florence, first in the age of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany and later (since the 1970s) with the establishment of the Regional government. From a mere geographical point of view, there is no such thing as the marginality of Grosseto, that is located right in the centre of the country (see again Figure 6.2). For example, the 'need' for a local airport is often argued on the basis of the excessive distance from the regional airports of Florence and Pisa (160 km). At the same time Grosseto is only 170 km distant from the main Italian airport and international hub, Rome Fiumicino. Clearly marginality is more a matter of perceptions and stereotypes rather than an objective reality.

Grosseto is the 'other Tuscany'. The 'otherness' of Grosseto has more than one meaning: 'being atypical and being peculiar are also the juxtaposed terms by which the local society and its elite have portrayed themselves in their relationship with the external world' (D'Agnelli, 2003). Possibly the most consistent effort to re-build an identity based on pride and diversity has been realized during the two terms of Alessandro Antichi as mayor of Grosseto (1997–2005). This controversial, conservative, anti-communist lawyer defeated the left-wing government of the city by emphasizing the reaction to the widespread feeling of decline and by proposing a new rhetoric of development (in his words, 'a new renaissance'), based on the otherwise lost local identity. He was also a provocative and imaginative manager of symbols and icons, including monuments and cultural events. One famous photograph portrays him as a defiant, proud (but also modern and bourgeois!) replica of the *buttero*, while taming a cow (Figure 6.4).

Differences may then also reveal a new, positive and dynamic development model based on a greater weight of rural environment and therefore (especially in a post-industrialist, environmentalist approach) on a new tourism relying on 'a network of environment, natural resources, rural dimension, rural and artisan products of high quality'. Maremma is the land of escapes: not only for the frustrated metropolitan inhabitants looking for a slice of slow life, but, e.g., also for social experimenters like

*Source:*   www.alessandroantichi.org.

*Figure 6.4   Mayor A. Antichi*

the founders of the Christian community of Nomadelfia (a community where private ownership is abolished according to the myths of early Christianity).

Therefore Maremma can also be opposed to classic Tuscany in a positive sense. Classic Tuscany would offer cities of art, the most celebrated monuments, but also noisy and inattentive crowds of tourists and glittering outlets, while 'the other', 'unexpected' Tuscany would offer uncongested landscape, rural values, high quality environment, naturalistic and historical values: in other words, a different, greater authenticity, 'un-sophisticated genuineness' that gives 'emotions'. These are indeed the Leitmotiv of tourist marketing:

> Meant for those who love to travel, in search of colours, fragrances, sounds, flavours of the Maremma: a land you must live, love and visit. The traveller who wishes to awaken his emotions with a lifestyle linked to traditions and nature,

has only to come to Tuscany, in the fascinating Maremma region. Maremma is a lifestyle. . . consisting of the sea, nature, archaeology, craftsmanship, sport, good food. . . and much more. Today, more than ever, the Maremma is the perfect choice for the romantic traveller.

Nature here is not an asset nurtured by history and consciously shaped in accordance to a specific identity. Rather it is the result of a limited industrial development in the past. Wide spaces are then offered as an opportunity to investors. According to official brochures, the 'first reason' to invest in Grosseto is that the area has had a 'peculiar development' compared to the rest of the Region, leaving the natural aspect almost intact and 'untouched' by excessive industrial and urban settlements: 'this offers today the possibility to design new investment projects without being constrained by previous situations'.

The local discourse echoes the different meanings of this 'otherness'. The *maremmani* like to show the pride of their being different, but the political debate seems to be obsessed by the problems of being 'periphery', with a kind of (sometimes unjustified) inferiority complex that is a ready-made alibi for all failures in solving the economic and social problems of the area.

Thus, another icon of Grosseto is the 'Canapone', the nickname of the last granduke of Tuscany, Leopold II and also of its beautiful statue in the main square of the city (Figure 6.5). This granduke had a special paternalistic 'affection' for this area and indeed was committed to the solution of its main problems, starting with malaria. In his testament he refers, almost poetically, to Maremma as 'the first sick region, needing help, and yet so beautiful and rich of hopes'. The locals rewarded this love with a statue that portrays him, dressed up like an ancient roman, raising a distressed, sick lady with an act of pity and encouragement. To contemporary eyes, this is also an icon to the sense of frustration of the area and to the expectation of external help as the most likely solution to local problems.

