Exploring Stakeholder Participation and Representations
in Region Branding:
The Case of Northamptonshire, UK

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Abstract

Collaborative multi-stakeholder processes for regional development are not novel, but they are usually inhibited by complex management issues and power politics. Peripheral regions face the greatest likelihood of economic decline due to the aggregation of activities in the largest cities. Stakeholder-led place branding strategies have been known to create a distinctive identity and narrative about a place or location to garner recognition. However, few models and recommendations have been developed for adoption in resource-constrained regions. Given this socio-economic context specificity, the present study suggests a 'Conceptual Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Place Brand Governance' for developing region branding strategies. The theoretical notions of social representations, regional cohesion, brand architecture and participatory place branding are reviewed and examined in the case context of Northamptonshire. The research adopts a qualitative, single case study strategy to investigate the social representations and participation of institutional and community stakeholders. Data from semi-structured interviews, focus groups and secondary documents are thematically analysed.

The findings reveal dominant social representations, historically unequal development in urban and rural areas, and the marginalised position or feeling of neglect in the case context. A market-oriented approach is evident in the narrow interpretation of place branding as a tourism marketing exercise. An in depth exploration of stakeholders' assumed and expected roles reveals the intertwined issues of inclusiveness and legitimacy of place branding. Brand architecture strategies are suggested to manage the critical issues hindering a cohesive approach to region branding. The research aim is achieved by linking complex brand and stakeholder relationships under one framework. Special attention is paid to stakeholder management by conceptualising roles, relationships and mechanisms for multi-stakeholder place brand governance. Finally, the practical implications for widening participation in a resource-constrained region are discussed. The recommendations are directed towards practitioners and policymakers who play a prominent role in brand governance since institutional recognition and support are found to be central to diversifying the social representations and participation in place branding.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Appendix

Chapter 1. Introduction

Place branding (PB) has been widely recognised as the practice of developing 'brands' for geographical locations such as cities, regions, and nations to trigger positive associations and distinguish a territory or location from others (Anholt, 2010; Kavaratzis, 2004). The development of PB praxis has left little doubt about the application of branding and marketing techniques to places. The question is not, *can places be branded?* The inquiry is concerned with *how to brand different types of places?* Differentiated PB based on geographical scales such as city, region and nation is regarded as an integral part of theory building in the field (Gertner, 2011a). However, 'regions' are the least explored scale in PB, compared to city and nation, even though regions are significant units for economic development and place governance (Herstein, 2012). In the age of city-centric development, the meso-scale can enable towns, villages and hinterlands to gain a competitive advantage by pooling resources to better the whole region (Turok, 2004).

Collaborative multi-stakeholder processes for regional development are not novel, but they are usually inhibited by complex management issues and power politics. PB has been applied as a stakeholder-led strategy for creating a distinctive identity and narrative about a place or location to gain recognition and competitive advantage. A stake and interest in the economic performance and cultural vibrancy of the place is a crucial factor for the formation of vital coalitions in PB (Donner et al., 2017). The capacity to bring capital such as economic, social, cultural and symbolic determines which stakeholders are included in place brand governance (Reynolds, 2018). The usual participants are the public and private sector stakeholders. More recently, the role of the voluntary sector (Sarabia-Sanchez and Cerda-Bertomeu, 2018) and Higher Education Institutions have been recognised (Bisani et al., 2021; Cavicchi et al., 2013).

Place branding in general, and region branding in particular, face two key challenges: (i) the management of complex brand associations to create the perception of the region as a single cohesive entity and (ii) managing the co-opetitive forces affecting local and regional political, economic and cultural stakeholders to mobilise them for a cohesive approach to region branding. The qualitative case study method in this study investigates the representations and participation of multiple stakeholder groups in an urban-rural, resource-constrained region. The two intertwined issues are addressed under the *Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Place Brand*

Governance, advancing our understanding of stakeholder roles, relationships and collaboration mechanisms in PB.

1.1. Background

1.1.1. Place Branding Urban-Rural Regions

A useful starting point for such an enquiry would be clarifying the meaning, goals and outcomes of PB. Unsurprisingly, there is no single consensus among practitioners and scholars on what this might be. Based on the literature, multiple conceptualisations of PB can be held and achieved at the same time. They are identified as *perception management, stakeholder engagement, place governance* and *economic development* (elaborated in Section 2.4.)*.* The definition of PB adopted in this study views that the meaning, goals and outcomes are dependent on the political, economic and cultural context of a place.

However, PB theory development tends to rely on the practices and successes of well-known (mega)cities and nations. Cleave et al. (2016; 2017) have argued that municipalities of all sizes employ PB as part of their economic development strategies. Indeed, smaller and more peripheral municipalities, whether urban or rural, face the greatest likelihood of economic decline since the agglomeration of activities in the largest cities can leave smaller urban spaces to fight for the remaining scraps of mobile economic resources (Cleave and Arku, 2015). Thus, it is crucial to understand the decisions these smaller municipalities, urban towns and rural regions make in their economic development efforts with respect to place branding.

In the current study, regions are defined as "social constructs that defy reification solely as fixed territorial-administrative spaces" (Dinnie, 2018, p. 31). Two strands of enquiries are popular in the scant regional branding literature at present. *Inter-regional branding,* studied from an economic-geography perspective, is concerned with the joint branding efforts of two or more regions within one country or between countries (Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015). *Rural regional branding* is concerned with leveraging the territorial identity to stimulate endogenous development (Donner et al., 2017; Horlings, 2012; Vuorinen and Vos, 2013). Both perspectives have their starting point in the conditions of interdependency for resources, achievement of a critical mass and enhancing product portfolio. This study finds that urban-rural, resource-

constrained regions are likely to have the same drivers for joint PB; however, their practices have been largely overlooked in the literature.

A distinction between urban and rural PB is based on the latter's relatively significant geographic or economic peripherality (Rauhut Kompaniets and Rauhut, 2016). However, economic peripherality can be a characteristic of an entire region, affecting urban and rural areas with high out-migration rates, ageing population, low educational levels and suppressed incomes (Stoffelen et al., 2017). Building on the earlier argument of Cleave and Arku (2015), these smaller, peripheral municipalities face the greatest likelihood of economic decline and depend upon common pool resources to achieve a critical mass for competing with larger urban agglomerates. To some extent, such arguments are found in PB literature exploring export of agro products or rural tourism as a form of urban-rural connection (Horlings, 2012; Ikuta et al., 2007). However, considering urban-rural connections in region branding is more than a matter of 'promoting together' (Andersson and Paajanen, 2012). It is argued that region branding can serve as a framework for creating shared identity and goals for the betterment of the whole region. Thus, the current study aims to contribute to understandings of branding urban-rural regions beyond the functional goals of regional development, focusing on the interplay of urban and rural identity narratives.

1.1.2. Multi-Stakeholder Governance

New modes of public-private partnerships (PPP) are observed in several areas of the public sector functioning. To some extent, the PPP model is an outcome of the liberalisation of government processes by including industry networks and actors for informing the growth policy and agenda. This follows a shift in the new public management philosophy of governments adopting a more business-like manner, involving risk-taking, inventiveness, promotion and profit motivation in their functions (Hubbard and Hall, 1998). Regarding PB, the multidisciplinary scholarly view purports that governments alone cannot be sole owners and managers of place brands (Vuignier, 2017; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014).

The shift from public-led branding to private-led branding is particularly evident in 'resource-constrained' regions (Slocum and Everett, 2014). This condition is attributed to shrinking public sector finances and a reliance on private or commercial interests in setting the regional development agenda and implementation through private sector-led agencies such as

Destination Management Organisations (DMO) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) (ibid). Constraints are noted in terms of dwindling finances and human capital (Jones et al., 2011). Some of the consequences are wider geographic reporting within the LEP system and a restructuring of tourism governance into a general economic development remit (Slocum and Everett, 2014). Consequently, the condition purports a market-based view rather than a resource-based view, evident in the channelling of resources towards external destination promotion rather than membership focused governance (Peters et al., 2011).

In an extended rendition of the PPP model, access to strategic participation and decision making tends to be limited to prominent institutions and groups (Quinn, 2013; Slocum and Everett, 2014; Ward, 2000). Universities, in particular, contribute significant knowledge infrastructure and amenities to the place and can be an influential stakeholder in local governance (Salomaa, 2019; Lebeau and Cochrane, 2015). Next, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations promoting heritage and nature conservation, arts and culture, (general) philanthropy and public service delivery may be engaged in development and governance networks (Sarabia-Sanchez and Cerda-Bertomeu, 2018). However, their influence and impact on the PB process are not well documented. Since these groups are primarily engaged in PBG due to their institutional or organisational interests and mission congruence, they are regarded as *Institutional Stakeholders* (ISH).

In contrast, civil society groups and residents are not necessarily ascribed an active role in PBG (Sarabia-Sanchez and Cerda-Bertomeu, 2018). They may contribute to identity development through public consultation mechanisms or act as ambassadors for the place brand through the power of their word-of-mouth. Their participation at the strategic level has been limited because they are an incoherent and heterogeneous assemblage of individual interests with low influence and involvement. Some concepts and empirical evidence challenging this passive role are emerging from destination management and PB literature, particularly at the neighbourhood and city level (Sofield et al., 2017; Hudak, 2015; Braun et al., 2013). The present study explores the role of these *Community Stakeholders* (CSH) in region branding.

1.1.3. Models of Participation

A distinguishing feature of PB, in comparison to the mainstream product or corporate branding, is the complexity inherent in managing stakeholders (Hanna and Rowley, 2011). Following the

multidisciplinary expansion of the field of study, a participatory approach to PB has become a widely purported model. Notions of participation that influence current understandings in PB stem from developments in spatial planning, policymaking, participatory design principles and good governance (Braun et al., 2013; Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014; Jernsand, 2016).

Following a similar line of thought as the PPP models, the notion of 'participatory place branding' holds that place brands cannot be strictly controlled; they can only be managed through collaboration with stakeholders. The concept of stakeholder *collaboration,* stemming from organisational and management studies, can be likened to value co-creation, i.e., sharing resources to solve problems that cannot be solved by any one group or individual (Bazzoli et al., 1997). In particular, the outcome of the process is significant for "creating new value together" rather than a value exchange between partners (Kanter, 1994, p. 97). Thus, in accordance with this view, all stakeholders who affect or are affected by the branding of the place should be co-producers in brand creation, implementation and governance (Henninger, 2016; Kavaratzis, 2012).

The notion of *inclusiveness* captures this notable development, encompassing ideas of broad participation, equitable or sustainable development, stakeholder multiplicity and democracy (Jernsand, 2016). Proponents have called for a more responsible and socially sensitive approach to cater to a broader range of stakeholders and acknowledge the importance of resident participation in PB decision-making (Kavaratzis *et al.*, 2019). Further, broad participation has been linked with enhancing the legitimacy of ISH's PB initiatives (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013; Martin and Capelli, 2017). Adopting the socio-economic perspectives of these studies, the current study argues that CSH have a clear stake in the place and its brand due to their residential interests and ties to the region. They may be *self-engaged* members, playing an active role in the civic, social or voluntary aspect of community life. Drawing from notions of political activism, placemaking and volunteering in tourism studies, this 'active citizenship behaviour' is viewed as their 'right' or claim to the place (de Azevedo *et al.*, 2013; Zhang and Xu, 2019).

Caution should be taken in developing a 'participatory' model for PBG since widening participation may not be ideal for all types of places. For instance, full and direct participation of residents is usually associated with mature destinations seeking rejuvenation (Bichler,

2021). However, the benefits of promoting a diverse representation in place brand development are too significant to ignore. Moscardo's (2005) analysis of 40 cases of tourism development in peripheral regions consistently found evidence that those who had the power to make decisions about the nature of tourism development primarily determined the impacts of that development. Moscardo (2011) provides the foundation for interrogating stakeholder participation through the analysis of social representations of PB. Hanna and Rowley (2011, p. 473) called for further research on 'agents, relationships and interactions' to better understand how place brands come about and how they can be managed. Thus, the social representations and participation of institutional and community stakeholder groups are explored to develop a *Conceptual Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Governance*.

1.2. Research Approach

The study is firmly grounded in the theoretical framework for multi-stakeholder governance as current understandings on this topic serve as the foundation and shed light on the knowledge gaps. Four research questions are formulated to address the gaps (outlined in Chapter 5). Then viewed holistically, they are the basis for the study aim: to create one framework that incorporates the notions of regionalism and participation to address the issues of multi-stakeholder PBG. Research objectives break down the task into four main steps for conducting a multi-source, qualitative investigation. Simultaneously, this case study context exemplifies characteristics that are intrinsic and instrumental to the research problem.

1.2.1. Problem Statement and Aims

Different stakeholder groups attach varying meanings and identities to a place (Merrilees et al., 2012). Stakeholders are driven by different degrees of residential and commercial interests and identities when participating in collective action (Neville and Menguc, 2006; Rowley and Moldoveanu, 2003). Thus, it is inferred that 'stakeholder multiplicity' is inherent in the PB process, reflected in the multiple, conflicting, complementary or cooperative stakeholder claims to the place and the place brand (Neville and Menguc, 2006). The role of place brand managers is not solely to seek consensus (Jernsand, 2016) but to channel the multitude of interests and interpretations of the place into a cohesive place brand narrative. The theory of *social representation* specialises in the articulation of individual and social, and symbolic and real meaning (Moscovici, 1994; Moscovici and Marková, 1998). It has been used to explain

community perceptions and attitudes towards tourism development (Pearce et al., 1991; Moscardo, 2011). Establishing shared understanding and meanings enhances collective appreciation and a common language for articulating PB goals and vision (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). Thus, following the methodology of Moscardo (2011), investigating social representations of PB means questioning *whose identities are being promoted*, *who shapes the process* and *who stands to benefit*.

Considering a socio-constructivist definition of 'region', the perception of a unified and cohesive entity is not strictly politico-administrative (Dinnie, 2018). Past studies have utilised the notion of *regional cohesion* to examine the 'functionality' of the region for forming policy networks among public-private actors (Quinn, 2015) and the 'feeling' among the residents for internalising the place marketing image (Hospers, 2004). As per this view, regional identity and image are ultimately determined by the political, economic and cultural institutions and actors. Regional cohesion reinforces that the aim of region branding goes beyond regional development to symbolically represent the region through the management of two interrelated dimensions: (i) complex brand associations and (ii) stakeholder multiplicity, in order to mobilise stakeholders for a cohesive approach to region branding.

Considering that stakeholders can mobilise, the question arises about their roles and legitimacy. *Brand architecture* models have been applied for clarifying the structure of brand relationships, and to a lesser extent, stakeholder management in PB. The main gaps in knowledge pertain to stakeholder collaborations, mainly when a central coordinator or place brand manager is not present. Broadly, political and economic institutions, agencies and industry networks have been known to take up the strategic role of PBG and decision making. Little is known about the role and engagement of citizens or residents in a multi-stakeholder governance network. While the benefits of engaging local communities are recognised, their active role tends to be marginalised. Eshuis and Edwards (2013) caution that such practices may lead to a place brand devoid of local character and may be perceived as a waste of the taxpayers' money, hampering the legitimacy of the place brand. Bichler (2019) called for further research on residents' perceived roles and responsibilities and exploring institutional and social governance structures that enable participation and support of civil society. Thus, the principles and mechanisms governing *stakeholder collaboration and inclusiveness* are key to the development of such a framework.

The present study aims to develop a *Conceptual Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Place Brand Governance* and recommendations for adoption in a resource-constrained region that incorporates notions of:

• Diverse social representations

• Regional cohesion

• Brand architecture

• Stakeholder collaboration and inclusiveness

The aim is achieved by linking complex brand and stakeholder relationships under one framework. Special attention is paid to the stakeholder management aspect by conceptualising roles, relationships and mechanisms for multi-stakeholder PBG.

1.2.2. Research Context

Northamptonshire, an urban-rural county in England, United Kingdom, is chosen for in-depth exploration of stakeholder collaboration for PB in a resource-constrained region. Northamptonshire's regional characteristics of stark income inequalities, urban and rural deprivation, and limited public finances situate the county as apropos for this study exploring PBG in a resource-constrained context. Interestingly for a semi-rural region, the county is not peripheral in a geographic sense. Indeed, the location of Northamptonshire in the Midlands is one of the unique selling points the county has leveraged in its economic development policy for the attraction of residents and students (NEP, 2014). However, in socio-economic terms, deprivation in income, education and employment in the urban towns and rural villages contribute to its marginalisation (NCC, 2019). This position is also observed in wider regional growth and policy networks due to the lack of a city within the county. Moreover, following the central government austerity programme since 2010, local government authorities, including Northamptonshire County Council, have had their public sector budget drastically reduced (Caller, 2018).

Despite being a historic county-region, Northamptonshire seems to lack a clear, joined-up strategy for the promotion of its identity (Northamptonshire Surprise, 2019; Uloth, 2017). Nonetheless, the growth potential is significant owing to being in the South East Midlands industrial growth area, known as the *Oxford-Cambridge Arc* (SEMLEP, 2019). Of particular

interest to this research is the visitor economy of Northamptonshire since multiple stakeholder groups with diverse interests co-exist. There is an ambition among the visitor economy stakeholders to build an overarching brand identity for the county and formalise its governance by setting up a DMO. However, the PBG in the county remains fragmented due to weak economic and political institutions. Power struggles have been noted in community tourism initiatives when leadership is weakened through shrinking resources (Slocum and Everett, 2014). These authors conclude that commercial interests ultimately control the destination image in resource-constrained regions. A different proposition is put forth in the current study, i.e., the potential for multiple stakeholder groups to mobilise for PB in the face of weak public sector finances and governance.

The research was conducted during the transitionary period as the local government authorities in Northamptonshire were being restructured owing to financial mismanagement and weak public governance (GOV.UK, 2018b). This monumental event brought forth the issues of 'local vs regional', 'urban vs rural', 'identity and governance' in the minds and discourses inside and outside the county. Thus, the chosen research setting is pertinent to investigate the current practices and potential for stakeholder mobilisation in an urban-rural resource-constrained region in order to orchestrate a cohesive approach to PB.

1.2.3.Research Questions and Objectives

Considering the gaps in the literature and the research context, four research questions are conceived for the empirical study. They are:

Q1. What are the diverging social representations of place branding for Northamptonshire?
Q2. How do the political, economic and cultural stakeholders mobilise for region branding?
Q3. What roles do they assume and expect in the place branding process? How do they create legitimacy for place branding?
Q4. How can community stakeholders engage in place branding?

The following research objectives are conceived to systematically gather empirical evidence:

1.To examine the critical conditions and issues for mobilising stakeholders for a cohesive approach to region branding by reviewing the past and current place branding initiatives.

2.To investigate the scope for multi-stakeholder place brand governance by analysing stakeholders' roles and relationships.

3.To identify the enablers and barriers to collaboration by analysing stakeholder engagement practices and motivations.

4.To recommend strategies for widening participation by conceptualising the motivations and mechanisms of self-engaged community stakeholders.

1.2.4.Methodology

The empirical investigation is rooted ontologically in social constructionism and interpretive epistemologies. It seeks to gather rich data from those who experience the phenomena or process under study through an in-depth, qualitative single-case approach (Stake, 1995). The case study approach is appropriate for exploring under-researched topics concerning PBG (Reynolds, 2018; Lucarelli and Giovanardi, 2016). This present study uses Stake's (1995) *The Art of Case Study* as the prime guide for answering exploratory research questions as per the non-positivist paradigm. Primary and secondary sources are used to create a compelling case for multi-stakeholder PBG and wide participation and illustrating how the conceptual framework and recommendations can be applied. Data are gathered and analysed in two phases, resembling a 'double diamond' (DesignCouncilUK, 2015). Following an iterative and abductive approach, the analysis starts alongside data collection, and it shapes the next steps in the data collection process (Bryman, 2012).

Small and purposive samples were used to collect detailed information to answer the 'how' and 'why' questions (Saunders et al., 2009). Theoretical criteria were used for sampling a diverse range of stakeholder groups in Northamptonshire. In line with Cleave and Arku (2015), practitioners from various geographic, political and economic contexts were included through multi-locale fieldwork. A total of 46 participants were engaged in the study. *Phase I* data collection involved in-depth interviews with 23 institutional stakeholders (public, private and voluntary sector and higher education institutions) and 5 active community stakeholders. In Phase II, 4 focus groups were conducted with community stakeholders in three towns. No more interviews and focus groups were conducted when it was deemed that theoretical saturation had been reached.

1.3. Thesis Structure

Chapters 2-4 cover the Literature Review on *Place Branding – meanings, goals and outcomes*; *Region Branding;* and *Participatory Place Branding,* respectively. Chapter 2 maps the field's evolution and discusses the emergence of key concepts and current understandings of PB. Chapter 3 reviews the definitions of 'region' and 'region branding' and models of place brand architecture. Chapter 4 discusses the fundamental notions regarding the changes in stakeholder engagement in PB.