# BRANDING FUTURE TUSCANY

## Images of the Regional Industry

Tuscany is a strong brand in tourism, but not for industry and not even for the food industry. The 'region-of-origin' effect is weak. According to the above quoted survey, only 60 per cent of German consumers link some food product to Tuscany (mostly wine and oil); among American and Japanese consumers this share drops to 7 per cent. As far as the fashion
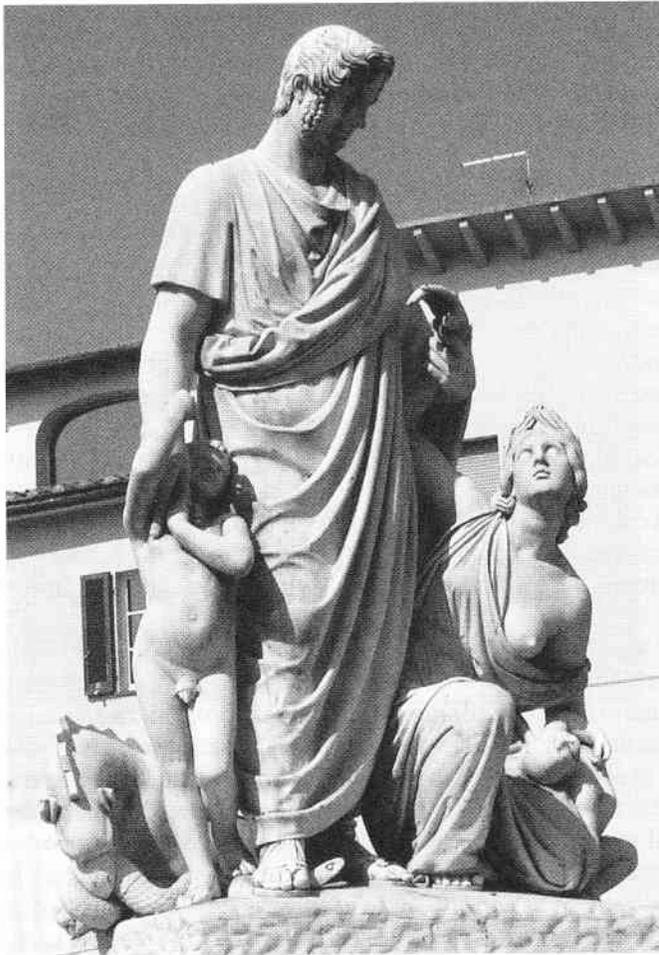
*Source:*    Nicola Bellini.

*Figure 6.5    The 'Canapone'*

industry is concerned, only 12 per cent of German consumers and 3 per cent of consumers in the US and Japan know some Tuscan *griffe*. By far the brand that is most clearly identified as Tuscan is Gucci. Prada and Ferragamo are recognized as Tuscan only by a small minority. Moreover, among the brands that are mentioned as Tuscan there are also non-Tuscan brands such as Armani and Benetton, showing how the Tuscan image easily disappears into the stronger 'made in Italy' brand. No connection

emerges between other major made-in-Tuscany brands (e.g. the *Vespa* motorscooter) and the region.

Even when we move from general consumers to professional buyers, only 60 per cent of the sample recognize a positive value in a 'made in Tuscany' product compared to a 'made in Italy' product. Many of the positive factors attached to the Tuscan origin of the product are mere repetition of the traditional factors characterizing 'made in Italy' products (Cavalieri, 2001:19 et seq. and 28 et seq.). To some tourists (like the Japanese), rather than a place of origin of prestigious products, Tuscany is an excellent location for shopping (Cavalieri, 2001:36). The Tuscan economy, therefore, seems to be able to exploit the high visibility of the Tuscany brand only in a very limited measure. Can a strong image give a substantial contribution to cognitive, social and political lock-ins? The case of Tuscany seems to suggest that this is possible. The tourist image of Tuscany is intimately consistent with a popular vision of the future development of the Tuscan economy that assumes the exit from the manufacturing sector as unavoidable and – in fact – desirable. According to this post-industrial vision, tourism, services, agri-food industries and other environmentally sustainable enterprises should substitute manufacturers in creating value and sustaining income levels.