Chapter 5 lays out the *Theoretical Framework for Multi-stakeholder Place Brand Governance* covering the management of brand and stakeholder relationships. The critical knowledge gaps are identified, and consequently, research questions and objectives are formulated.

Chapter 6 details the philosophical, ethical and methodological issues and approaches adopted to address the research aims and objectives. The rationale for adopting the case study strategy and the choice of the case (Northamptonshire) are discussed. Data collection and analysis, sampling and participant recruitment strategy, and the practicalities of conducting research are explained.

Chapter 7 presents contextual information regarding PB development in the county of Northamptonshire through an examination of the historical, cultural, economic and political narratives obtained from secondary sources.

Chapters 8-10 cover the Findings and Analysis on *Perceptions of Northamptonshire*; *Institutional Stakeholders' Roles and Relationships;* and *Community Stakeholders' Participation,* respectively. Chapter 8 reviews the past and current PB initiatives to identify the critical conditions and issues for a cohesive approach to region branding. Chapter 9 examines the role of public, private and voluntary sector and higher education institution to explore the scope for multi-stakeholder PBG. Chapter 10 investigates community engagement practices and CSH roles to identify enablers/barriers, motivations and mechanisms for widening participation in PB.

Chapter 11 covers the Discussion of the key findings in relation to relevant literature to derive the principles and mechanisms for modelling the *Conceptual Framework for Multi-Stakeholder*

Place Brand Governance. The practical and policy implications for widening participation in a resource-constrained region are discussed.

Chapter 2. Place Branding – Meanings, Goals and Outcomes

"Place branding is believed to be a way of making places famous .. [and the] so-called 'branding' techniques, such as advertising, marketing, public relations, web design and social networking, will somehow see to this."
(Anholt, 2010, p. 7, 9)

2.1. Introduction

Places have been promoted for centuries to enhance the attractiveness of trade, tourism and culture. The field of study that observes the application of marketing and branding to places is relatively new (Gertner, 2011a). Few scholars have attempted to map the evolution of place marketing and branding (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008; Gertner, 2011). Gertner (2011a; 2011b) conducted a systematic review of academic literature on 'place marketing' and 'place branding' between 1990-2009. While commendable for the pioneering work, the analysis does not account for the real-world changes that instigated the practice of place marketing and branding. While Kavaratzis and Ashworth's (2008) review predates Gertner (2011), the former authors take account of the historical developments in marketing and other place-based disciplines (such as planning and corporate communications) and note the inception of the field of practice from seventeenth to twentieth century. However, it must be noted that Kavaratzis and Ashworth's (2008) review is comprehensive rather than systematic. The pioneering efforts of the authors (Gertner, 2011a; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008) compounded with state of the art reviews published in the last decade help in charting the evolution of the field and clarifying key concepts regarding PB (Lucarelli and Olof Berg, 2011; Acharya and Rahman, 2016; Vuignier, 2017; Berglund and Olsson, 2010; Lucarelli and Brorström, 2013). The field has evolved from the 'selling' of place products to the 'strategic management' of places, arguably denoting a shift from marketing to branding focus.

Early conceptual literature in the field was greatly concerned with establishing the meaning, goals and outcomes of place marketing and branding. While empirical evidence has been gathered in contemporary studies, despite their case study focus, they seldom discuss implications of the context of the place on the meaning, goals and outcomes. With this in mind, the first Chapter of the literature review aims to identify a suitable theoretical definition of PB. Due to the lack of a consensus on a definition for PB, the first undertaking of the review is to

examine the key milestones in the field's development to situate our current understandings and definitions of PB. The two terms, 'place marketing' and 'place branding' are often used synonymously in the literature, even though they have different practical implications. Next, examining the four theoretical conceptualisations revealed multiple views on the goals and outcomes of PB. The meaning, goals and outcomes are context dependent as they are socially constructed by stakeholders of the place. The definition is chosen based on the research aim: to develop a framework for multi-stakeholder PBG in a regional, resource-constrained context. The case context is an important consideration since the theoretically established definition, goals and outcomes will be used to critically study the practices and policies of an urban-rural region in the UK.

First, the field's evolution is mapped, indicating a shift from Place Marketing (PM) to PB. In Section 2.3., the definition and approach of 'place branding' are clarified and justified in relation to place marketing. Owing to the multidisciplinary development of the field, various conceptualisations have emerged with different focal points regarding the goals and outcomes of PB. Section 2.4. discusses the four focal applications of branding principles and methods to places with the goal of: 'perception management', 'stakeholder engagement', 'place governance', and 'economic development'. Next, the four conceptualisations are compared and discussed to reveal the gaps and main themes in need of further exploration.

2.2. Evolution of the Field

The field of study emerged from the application of marketing principles and techniques to places. In academic discourse, the seminal work of Kotler and Levy (1969, p. 10) urged that the principles of marketing should move "beyond the selling of toothpaste, soap and steel" and be applied to broader societal contexts. The authors pointed that these principles were already being applied in the activities of the government and the public sector. In the nineteenth century, a form of place marketing and communications was used to attract industries to create manufacturing jobs and workers to these industrial town settlements (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). In these early studies, the focus on 'promotional' aspects of marketing has been noted, followed by its adoption as an urban policy and planning instrument for image correction and selling of the post-industrial place (Barke, 1999; Short et al., 1993; Ward, 1998 in Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008; Zenker and Braun, 2017).

As post-industrialisation prompted a shift from traditional industries to service-dominant economies, the trend shifted towards creating differentiation of specific urban functions such as tourism to sub-urban areas (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). O'Leary and Iredale (1976) were the first to assert that the application of marketing can create favourable dispositions and behaviour toward geographic locations (in Zenker and Braun, 2017). Later, Ashworth and Voogd (1990) conceptualised the application of marketing theory specifically to public management and planning in their book on 'selling the city'. The authors illustrated the successful place marketing strategies of Western Europe and North America. This can be attributed to the proliferation of new public management models that prompted changes in government philosophies and workings (Peters, 2017). This, in turn, caused the marketing approach to be more readily adopted by the public sector (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). Places were being managed in a more business-like manner, involving risk-taking, inventiveness, promotion and profit motivation (Hubbard and Hall, 1998). Further, the liberalisation of economies led to public-private partnerships for place management (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013). These trends altered the way places presented and promoted themselves, forging the way for 'place marketing' (PM).

In academic discourse, the concept of PM was popularised through the research monograph of Kotler et al. (1993). The goal of applying marketing techniques for promoting neighbourhoods, cities and nations was to attract investors, businesses, visitors, residents, events and other important sources of revenue (Gertner, 2011a). At the time, the discourse on PM primarily emerged in tourism research and product marketing with reference to the country-of-origin strategy (Gertner, 2011a; Anholt, 2010). 'Destination marketing' was one of the earliest forms of PM to gain recognition in academia and practice (Anholt, 2010). The application to destinations was aimed at attracting the tourism 'consumers' through the marketing communications of the 'producers' such as tourism agencies such as Destination Management Organisations (DMOs). These developments led to the view of PM for 'selling places'. These developments have not progressed without a critique from scholars spanning public management, political science and geography.

The emergence of 'place branding' came about due to the changes in the competitive circumstances of places (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). In the nineteenth century, competition between places was heightened by the globalisation of markets. After decades of marketing dominance in the field, changes in the economy and dissatisfaction with applying

the marketing mix to place management, a new approach to PM was needed (ibid). The notion of place branding for creating differentiation became popularised. Anholt (1998) coined the term 'nation brand' and established PB as a managerial tool for governments and the public sector to gain a competitive advantage. The application of branding was aimed at enhancing the overall reputation and recognition of places and attract tourists, investors, residents, students and the workforce. Later, the author argued that the application of branding (limited to the communications perspective) was not sufficient for raising the profile of places. The communication perspective needs to be complemented with the actions originating in public diplomacy and policy (Anholt, 2008).

Other prominent works of the same time were also looking beyond product marketing to develop the field. In Hankinson's (2004; 2007; 2015) collective research, concepts from corporate and service branding became the point of reference to theorise PB. Another application of branding that was popular was regarding image correction or rebranding. It was argued that the concepts of branding and rebranding fitted to all types of places - nations, regions and cities. In practice, this was evident in post-industrial cities and post-communist nations that began reimagining and rebranding themselves to lose their negative reputations (Zenker and Braun, 2017). Later the notion of creating and managing emotional and psychological associations became central to PB (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008).

The field's evolution indicates a gradual shift from place marketing to branding (Braun, 2008). Between 1999-2009, marked as the 'post the gestation period' of the field, the number of publications on 'place branding and image' was greater than 'marketing' (Gertner, 2011a; Lucarelli and Olof Berg, 2011). Later a review of studies published between 2004-2014 found that the major research theme was 'place brand identity' (Acharya and Rahman, 2016). Not all scholars view branding as an evolved form of marketing application to places. For instance, some authors consider marketing a broader domain within which branding is performed; hence PB is a part of PM (Skinner, 2008; Kotler et al., 1999; Kavaratzis, 2004). In the seminal work of Kavaratzis (2004), branding is viewed as a new episode in the application of PM with more focus on emotional, mental, psychological associations moving away from the more functional and rational character of marketing interventions.

Arguably, a shift from PM to PB is indicated even though the terminology is interchangeably used in the literature. Vuignier (2017, p. 456) explained this frustration in their review, stating

that studies in the field had "no tendency to differentiate between these two categories, despite our critical look at the definitions [..] in a strict sense place branding is not synonymous with place marketing". These authors have explicitly called on researchers to clarify the meaning of the terminology they choose and note the corresponding implications for practice (Hospers, 2007; Vuignier, 2017). Thus, the following sections are focused on deriving an apt definition of PB in line with the aims of the study and clarifying it from PM.

2.3. Clarifying Place Branding

The early PB literature tended to adopt the traditional definition of a 'brand', proposed by the American Marketing Association (AMA) in 1960, i.e., "A name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors." It is no surprise that place brand logo and visual identity elements were the focus of analysis for scholars and served as a basis for differentiation for practitioners in the field. Advancements in the wider branding literature and practice led to multiple definitions and meanings (de Chernatony and Riley, 1998).