This vision has been increasingly influential, although never made it to 'get hold' of the political agenda. Regional and local governments have mostly confirmed their allegiance to 'industrialist' visions, even in front of the crisis of the few large corporations present in the Region. This has happened with two (complementary, but sometimes juxtaposed) variations: the belief in the alternative model of development provided by smaller companies in the 'industrial districts' vs. the belief in the evolution towards a neo-industrial scenario, characterized by service-manufacturing integration, high levels of R&D activity and an increasing role of high-tech companies.

Both industrialist visions had images of Tuscany that could be conveyed to the general public. On the one hand, the industrial district vision built a powerful intellectual myth of an alternative economic model, mixing cooperation and competition, capitalist growth and social stability. Only in one case, i.e. the city of Prato, one has openly made reference to and emphasized the role of manufacturing tradition as a constituent part of the image of the city. More recently, due to the ups and downs of the economy, the general perception of industrial districts has been more frequently linked to crisis and de-industrialization rather than to success and growth.

On the other hand, the neo-industrial vision has developed its own brand, 'ArnoValley'. The obvious reference to Silicon Valley is here combined with the fact of the geographic concentration of high-tech

activities Universities, research centres and some 3000 companies in the area between Florence and Pisa, along the river Arno. The name 'ArnoValley' was first used provocatively by a Tuscan economist in an interview. Rapidly it spread across local and national newspapers, with no intentional planning or monitoring. As a consequence also no distinctiveness or authenticity were communicated and the most simplistic analogies with the Silicon Valley myths were suggested, notwithstanding the warnings of many about the excessive optimism of such messages. In 2002, a formal agreement between the City Councils of Florence and Pisa and the government of the Tuscan Region put the ArnoValley label on a programme promoting a more robust and networked business community for the Tuscan high-tech. Among the most noticeable initiatives were the publication of a report on the 'Net Economy in Tuscany' that raises some public debate and the start of a website 'ArnoValleycommunity.com', with the aim of contributing to the establishment of a business community. At the beginning the idea looked quite successful and the Community appeared to be an effective way to give visibility to the high-tech industry in the area, also by providing an interface to politicians and other business interests. In 2003 a study was commissioned in order to design the possible institutionalization of the ArnoValley Community. The report, following a thorough consultation of all stakeholders, suggested to link the ArnoValley brand to the Tuscany brand, which is 'unique and easy to be sold'. It also proposed the establishment of an 'ArnoValley Association' as animateur of business aggregation and of concrete projects, arguing communication was 'not enough and, if [ArnoValley did] not tackle business problems pragmatically, it [would not have left] any signs' (Marenco, 2003:12). And yet at the end of 2003 the project entered a fatal deadlock. The association was not founded, the ArnoValley Community website was progressively abandoned and is now no longer updated.

Why is this the case? ArnoValley never took off because it was inherently a very weak initiative, unable to build a significant 'brand purpose' (Anholt, 2007), that entered a vicious circle of irrelevance and ineffectiveness and appeared to most stakeholders as not bringing any real added value. The process was carried out quite poorly, both technically (because of the prevailing role of communication and public relations experts) and above all politically. The constituency of the local political elite remained rooted in the traditional industries and their territorial clusters. Unsurprisingly political support turned out to be more lip-service to then fashionable catchwords than actual commitment. The Region never assumed full financial and strategic responsibility, leaving the leadership to the two City Councils. These had a very loose coordination: the two municipalities designed distinct and separate initiatives and governance

arrangements in order to pursue their own objectives under the broader coalition's aims. The municipalities also suffered from not being at the appropriate scale of jurisdiction, not representing other smaller, but not less active municipalities (such as Pontedera and Empoli). Their own commitment was also very much dependent on the personalities involved and clearly declined when the political leaders of the project left their jobs. Other competing projects were allowed to emerge with no greater success or scope of action (e.g. the so-called *Progetto California*), but for sure not helping communication and community-building efforts.

The result was a weak and vague brand identity proposition that was rejected by more established and stronger identities. Actually, the need to dialogue with the deeply rooted Tuscan identity was often overlooked. Especially during the first stage, instead of reducing the conflicting potential in order to harmonize contemporary and traditional assets within an 'umbrella identity', the high-tech was superficially communicated as a 'potential economic miracle' able to 'radically upset the traditional productive and social fabric' of Tuscany. This promise was accepted with scepticism by the industrial and political establishment and in fact proved to be undeliverable when the new economy bubble burst. The bluff was revealed and ArnoValley finally delegitimized. In conclusion, also due to the weak perception of the need to brand industrial Tuscany, the strength of the traditional image succeeded in preventing the emergence of new ones, that could reflect the vision of more dynamic industries and social groups.

**Heritage and the Forgotten Past**

The role of cultural heritage here comes into play, showing how different images and visions are built upon a very selective narration of the region's history and shared values. Facing the inability to sustain a 'dissonant' discourse on regional heritage (cf. Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996), the emphasis on a romantic, anti-modern, 'natural' image of Tuscany, the obsession with 'preserving the past' and the stubborn reluctance to modern additions has been clearly instrumental to the post-industrial vision of regional economic development. Thus heritage has failed to contribute to the regional innovation culture, i.e. to the shaping of those institutions (norms, values, formal, informal) that have a significant influence on the perceptions of actors involved in innovation process (Didero et al., 2008).

The dominant manipulation of heritage as entertainment for tourists, typical of the 'cities of art' (as distinguished from the 'cities of culture': Sacco et al., 2008) is based on forgetting. When nature is indicated as the

strategic resource of future Tuscany it is easily forgotten how little of the Tuscan landscape is 'natural' and how often it is, on the contrary, a classical case of *Kulturlandschaft*, with man-shaped hills, lines of cypresses and pine forests along the coast. When authenticity is based on history (i.e. the longer its history, the greater the authenticity), it is easily forgotten the huge amount of process and product innovations that are supporting the quality and competitiveness of the local 'authentic' food industry.

An excellent example is wine. Like (and more than) other food products, the link to the geographical origin is essential. As mentioned before, in Tuscany this has also a historic dimension: being rooted in history makes the product and the experience connected to it more 'authentic'. But not all Tuscan wines have a history. Outstanding wines with spectacular commercial success are in fact 'new products' and have created 'new' wine areas, in no way more 'noble' than wine areas are in Northern California or other extra-European regions. The best known case is the Sassicaia wine, produced in Bolgheri since the 1960s. Producers in areas like Bolgheri itself, Val di Cornia or the Pisan Hills have been constantly innovating production technologies, introducing new grapes and varieties, exploiting new lands, bringing in non-Tuscan entrepreneurship and capitals and even 'scandalous' modern winery architecture. Of course, marketing concedes that wine-making science has evolved, but, whenever possible, distinctiveness and quality are presented as based not on contemporary creativity and knowledge, but on available historic antecedents (including Romans and Etruscans).

As one scholar of high-tech development problems in Tuscany once reminded his readers, 'Galileo used to live here' (Bianchi, 1996). Yet it is surprising to notice how rarely the brand 'Galileo' is used, even in his hometown, Pisa. Leonardo da Vinci, another icon of modern science, is much more frequently remembered (and reminded to tourists) as an artist than as a scientist.

Also forgotten are some fundamental characters of Tuscan history, such as the intimate link between modernity and beauty and between culture and economic development that was the essence of the golden age of the Medicis. Beauty is communicated as a mostly aesthetic fact and visitors often are left in total ignorance about the tremendous technical challenges and outstanding skills behind some of the greatest works of art. In Pisa, only the dramatic events concerning the stability of the Leaning Tower have drawn attention to the fascinating technical complexity of that building.

The strength of this collective mood is reflected in Florence, a 'high culture district' (cf. Lazzeretti, 2003) with a dramatic inability to express and communicate innovation. As one inhabitant once put it in a private

conversation, 'we should expect to be ordered to go out dressed up in medieval costume'. The most modern landmark in the city is the Santa Maria Novella railroad station, a masterwork of modernist architecture, built in the 1930s and actually imposed on the city by the Fascist regime. With the exception of some linkages to modern creativity, mostly in the field of fashion, Florence is today a frozen city, in sharp contrast with the characters of contemporary creative cities (Hospers, 2004) providing a reminder of the fact that 'the most successful heritage cities are those of sufficient size to offer numerous amenities, including heritage, but not dominated by it' (Graham, 2002:1014). The recent debate about the new entrance to the Uffizi Museum and the innovative proposal by Arata Isozaki (finally cancelled in 2004) has led the distinguished art historian Irving Lavin (2005) to comment about 'the bitter irony that is behind the conservative mood that dominates in Florence – right in Florence! – and suffocates the spirit of adventure and innovation that created the city we all love and admire, where the notion itself of modernity was born. The Cathedral itself, and especially Brunelleschi's dome, would be surely prohibited today (. . .) Florence has become a stone-made Disneyland'.