Central to these new perspectives are notions regarding 'brand image': "the perception of a brand in the minds of persons" (AMA, 2018). This is evident in Brown's (1992) view that "a brand name is nothing more or less than the sum of all the mental connections people have around it" (in de Chernatony and Riley, 1998, p. 419-420). This has inspired the most cited definition of 'place brand' by Zenker and Braun (2010, p. 5): "a network of associations in the place consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place and its' stakeholders". Another notion central to the definition of a commercial brand is 'adding value', insinuating the product or firm's "functional and emotional values in relation to the psychosocial needs of consumers" (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998, p. 417). An earlier definition of 'brand', which includes 'place brands', weaves the three key notions of identification, image and value add:

> "an identifiable product, service, person or place augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added values which match their needs more closely."
> (de Chernatony and McDonald, 1994, p. 18)

On the other hand, PM refers to the application of marketing instruments to geographical locations such as cities, towns, regions and communities. The AMA definition of place marketing is: "Marketing designed to influence target audiences to behave in some positive manner with respect to the products or services associated with a specific place" (AMA, accessed on 2021). A more detailed definition is offered by Braun (2008, p. 43): "coordinated use of marketing tools supported by a shared customer-oriented philosophy, for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging urban offerings that have value for the city's customers and the city's community at large". Braun's definition stresses that PM is characterised by a customer-oriented philosophy and a demand-driven orientation. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the definition includes both customers external to the place (e.g. tourists, investors) and the community itself (e.g. residents and companies) as groups that are important in PM (Eshuis et al., 2014).

Hospers (2007, p. 3) attempted to clarify the confusion between 'place marketing' and 'place branding' by analysing the etymology of the words. In his text, he argued that marketing comes from 'market getting' and has the market as its starting point, while branding means 'burning' or 'marking' something. Thus, PM starts from the demands and associations of external audiences and so-called consumers, indicating an 'outside-in-approach' (ibid). This corresponds to the 'communication-dominant' (Braun et al., 2013), 'sales-oriented approach' (Eshuis et al., 2014), in which the starting point is identifying target audience perceptions (*who they think we are).* The goals are achieved by using classical marketing instruments, such as advertising and public relations, to define and enhance the 'image' among target groups (Kalandides, 2011; Hankinson, 2015). This focus on image or perception management as the ultimate goal is a key concept shaping the PB praxis (Zenker and Braun, 2017). This conceptualisation is reviewed in further detail in Sections 2.4.1.

On the other hand, PB is an act by the place itself and tells the outside world what it is or how it wants to be seen, indicating an 'inside-out-approach' (Hospers, 2007, p. 3). The "visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place and its' stakeholders" are seen to shape the place brand associations (Zenker and Braun, 2010, p. 5). Thus, stakeholders are focal to developing the place brand propositions by reflecting on *who we are? what we have to offer?* This inquisition is part of the 'brand identity' construction of places (Klijn et al., 2012; Hankinson, 2015). Kapferer (1992) emphasised the brand identity as a structured whole of six integrated facets of culture, personality, self-projection, physique, reflection, and relationship. For

Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015), the place brand construction is an interactive process involving people's mental associations of materiality, practices, institutions and representations of a place. They suggest that place image is an integrated part of place identity and cannot be juxtaposed to it.

Image and identity are both key components of branding. The weakness of defining a 'brand as an identity system' is being over-reliant on the input activities, since identity relates to the desired positioning and not how it is perceived, i.e. the brand's image (de Chernatony and Riley, 1998). Thus, consideration for both is needed. Congruently, this study adopts Anholt's (2006, p. 101) conception that good place brands are effective both inside and outside of the place "they are motivating to the population and stakeholders but must be equally so to customers" and only in this way does the place brand "tie in … to the marketing function" (in Skinner, 2008, p. 923). Thus, the *PM-PB continuum* illustrates place branding and place marketing as the two extremes to denote the difference in approach – 'inside-out' and 'outside in' (Figure 2.1.).

Figure 2.1. PM-PB continuum illustrating the difference in Place Branding and Place Marketing approaches. Source: Author's conceptualisation based on the literature review.

The position of a place brand on the continuum is not specified since the 'identity' conceived by the stakeholders and the 'image' or reputation of the place is not static (Hankinson, 2015). The brand is in flux, moving along the continuum due to the interactions of associations (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015). The continuum is a fitting illustration that captures the practicalities of PB from a management point of view. Place brand managers constantly juggle between internal and external associations and needs by considering *what the market wants* and *what value the place can offer.*

The implication for this study is that while it draws on literature that uses both terms place marketing and branding, 'Place branding' guides the theoretical and analytical approach. Consequently, the researcher will draw attention to where marketing logic becomes dominant (in Findings and Analysis, see Section 10.3.). In the following section, contemporary developments and conceptualisations of place branding are reviewed.

2.4. Conceptualisations of Place Branding

This section aims to discuss the key notions and concepts that have led to the current understanding of PB. Contributions to the development of the field beyond the classical marketing and branding perspectives have led to multiple conceptualisations of PB (Gertner, 2011a). PB is considered a tool for: 'perception management', 'stakeholder engagement', 'place governance', and 'economic development'.

2.4.1. Perception Management

There is a broad consensus among scholars that the value of branding to places is 'managing image or perceptions'. Adopting Zenker and Braun's (2010) notion of 'brand' as a set of associations and network maps in the mind of the consumer, the goal is to add value to the functional characteristics of products or services to create brand preference and loyalty (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). For places, this translates to the 'attraction and retention' of external audiences and 'pride and ambassadorship' of the internal populace. Thus, viewed as a tool for perception management alone, PB is broadly concerned with the outcomes of achieving awareness and recognition among stakeholders and audiences (Vuorinen and Vos, 2013).

The goals may be adaptive to the conditions and circumstances of the place. One way to define this is the existing 'image' and reputation. For places that suffer from adverse or no reputation, the prime goal and challenge is to create awareness and positive associations with the place (Kavaratzis, 2004). More advanced place brands are geared at distinguishing themselves from other places (Eshuis and Klijn, 2012). The advancements of the goals resemble the stages of the marketing funnel (from awareness to advocacy). Thus, this conceptualisation of this goal is rooted in PM.

Eshuis and Edwards (2013) assert that PB as a 'form of perception management' emphasises the emotional and the psychological aspects of the place to appeal to the consumers' senses, reason and emotions. Thus, the process differentiates it from marketing. Branding entails the strategic aspects of image management: creating a brand vision, the definition of brand identity and values, and the search for positioning. In more operational terms, authors look at the organisational structures in place, place perception (associations with the place brand), communication campaigns related to the place brand strategy, and even tangible aspects like graphic design, logos and slogans, and promotional products. For example, places are not branded by providing factsheets comparing them with other places; brand communication evokes an image and association with the place such as 'exciting,' 'lively', and 'cosmopolitan' (Young et al., 2006).

Brand identity is commonly derived from the cultural, historic and geographic features of the place (Zenker and Erfgen, 2014). It is represented as place names (Medway and Warnaby, 2014), narratives (Hudak, 2015; Walters and Insch, 2018), maps (Trell and Van Hoven, 2010), logos, slogans and photos. In some cases, such symbolism can be used to induce new associations. According to a popular account, the territory of Greenland was given its name by its first settler, Erik the Red, to attract more settlers to the territory by creating the impression of greater fertility than the place possessed (Anholt, 2010). However, the practice of creating brands as visual identities has drawn criticism for its unprovable effectiveness in enhancing the overall image and reputation of the place (Anholt, 2005; Ashworth, 2010). The studies from a critical perspective highlight the challenges of applying private sector branding practices to PB, which is considered a 'public good' (Martin and Capelli, 2017; Vuignier, 2017). Rather than viewing 'brands as an identity system', de Chernatony and Riley (1998) suggest building 'brands as value systems'. This necessitates going beyond short-term promotions, increasing awareness and looking for temporary gains in market share. The values developed as the core of the brand must be bound together by a vision to give them meaning, impetus and direction (ibid).

2.4.2. Stakeholder Engagement

The conception of PB as a tool for stakeholder engagement emphasises the value of branding and brand creation for its ability to build relationships with people (Kemp et al., 2012; Hankinson, 2004; Zenker et al., 2017). Drawing from the relational exchange and network

marketing paradigms in branding, Hankinson (2004) proposed 'place brand as a relationship' with internal and external stakeholders. This is because places have personalities that enable them to form a relationship with stakeholders. Aaker (1996, p. 150) describes brand personality as a metaphor which "can help brand strategists by enriching their understanding of people's perceptions of and attitude toward the brand, contributing to a differentiating brand identity, guiding the communication effort and creating brand equity". In a similar vein, the seminal work of Florida (2002) found that creative economies attract creative people to live and work in them by appealing to their personalities and tastes. This would explain the surge in cities self-proclaiming the title of 'creative city' (reported by Vanolo, 2008; Vicari Haddock, 2010). However, for the success of such communications, 'behaviours rather than communications' and 'reality rather than image' must be targetted.

PB is considered to be service-oriented, as opposed to product-oriented (Hankinson, 2004). While product branding utilises functional and symbolic attributes to create perceptions of quality, 'service branding' relies on experiential (ambience related) associations. The use of logos, symbols and marketing communications alone is not sufficient for creating a favourable perception of the place. The experiences in the place will shape the ultimate brand. From a service branding perspective, the branded interactions between consumers and service personnel are considered opportunities for co-production. Similarly, interactions between internal and external stakeholders of the place, such as local businesses and visitors, can be opportunities for positive brand encounters or experiences. Following Zenker and Braun's (2010) definition, the 'behavioural expressions' of the place and its stakeholders' through their attitudes and sense of ownership shapes the experiential dimension. Co-creation by internal stakeholders is intrinsically tied with the experiential nature of 'places' and 'brands'. Thus, stakeholders play a vital role in the success of PB. This notion is reviewed in further detail in Section 4.2.

In Hankinson's (2004) relational network brand model, governments, public and private sector, entrepreneurs, employees, citizens and visitors are seen to be in the process of networking and establishing relationships with each other and the place brand. However, the management and governance of stakeholders are not distributed throughout the network. The task of place brand management is consolidated with managers and governments. Further, issues associated with organisational structure and leadership are not sufficiently addressed. This criticism emerges from the following conceptualisation of PB.

2.4.3.Place Governance

The conception of PB as a strategy for place management or governance can be traced to the urban planning and public administration disciplines. The concept of 'governance' is distinct from that of 'government'. Governance refers to the spreading of the role and responsibilities of traditional governments across the public and private sector (Newman et al., 2004). New modes of public-private partnerships (PPP) are observed in several areas of the public sector functioning due to the financial and resource deficiency facing governments worldwide. In the UK, local growth and regional development, especially regarding tourism, are overseen by PPP agencies or industry-led networks (Slocum and Everett, 2014). In the same vein as the criticism for the last two conceptualisations, PB as a tool for place governance has been criticised for pursuing a neo-liberal agenda representing the economic and political interests of the few elites (Zenker and Braun, 2017; Slocum and Everett, 2014).