## The 'Other Tuscany', Once Again

Unsurprisingly, Tuscany shows a great difficulty in managing umbrella brands, as serious inconsistencies easily emerge in messages conveyed to different targets (e.g. tourists vs. foreign investors). Inward investment attraction needs to communicate an image that is substantially different from the tourist one: a society with a strong productive tradition; a dif-fused entrepreneurial culture; the network of institutional partners for guidance, support, assistance; the pervasiveness of infrastructures, its accessibility also due to the importance of regional airports; the excellence of its universities and research centres. Even speaking of 'quality of life' may be difficult. To tourists it is related to relaxation, 'stopping time', isolation, silence, and a break with modernity (from cars to e-mails). To investors and their workers it obviously relates to accessibility, connec-tions, urban excitement, progress and modernity.

Tensions emerge. The emphasis on history clashes with the need to com-municate an orientation to the future. While some industries (like textile, clothing, shoe-making and other fashion-related manufactures) may more easily make reference to the past, this is perceived as difficult for modern industries, like the automotive, electronics, biotech or chemical industry. Contrasts are then dramatized. The 'New Deal of the Tuscan System', from traditional manufactures to high-tech, looks more like a jump

forward, a surprising outcome rather than an obvious bridge between past and future: 'The time runs unexpected roads. In Tuscany.'

Furthermore modernity seems to threaten genuineness. Modern features in farmhouses (like swimming pools) need to be explained as not 'artificial', but expression of a humanized approach, that makes living comfortable by our standards today, as they were centuries ago for the people of the past.

An additional, even more dramatic tension exists between industrial landscapes and the Tuscan landscapes as communicated to tourists. As it is often the case with advertising, communication reveals rather than downplays these tensions. For example, playing on the double meaning of the word 'natural' (related to nature, on the one hand, and right, ideal, obvious, on the other) place marketing suggests that Tuscany is 'The natural choice of your business location'. More evocative analogies are sometimes attempted. For example see Figure 6.6, a group of cypresses should portray the quality of local social capital and the attitude to networking among economic actors (like in the 'industrial district'). In the end, high quality and excellence seem to be the only truly horizontal features of Tuscany that are able to support umbrella brands effectively. Quality and excellence concern lifestyle, society, landscape, education, food and wine, environment, traditional products (fashion, jewellery, textile), new products. Irony helps: 'also an imperfection may make one extraordinary, as in 'In Tuscany' (see Figure 6.7).

Again, due to the strength of tourism's stereotypes, important features of the Region, such as the presence of a high-tech industry, need also to be labelled as the 'other Tuscany', suggesting a problematic relationship with the identity of the Region. The President of the Region, visiting Japan in early 2007, referred to Research and Technology in Tuscany as 'the other face' of the Region, an unknown face, to many an unexpected one ('Tuscany as you didn't expect'), that deserves to be 're-discovered': 'Leonardo was a great scientist too and we want to demonstrate that still today we are an advanced technology and research land, not only of style, wine and tourism'.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has emphasized the many weaknesses inherent in Tuscany's strong image. Branding Tuscany is a technically challenging task not only because of the inertia of the many stereotypes, but also because of the many policy implications that are 'hidden' behind brands. In particular we notice that a strong brand can be as effective in linking and including

Anche i singoli fanno sistema. In Toscana.

Figure 6.6    Promotion images of Tuscany 1

Anche un difetto può rendere eccezionali.
In Toscana.

*Source:* www.investintuscany.com.

*Figure 6.7 Promotion images of Tuscany 2*

as it is in excluding regional sub-areas as well as social groups. Of course, otherness may be considered either in its negative or in its positive significance. However, the stronger the collective image, the greater should be the attention to branding, as a way to legitimize new social groups, emerging industries and alternative models of development.