The commodification of local identities for creating abstract marketing messages targeting external audiences has been associated with antagonism and negative internal branding (Govers, 2011). For instance, the lack of concern for community needs created an adverse perception towards institutional stakeholders' brands (Martin and Capelli, 2017). The residents felt that the institutional stakeholders had branded the place to sell it to outsiders, whereas the residents did not even know about the PB efforts (ibid). To counteract this, PB measures should support citizens' projects and overcome the negative image it has developed as a place-selling (Zenker and Erfgen, 2014).

Owing to the experiential nature of the place brand, no one stakeholder can claim complete ownership and control of the place brand. Thus, it is not feasible for governments alone to be the exclusive brand owners. Moreover, in the digital age, technologies such as web 2.0, user-generated content and mobile networks have prompted new modes of production (Hereźniak, 2017) wherein the boundaries between producers and consumers of branded content and communications are blurring. The digital platforms (social networks and forums) have become spaces where consumers interact with one another, share user-generated content and form digital brand communities, thus, challenging the traditional 'producer to consumer' model.

To overcome the criticism, PB as a governance strategy must reflect the changes in the society relating to organisational structures and the relationship between government and the governed

(Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). As a governance strategy, PB should foster citizenship, community participation, and social capital through citizen engagement by public administration officials (Hereźniak, 2017). Eshuis et al. (2014) assert that branding should enable the inclusion of people's emotions and feelings in policymaking to gain democratic legitimacy. It should inspire them to engage in public discussions regarding the future of their place (Ntounis and Kavaratzis, 2017). In this way, PB can become a strategy to manage perceptions and bind the citizens to the place brand (Eshuis and Klijn, 2012). Contemporary literature on participatory processes is emerging, which emphasises the role of residents (Kalandides and Kavaratzis 2012; Eshuis et al., 2014; Zenker et al., 2014; Kavaratzis and Kalandides 2015; Zenker and Seigis 2012; Jernsand, 2016) — reviewed in detail in Section 4.4.

The notion of PB as a tool for governance strategy is under development (Giovanardi, 2015; Lucarelli and Giovanardi, 2016; Eshuis and Edwards, 2013; Braun, 2008). Vuignier (2017) points to the knowledge gap regarding the political and institutional contexts of places in PB literature, although this information is crucial in terms of public management. This aspect will be reviewed in further detail in Sections 3.4.3. and 4.3.3.

2.4.4.Economic Development

In the studies concerning the branding of municipal, regional and national economic sectors, PB is often regarded as a tool for economic development (Cleave et al., 2016; Cleave et al., 2017; Pasquinelli, 2015). Additionally, in rural, regional contexts, PB has been utilised as a mobiliser of territorial identity and its stakeholders to stimulate endogenous development (Donner et al., 2017; Horlings, 2012; Vuorinen and Vos, 2013). It is noteworthy that while the earlier conceptualisations consider a variety of images, relationships and stakeholders in PB, these studies view branding as a more tactical tool wherein strategic sectors and stakeholder interests are prioritised to enhance outcomes in specific sectors.

By observing region branding practices in ten prefectures and two cities in Japan, Ikuta et al. (2007) found three types of 'patterns' of regional development, focused on either the regional image, the individual sectoral brands or both. In one case, municipal authorities introduced policy measures focused on increasing sales for agricultural, forestry, and fishery products without a strategy for linking this with the regional image. This model bears more similarity

with product branding than PB since the goal is selling regional products and not achieving a favourable reputation of the place via branding. Other authors have also cautioned against confusing PB with the country-of-origin effect found in export marketing (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008; Anholt, 2010). The same logic applies to investment, tourism and talent attraction. Additionally, viewing PB solely as a tactical tool for sectoral development may overlook the goal of development itself – which has both economic and social aspects.

The notion of PB to foster economic development cannot be fully understood without understanding the goals of economic development. Thus, the study refers to the work of Pike (2002) and Pike et al. (2007), who assert that economic development is a means for achieving wellbeing and prosperity for a populace, not just driving monetary outcomes. They purport to ask the important question, *how is development achieved and for whom?* Moscardo (2011) found a deficit regarding such considerations in the tourism planning models in Africa and other emerging destinations. The models were narrowly focused, had limited evaluation of all tourism benefits and costs, paid little attention to non-economic factors and did not integrate into broader development processes. Thus, the authors argue for a broader social representation of the destination residents in the tourism planning process. In the same vein, several author contributions to the book on 'Inclusive Place Branding' call for a more responsible and socially sensitive approach to cater to a broader range of stakeholders and acknowledge the importance of resident participation in PB decision-making (Kavaratzis *et al.*, 2019). In doing so, the goals will come to reflect the aspirations and ambitions of the stakeholders as to what they want to achieve in the medium and long term (Pike et al., 2007). This notion supports the proposition in an earlier Section (2.4.1) that the goals of PB will be linked to the current standing of the place.

2.5. Discussing the Conceptualisations of Place Branding

It is evident that 'place' is central to PB. However, in their review, Berglund and Olsson (2010) found that conceptual PB research had its starting points in either 'place' or 'marketing'. They either use the 'place' as a unit of analysis with 'marketing' as the focus or vice versa. This approach helps in understanding the theoretical foundation of different perspectives. PB for 'place governance' and 'economic development' primarily focuses on the governance structure and economy of the 'place' and secondarily on the 'brand' management. They are rooted in the philosophies and practices of the public sector. On the other hand, PB for 'perception

management' and 'stakeholder engagement' is focused on 'brand' identity, image and relationships. They can be traced back to classical marketing or branding principles and practice. In line with the study aims, branding is a tool to drive outcomes for the place. Thus, foremost the focus is on unravelling place perceptions, vision and values and later applying branding principles and tools for analysis.

This literature review clarifies that the meaning, goals and outcomes associated with PB can be varied. It is no surprise then that stakeholders of a place will have different assumptions and opinions of the goals and processes of PB. In an organisational context, "it may be helpful to get each manager to make explicit their view about their interpretation of the brand and if there are diverse views these should be exposed and a consensus sought amongst the team" (de Chernatony and Riley, 1998, p. 438). In the PB context, this shared collective understanding has been linked to enhancing collective appreciation and a common language for articulating goals and vision (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). Thus, in addition to the theoretical conceptualisation of PB, the interpretations of stakeholders on the meaning, goals and outcomes will aid the case study analysis. It is inferred that the diverging social representations of a place and PB need to be explored at the beginning of the PB process by questioning brand meaning, identity, development, image and reputation. This is the basis of framing the *Research Question 1*. Previously, social representation theory has been used to explain community perceptions and attitudes towards tourism development. Pearce et al. (1991) and Moscardo (2011) demonstrated a dominant social representation of tourism planning in which destination residents played only a minor role and were typically excluded from tourism governance. The key issue was that these planning models were narrowly focused, had limited evaluation of all tourism benefits and costs, paid little attention to non-economic factors and did not integrate into wider development processes.

It is noteworthy that a significant number of studies in PB are conceptual, and they rarely differentiate between the spatial or geographical variations of PB with empirical research (Gertner, 2011b; Vuignier, 2017). For example, out of the 34 studies cited so far in the literature review section, only 11 specified a spatial unit (city, region or nation) to which their research could be applied. This warrants a more robust approach to differentiated PB and empirical research to support theory building in the field. This is discussed further in Chapter 3 with a focus on 'Region Branding'.

Congruently, 'stakeholder engagement' reveals the centrality of 'identification of stakeholders' with the place brand. Stakeholders are an integral part of the branding process for lending their identities and mobilising for its promotion. PB as ' place governance' emphasises the inclusion and management of diverse stakeholders in PB. Both views posit that internal stakeholders of places are central to the formation and management of place brands. This is viewed as a deliberate, collaborative effort on the part of the stakeholders of the place since individual stakeholders or their agencies cannot be the sole owners of a place brand. The two key aspects of stakeholder management are the link between stakeholders and the place brand in the form of 'brand relationships'; and the link between the diverse stakeholders in the form of 'stakeholder relationships'. Despite the significance of these two themes, it needs to be highlighted that the mechanism for the latter concept is underexplored (Hanna and Rowley, 2015). Generally, the two themes have been discussed under the 'Participatory Place Branding' domain, which is underdeveloped. This is discussed further in Chapter 4.

2.6. Summary

While traditionally, place branding has been considered the responsibility of governments, it is the 'brand' of the place and not the brand of the responsible territorial governments. The study concurs that governments are not the exclusive owners of place brands (Zenker and Braun, 2017). This Chapter maps the evolution of the field and clarifies the distinction between two key concepts in the field - 'place marketing' and 'place branding'. Place branding is defined as '*an inside-out strategy to drive outcomes for the place and its stakeholders. A combination of these goals may be decided upon by the place's stakeholders based on their specific conditions and contexts: perception management, stakeholder engagement, place governance, and economic development'.* All four conceptualisations view developing branding goals and strategies based on the place conditions and contextuality. Since stakeholders may hold different views on the meanings, goals and outcomes of PB, research question 1 is conceived as:

Q1. What are the diverging social representations of place branding for Northamptonshire?

In the next Chapter, place branding practices based on different scales will be discussed with a focus on region branding.

Chapter 3. Region Branding

"Should we continue to use the 'place marketing' and 'place branding' umbrella to refer to the application of the concept to such a diverse set of geographic entities? Or should we adopt specific and precise designations that reflect each type of locale, such as 'city marketing' and 'nation branding'?"
Gertner (2011b, p. 97)

3.1.Introduction

Following the proliferation of conceptual models and case studies on PB, there remains little scepticism whether places 'can' be branded. As Gertner (2011b) prompted, the critical question now is how to brand different types of places. Several authors agree that a 'one size fits all' model cannot be applied to branding places with varying characteristics. Differentiated branding based on geographical scales, such as city, region and nation, is an integral part of the theory building in the field. However, few authors have examined the differences in branding the three spatial units (Caldwell and Freire, 2004; Herstein, 2012; Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015).

Table 3.1. Overview of search results for city, region and nation branding generated from ABI/INFORM Global database (accessed on 29.06.18). Source: Author.

Key term	Results	Key term in combination with	Results
'city brand' OR 'city branding'	886	'place brand' OR 'place branding'	498
'region brand' OR 'region branding'	113	'place brand' OR 'place branding'	50
'nation brand' OR 'nation branding'	843	'place brand' OR 'place branding'	410
Total	1842	**Total**	958

An overview of the literature indicates that the study of 'city branding' and 'nation branding' has received much more attention than 'region branding' (Clifton, 2014; Herstein, 2012; Ikuta et al., 2007; Oliveira, 2014; Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015). A simple search on ABI Global database relating to the branding of city, region and nation, reveals the disparity in the number of peer-reviewed articles published on the three topics (refer to Table 3.1). Journal articles on

'region branding' amount to approximately 6-7% of the overall articles on place branding, whereas 'city branding' and 'nation branding' amount to 48-52% and 43-46%, respectively.

The first scholarly publications dedicated to place marketing and branding came from regional economists and geographers (Zenker and Braun, 2017). Hence, the conceptual understanding of 'region' in PB stems mainly from the disciplines of Geography and Economics. As seen in Caldwell and Freire (2004) and Herstein (2012) 'region' is generally regarded as a fixed scale in between the city and nation. From a geographic perspective, this is the 'old' conceptualisation of regions that views their emergence and establishment through a history of governance (Paasi, 2009). While conceived as 'old', it has significance for region building as they may be meaningful entities for citizens and may therefore be essential sources of regional identity and emotions. Examples include the Swiss Cantons, Dutch or Italian historical provinces and British county-regions. In contrast, 'new regions' are typically 'created' as ad-hoc projects for development and increasing the competitiveness of the spatial units. 'New' regions can be viewed "not as neatly bounded territories but instead as semi-coherent territorial assemblages of power relations and economic development processes" (Jonas, 2015, p. 117). Case studies of the cross-border branding of the Øresund Region (Falkheimer, 2016), cooperative branding between Polish destinations (Żemła, 2014) and supra-national branding of the Baltic Sea Region (Andersson and Paajanen, 2012) have been documented in region branding literature are all examples of this 'new' conceptualisation.

By assuming a socio-spatial definition of 'region', it is possible to analyse the challenges and opportunities for regional cohesion and region branding arising from economic, political, and cultural dimensions. Regions are decisively significant for development, especially in a rural context (Rauhut Kompaniets and Rauhut, 2016; Donner et al., 2017; Messely et al., 2009), and may be contextually significant in the policy and cultural identity domain (Paasi, 2009; Quinn, 2015). In Regional Studies literature, regions are a crucial socio-spatial construct imbued with power, identity and pride (Pohl, 2001; Paasi, 2011). Through institutionalising, regions have been known to mobilise regional identity as a soft tool for gaining competitive advantage (Paasi, 2009; Messely et al., 2009). In PB literature, region branding is primarily linked with the goal of regional development (Pike and Ives, 2018; Stoffelen et al., 2017; Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015). In the rural context, the prime benefits have been gaining critical mass and broadening the product portfolio (Żemła, 2014; Dinnie, 2018). Some authors have argued that region branding is more than 'promoting together'; instead, it is a tool for creating shared

identity and goals (Andersson and Paajanen, 2012). In this vein, multiple models of PB, some with a focus on regions, have emerged that adopt a brand architecture strategy for the management of the various destinations and sectors (dubbed as *sub-brands*) of the region (Ikuta et al., 2007; Hanna and Rowley, 2015; Zenker and Braun, 2017).

In Section 3.2., literature that distinguishes between city, region and nation branding is reviewed to understand the relative position occupied by the region. Next, in Section 3.3., the multiple definitions and scales associated with 'region' in PB are discussed to adopt a pertinent definition drawing from the social constructivist perspective. The notion of regional cohesion is explained at this point. In Section 3.4., the dimensions of regional cohesion serve as a framework to review the existing literature on region branding to develop a definition for region branding. Finally, Section 3.5. discusses the theory of brand architecture and its application and value for branding places, specifically for region brand management. Pertinent models of place brand architecture are reviewed to identify the gap in the literature on region brand management.

3.2. Distinguishing 'Region' from City and Country

The works of Caldwell and Freire (2004) and Herstein (2012) set the foundation for theory building regarding city, nation and region branding by offering positioning strategies pertinent to the place' scale. Notably, both studies adopt a consumer-oriented approach that aims to understand and then appeal to the end consumer, the tourists and visitors. Caldwell and Freire (2004) assume that the larger the place, the more functionally diverse it is likely to be. Based on this assumption about scale and diversity, tourism brand communications of smaller places should leverage the functional characteristics such as sun, reefs, sky, culture; and larger places should leverage their representational attributes to resonate with tourists' self-concept and expression. According to the authors, the factors that influence tourists' evaluation of countries are different from those that influence the evaluation of regions and cities. While countries are perceived in terms of the representational parts of their brand identity, regions and cities, being smaller in scale, are perceived more from a functional point of view. Consequently, the authors recommend that large and heterogeneous places should leverage the emotive or representational aspect of their identity in order for tourists to form a relationship (identification) with it (e.g. Cool Brittania). The main critique for this argument is that the functional focus ascribed to cities and regions contradicts the notion of place branding as a

stakeholder-led strategy whereby city brands (and to a lesser extent, regions) can form relationships and identification with stakeholders (discussed in Section 2.4.2.). This is an essential distinction between PM and PB.

Herstein (2012) also used the concept of diversity in the *Country–City–Region Matrix Positioning* model. However, in their view, the diversity of a place is not necessarily proportional to its scale. Diversity is conceptualised as tourists' perception of the heterogeneous-homogenous geographic features and multicultural roots (nationality) of the citizens of a county. The author uses this construct to recommend whether a country should lead with the image of the nation, city or region at the forefront. Notably, the city, region and country branding are visualised as nested levels. However, in their model, the main objective of using city and region branding strategies is to enhance the country brand. According to Herstein (2012), if the geographic features of the country are homogenous and the populace is multinational, tourists must be drawn to visit specific regions with a recognised image rather than the country brand that may suffer from a negative image. For example, Jordan leveraging the image of the Petra region, which appeals mainly to adventure-seeking tourists. However, where both the geographic features and populace are heterogeneous, in that case, the country brand should be derived from many powerful city and region brands that act as magnets drawing tourists to visit the entire country and not simply parts of it. For example, Brazil attracts tourists to dispersed destinations by leveraging its multifaceted attractions. This notion of nested hierarchies and leveraging stronger aspects of a broad product portfolio has been adopted in place brand architecture models – discussed further in Section 3.4.1.

While these studies adopt a traditional view of 'regions' positioning them in between city and nation, the implication of this mesoscale and position for branding is not explained. Regions are categorised with cities, and in relation to the nation, it is assumed that cities and regions have homogenised characteristics. This current study adopts Caldwell and Freire's (2004) and Herstein's (2012) notions that regions do not exist in a vacuum; they are dependent on and implicate the other two scales. However, based on recent additions to the literature, the nested levels (city-region-nation) may not have strictly hierarchical relations in PB.

Giovanardi (2015) found that scalar relations are shaped and negotiated by place stakeholders through a dialectic process in multi-scalar PB in the city of Turin and Piedmont region. The scalar hierarchy enabled the identification and coordination of actors as the national level

provided legitimacy to the city and regional levels. Nonetheless, as the multi-scalar stakeholders came together to form the *Italia 150* committee, dialectics shaped the process of promoting the territory 'as a whole', establishing regulations, and defining their complementary roles. The dialectic approach also enabled the city, provincial and regional actors to engage their international partners in Glasgow, Detroit, Buenos Aires, Harbin, Nagoya and Salt Lake City, Hungary and Poland to host events and exhibitions. This is certainly not the only study on 'inter-regional branding' that views the regional construct beyond the hierarchically nested levels.

This concept of inter-regional branding has also been studied from an economic-geography perspective under 'new' regionalism. The edited book by Zenker and Jacobsen (2015) examines regions that have taken an approach to jointly brand two or more regions within one country or between countries, i.e., cross-border regions. These hierarchical and dialectic relations have been excellently illustrated in the thesis of Oliveira (2016). He uses the 'Russian doll metaphor' offered by Therkelsen and Gram (2010) to illustrate the multi-scalar potential in region branding (reproduced in Figure 3.1.). The scalar hierarchies are represented by the depiction of city brands inside region brand inside nation brand. Inter-regional relations are depicted between: city brands in the form of inter-city or inter-municipal brand; and between the region brand, historic district or residential neighbourhood brands and cross-border brands.
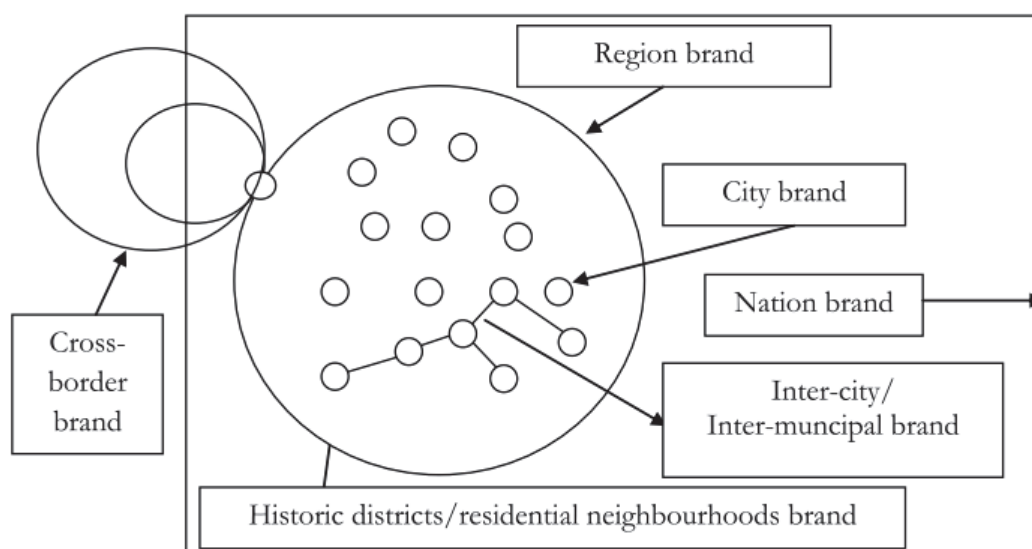
Figure 3.1. The 'Russian Doll model' representing multi-scalar relations in PB. Source: reproduced from the PhD thesis of Oliveira (2016).

As for the current study, the *relational aspect* of region branding, shaped either through politico-administrative hierarchies or dialectics of stakeholders or both, is interesting to exploit the full potential for regional branding. These 'co-opetitive' forces in region branding propel stakeholders towards coordination and competition at the same time (Grängsjö, 2003; Pasquinelli, 2015). The malleability of regions for multi-scalar coordination and competition within the loosely defined, socially constructed region and outside the region places them in a unique position. This literature review does not aim to demarcate city, region, and nation branding practices or claim that all types of regions can adopt a 'one size fit all' branding approach. Such theory building is not possible due to the underexplored study and vague definition of 'region branding' at present. In response, this study will explicate the definition of 'region' adopted in this thesis and the particular regional characteristics of the case under study (in Chapter 7) to contribute to future theory building.

3.3. Defining Region Branding

In PB literature, there is no consensus on a definition for 'region' (Andersson, 2007). Case studies focusing on a regional context do not necessarily establish a definition or attempt to draw out the implications for branding such an entity. Jonas (2015) highlighted that even geographers who have championed the concept of regions have disagreements about approaching the subject. In the seminal paper on region, identity and power, Paasi (2011, p. 15) stressed that "both the theoretical and empirical understanding of what regions ... mean must be based on contextuality".

This study adopts Quinn's definition of 'region' for policy implementation in the East Midlands of the UK. Quinn (2015) combined two typologies on the formation of a region - *territorial, symbolic, institutional* and *cognitive* (Paasi, 2009) and *cartographic, economic, political, cultural* and *ecological* (Tomaney, 2009) to explain the notion of regional cohesion which the author argues should be the basis for region building. The four dimensions of regional cohesion are identified as *cartographic, economic, political and cultural*. *Cartographic region* or territorial shape of the region is based upon the statistical, planning or administrative needs of the regions (Quinn, 2015). *Economic region* and *political region* result from institutional shaping such as setting up political institutions and establishing a single labour market that functions as a whole. Finally, the *cultural region* is a product of symbolic and cognitive shaping where people are united by a common set of ideals and social experiences or collective

memories, which becomes the core of their identity. For policy implementation, a newly formed region must go beyond the "basic definitions of region-hood" and be more than one type of region (p. 235). This idea concurs with Paasi's (2009) initial thesis that each dimension plays a role in region building; the order in which they develop for region-building can vary, but in most cases, such processes occur simultaneously.

Quinn's (2015) definition is appropriate for the empirical inquiry of region branding since it has been used in the regional analysis of economic development, planning and policy implementation in East Midlands in the UK. Not only is the East Midlands region broadly part of the case study chosen for this research, but the governance and development context of the definition is also appropriate for use in this PB study. Hospers (2006) also adopted a similar socio-spatial and marketing understanding for examining the Oresund region. This concurs with Dinnie's (2018, p. 31) view of "regions as social constructs that defy reification solely as fixed territorial-administrative spaces". Quinn (2015, p. 230) defines these social aspects as the political, economic and cultural cohesion, without which the region "will struggle to build governance networks and attract the involvement of the public and private sectors in policy initiatives". Thus, in the following sections, the literature on region branding has been discussed under four dimensions of regional cohesion.

3.3.1. Cartographic or Perceptual dimension

Historical view of regions sees it as having fixed administrative boundaries and established structures of governance that appear in maps (Paasi, 2009). In such regions, the cartographic dimension fulfils the administrative needs of the regional, national and supra-national bodies (Quinn, 2013). For example, in the EU, the cartographic regions were established by creating the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) areas for planning and policy purposes and disseminating EU structural funding. When combined with the definition of an 'old' historic region, the established administrative structure could be a meaningful entity for citizens and, therefore, a source of regional identity and emotions (Paasi, 2009). Examples include the Swiss Cantons, Dutch or Italian historical provinces and British regions. Thus, to some extent, the old definition of regions as fixed territorial-administrative spaces is prevalent in the literature.

Adopting the new conceptualisation of regions and target audience focus of PM studies, several authors have argued that territorial borders do not mean much to audiences (Zenker et al., 2017; Dinnie, 2018). This study concurs that audiences may perceive a region as an imaginary space rather than an administrative territory. Nevertheless, the perception of the region as a single entity within an imaginary bounded structure helps people identify and make sense of it. Even in the context of inter-regional branding, Zenker and Jacobsen (2015) emphasise that the prime aim is to create a perception of one geographical entity in the minds of the people. Thus, the cartographic dimension is concerned with placing the region 'on the map' and creating the perception of a single cohesive entity in people's minds. As per Quinn (2015, p. 231), the region "needs to be able to garner loyalty or attachment from its people and the business community if it is to function". Thus, the economic, political and cultural factors and actors that shape regional cohesion and region branding strategies are discussed in the following sections.

3.3.2. Economic dimension

Quinn (2013) states that the economic dimension of regional cohesion relies on the businesses in the area. It is easier to secure buy-in and encourage participation in networks and implement policy when businesses feel like they have a stake in the performance of their local economy (ibid). 'Vital coalitions' and 'sectoral networks' are commonplace for driving sectoral gains and interests. They can be vital for the bottom-up mobilisation of economic actors in tourism destinations (Horlings, 2012). Grängsjö (2003) found co-opetitive forces in operation in rural tourist destinations dominated by micro-businesses and independent entrepreneurs. Studying the co-opetitive forces in network branding more recently, Pasquenelli (2015, p.39) conceptualised network branding to be significant in "establishing a reputation, that is, an enduring perception of the network and its territorial partners and turning the network into an organisational identity". Congruently, Oliveira (2014) illustrated that synergies in the tourism domain were strong; hence, stakeholders could be united in their mission of increasing the regions' touristic reputation. Thus, it seems that cooperation networks with a strong basis and legitimised form can be the 'owner' of the place brand images, services and products (Vuorinen and Vos, 2013).

A study of the motivations, values and mindsets of coordinating sectoral actors revealed that stakeholders possess one of the two values or mindsets, either an emotional attachment, where

"the company serves the destination interests", or a more business-like entrepreneurial approach, where "the destination serves the company's interest" (Grängsjö, 2003, p. 445). According to the author, these determine and distinguish the way firms are involved in networking. The interdependency between the destination and its business community has been studied under the concept of embeddedness. In rural region branding, 'embeddedness' is used to link the agro, tourism and food and beverage industries with regional development (Donner et al., 2017; Duignan et al., 2018; Haven-Tang and Sedgley, 2014). The embeddedness of economic actors in a local context is viewed as a source of value creation by enabling organisations to contribute more actively and directly to the sustainability and resilience of local and regional economies (Di Gregorio, 2017). Particular emphasis has been placed on these actors' territorial embeddedness as they are anchored and have a vested interest in the region's economy. Even in the context of industrial tourism destinations, companies (usually consumer-facing, B2C) that want to emphasise their embeddedness in the region tend to participate in regional co-branding exercises (Otgaar, 2012). This view follows a co-branding logic between the sector and region, whereby reputed stakeholders contribute to the place image and benefit from associating with the territorially embedded network or region.

For cross-sectoral and cross-border coordination, Andersson and Paajanen (2012) noted that if stakeholders from diverse economies see that the benefit of coordinating are more rewarding than competing, they may be encouraged to join the PB efforts. The case of branding The Green Forest Region and Heuvelland in the Netherlands represented urban-rural coalitions that were possible owing to symbiotic investment opportunities for entrepreneurs in multifunctional business communities (Horlings, 2012). Oliveira (2016) indicated that in Europe, region brands constructed from networks of small and medium-sized towns and cities can better attract and retain international workers and firms and use resources more sustainably. This enhances the product portfolio and creates a spatially larger region than a city to promote to the audience to invest, visit and work. In the tourism context, collaboration at a regional level is an attractive solution for small neighbouring destinations with limited products and resources (Żemła, 2014). In the case of the Baltic Sea Region (Andersson and Paajanen, 2012) and the branding of European destinations (Therkelsen and Gram, 2010), generally, competing nations formed partnerships for joint promotion of the whole region to target distant markets and achieve economies of scale. Thus, interdependency for resources, achievement of a critical mass and enhancing product portfolio have been the main drivers for inter-regional, cross-sectoral coordination.

However, some authors have challenged this view of sectoral branding as a form of PB since region branding is more than 'promoting together'; it is a tool for creating shared identity and goals (Andersson and Paajanen, 2012). Martin and Capelli (2017) emphasised that the region brand is not just a destination brand to promote the tourism industry; it extends beyond the functional aspects of regional development to symbolically represent the region. Further, Ikuta et al. (2007) acknowledged that region branding should aid regional development in these four target areas: (i) sales of local products, (ii) tourism, (iii) investment and industrialisation and (iv) human resources and residents. However, they questioned the impact of policy measures for regional branding focused on development and outcomes for one sector. While the emphasised sector may become well known and enhance sales, this does not necessarily improve the profile of the whole region. Thus, the extent to which the goals and outcomes of sectoral branding networks are embedded in wider regional development and representation of the region will influence whether sectoral branding forms a part of region branding. Consequently, economic cohesion relies on the motivations and practices of economic actors and sectoral networks to articulate shared goals for regional development and identity for region branding.

3.3.3. Political dimension

Quinn (2013) stated that regional cohesion in the political dimension is strengthened through establishments and institutions having political power and working for the whole region. Established politico-administrative institutions have a clear stake in forging a regional identity and its promotion in old regions. Several studies have found that established institutional frameworks provide legitimate governance for PB processes (Żemła, 2014; Giovanardi, 2015; Eshuis and Edwards, 2013). The broader policy context determines whether regions may be autonomous or politically and jurisdictionally tied to central government decisions and policy (Oliveira, 2014). This, in turn, will affect the ability of a region to solve its own conflicts, determine its economic future and have regional actor capacity and legitimacy to take decisions that are relevant in the short and long term (Andersson, 2015).

As stated before, while regions have the potential for unifying local, marginalised and peripheral units in a joined-up narrative, the literature suggests that a critical challenge for both old and new regions is 'chaos and fragmentation' (Lucarelli and Giovanardi, 2016; Andersson, 2007). For old regions, fragmentation is primarily attributed to political parochialism

characterised by competition between political actors and institutions between neighbouring towns and cities in the region, resulting in weak regional leadership (Pike and Ives, 2018; Valente et al., 2015). Municipal authorities may lack regional-level thinking since they are responsible for driving economic growth by attracting inward investment, businesses and residents within their spatial boundaries (Vuorinen and Vos, 2013). Additionally, siloed-working within the various departments of municipal government authorities is also commonplace (Ikuta et al., 2007). In the Italian region of Romagna (an old region), this issue was aggravated by political tension between the local, regional and national scales (Lucarelli and Giovanardi, 2016).

The issue of 'politics of scale' observed by Lucarelli and Giovanardi (2016, p. 21) affects not only the hierarchical structures of old regions but also the governance of new regions. In newly formed regions establishing formal institutions and networks may be onerous since it depends upon the wills of the stakeholders, particularly government and industry (Andersson and Paajanen, 2012). Moreover, cross-boundary policy coordination and integration among urban areas may be hindered due to more generous institutional incentives for delivering services within their borders instead of coordinating activities across borders (Harrison, 2010; Trickett and Lee, 2010). In the formative years of the urban-rural coalition in the Green Forest Region in the Netherlands, one of the challenges was the lack of government leadership in coordinating multiple plans, initiatives, ideas and projects emerging from the stakeholders in the region (Horlings, 2012). Similarly, Falkheimer (2016, p. 161) noted that for the Øresund region, the "bi-national brand identity has not been a success" and the region brand was replaced by the place brand 'Greater Copenhagen', sixteen years after its launch. The author attributes this rebranding partly to the increased geopolitical focus on cities and city-regions and the uneven power balance between the stakeholders in Denmark and Sweden. Thus, these political structures and relations determine the mobilisation of stakeholders for region branding.

In the face of the intense competition in the political dimension, for a joined-up approach, destination stakeholders must perceive that added value is achievable only when cooperating with other destinations (Żemła, 2014). To some extent, the resource constraints posed by the austerity policy of the UK government has increased the dependency of local governments on the private and voluntary sector. In response, public-private modes of governance have become popularised, such as the DMOs and LEPs in the UK. The view is that the formalisation of cooperation regulates collaboration and allows for continuity of the management process

(Żemła, 2014). Its significance lies in coordinating stakeholders' actions and fostering a unique brand identity and story (Andersson and Paajanen, 2012; Ikuta et al., 2007). Thus, contemporary issues of PBG are not limited to the will of the political elite only. Nonetheless, political cohesion can be instrumental in enabling a framework for region brand governance.

3.3.4. Cultural dimension

For Quinn (2015), the cultural dimension is based on the populace of the region being united by a common set of ideals, social experiences and collective memories. Congurently, Hospers (2004) measures cultural cohesion as the extent to which the region is rooted in the consciousness and social practices of people, both as individuals and groups. For Paasi (2009), regional identity refers to the extent to which people identify themselves with the region as the whole of institutionalised practices, discourses and symbols. These definitions suggest that the cultural dimension of region branding is intrinsically linked with individual' self-identity and personal attachment (sense of place) as well as collective identity and memories (Paasi, 2009; Pohl, 2001).

Pohl (2001, p. 12917) stated that "regional identity is the feeling of .. belonging to an area at the meso-scale, therefore it is somewhere in the middle between local identity and national identity". It may be manifested through the populace coming together to fight to preserve or expand their region and culture (Paasi, 2009). The recent referendum of Catalonia to gain autonomy from the rest of Spain is a case in point where regional identity challenged the national identity. These understandings emphasise 'feeling' rather than knowledge as the basis for regional identity.

Regional identity is grounded in the regional history, landscape, language or dialect dominating in the region in question or other specific regionally bounded conditions (Pohl, 2001). The cultural dimension is shaped by museums, venues, cultural communities and small-scale entrepreneurs and artists (Mittila and Lepisto, 2013). The cultural dimension is alive, and the contribution of communities is that they lend their unique (and meaningful) cultural identities to the promotion of places. Even small-scale family farms make a substantial contribution to the territorial identity of a rural region (Messely et al., 2009). Moreover, institutions are mapping the most emotional aspects of regional civil society and the minds of citizens to mobilise them as assets in regional development (Paasi, 2009). Tangible and intangible

artefacts are evocative of a sense of unity (collective identity) and pride. In the case of the Øresund region, the construction of the Øresund bridge was viewed in a more positive light regionally because the bridge was seen as the first artefact of a shared regional identity that would create opportunities for regional development and recognition at the national and international level (Falkheimer, 2016).

Further, the commodification of identities has been noted in place brand communications for creating credibility and legitimacy in PB. Hospers (2010; 2017) recounts the significance of regional identity in creating the place brand for the Ruhr region in Germany. He states that since the 1960s, the German old industrial region had tried to dissociate with its industrial past. However, since the identity and economy of the region are still dependent on the industries in the area, the external audiences did not believe the region brand's campaigns and claims. At the turn of the century, when Ruhr started owning up and promoting its rich industrial legacy instead of denying it, the region's credibility was heightened.

According to Paasi (2009), cultural cohesion is perhaps the most challenging to achieve since it is entirely subjective and multifaceted, shaped by individual and institutional actors. Further, from a PB perspective, the identity construction process is 'interactive', shaped by internal and external stakeholders (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015). Several authors note that the varying needs of the communities of a place and external audiences (such as visitors) add to the complexity of PB. Zenker et al. (2017) found that for residents, the complexity of place brands actually increases the chances for identification with a place. In contrast, place brand communications for external audiences leverage a more symbolic or representational understanding of places. Thus, perceptions of cohesion are likely to vary since internal stakeholders are able to make sense of the multifaceted identities of a region into a cohesive whole, more than external target audiences. The cultural dimension is shaped by such dialectic forces from communities, external audiences and regional institutional actors. Undoubtedly, these implicate the regional identity as well.

3.3.5.A Definition of Region Branding based on Regional Cohesion

The review of region branding literature and case studies under the cartographic/perceptual, political, economic and cultural dimensions illustrates the aptness of 'regional cohesion' to the study of region branding. It seems that region branding is influenced by political, economic

and cultural dimensions of regional cohesion. At the same time, region branding can provide the framework to stimulate regional cohesion. Thus, it seems that regional cohesion and region branding are intertwined and interrelated concepts (illustrated in Figure 3.2.).
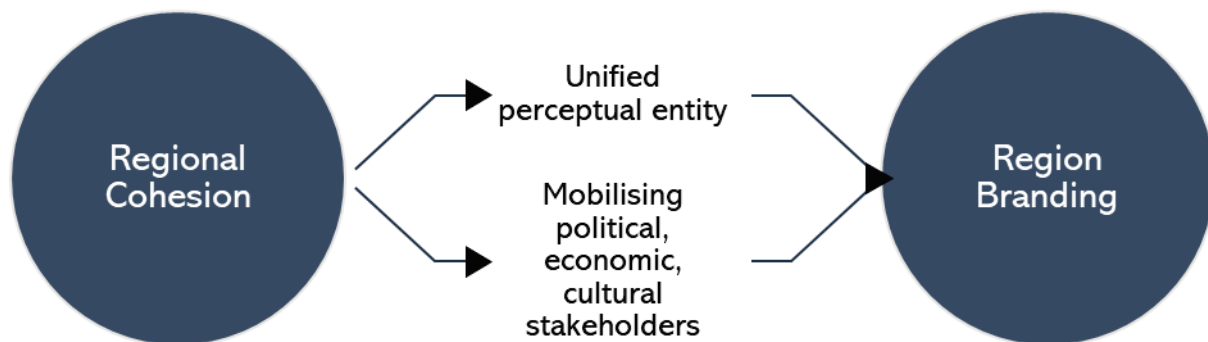
Figure 3.2. *A definition of region branding based on regional cohesion. Source: Author's conceptualisation based on the literature review.*

The notion of regional cohesion with its four dimensions is useful to explore the complexity of brand and stakeholder management within a specific context. The literature review revealed two key challenges for region branding: (i) the management of complex brand associations to create the perception of the region as a single cohesive entity and (ii) managing the co-opetitive forces affecting local and regional political, economic and cultural stakeholder to mobilise them for a cohesive approach to region branding. The latter challenge is the basis of framing *Research Question 2.* The following section on the application of brand architecture strategy to PB addresses some of these concerns.

3.4. Models of Place Brand Architecture

The concept of brand architecture stems from corporate branding literature. Brand architecture has been defined as "the organising structure of the brand portfolio that specifies brand roles and the nature of relationships between brands" (Rajagopal and Sanchez, 2004, p. 236). An overarching master brand (usually the corporate brand) spans multiple sub-brands (usually, product or service brands). The primary link between brand architecture and PB theory (and practice) has been managing the various images and associations of a place (Dinnie, 2018; Zenker and Braun, 2017; Ikuta et al., 2007). In the context of PB, the master brand refers to the

city, region or nation brand, and sub-brands represent the local council or sectoral brands or target audiences needs. Most of these studies are concerned with identifying the conditions under which *House of Brands* and *Branded House* approaches should be applied to specific PB contexts.

Based on different corporate or product branding scenarios, roles and relationships between the master and sub-brands are suggested. For instance, if there is a need to avoid a negative association linked to the master brand, the *House of Brands* approach is adopted whereby each sub-brand has its own identity and values, which is not aligned with the other sub-brands (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). In contrast, in situations where the master brand contributes visibility and positive associations to the sub-brands, a *Branded House* approach can be adopted whereby each sub-brand resembles the master brand (ibid). A sub-brand may also be applied as an extension of the master brand and fulfil different goals and purposes (Aaker, 2004).

The models of place brand architecture reviewed in the following sections are concerned primarily with 'place brand as a perceptual entity' comprising multiple destination brands, target audience associations, sectors of regional development, and stakeholders' brands. Over and above perception management, the study focus is on understanding stakeholder relationships in region brand governance.

3.4.1. Destination Brands

Studies on destination management tend to adopt a geospatial perspective to envision sub-brands (Caldwell and Freire, 2004; Dinnie, 2018; Datzira-Masip and Poluzzi, 2014). Herstein (2012) noted that country, region, and city constitute the three major levels at which place brand architecture is conceptualised. The geospatial perspective is concerned with identifying the conditions under which House of Brands or Branded House approaches are and should be applied to specific PB contexts. For example, the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean adopts a House of Brands approach since the individual islands such as Majorca and Ibiza are well recognised in comparison with the master brand of the Archipelago (Datzira-Masip and Poluzzi, 2014). On the other hand, the nation of the Maldives in the Indian Ocean is an example of the Branded House approach; the nation is made up of more than 1,000 coral islands which

makes it unlikely for all the islands to be recognised by name and characteristics, thus, the master brand is leveraged for tourism promotions (ibid).

In these studies, the purpose of brand architecture is to manage brand names and associations. Within a scalar, geospatial hierarchy, the authors suggest leading with the place-based master or brand with the most recognition among the target audiences, perhaps because these studies adopt a consumer orientation to tourism management (Freire, 2016; Herstein, 2012; Datzira-Masip and Poluzzi, 2014). Achieving critical mass, leveraging existing reputations and scalar linkages to strengthen the product portfolio are the primary concerns. Contemporary scholars examining geospatial brand architecture have acknowledged that politics and power significantly influence brand architecture construction (Dinnie, 2018). For instance, competing claims and sources of legitimacy in the political environment can hinder cooperation. Nonetheless, the impact of external perceptions (of tourists, students, visitors) on brand architecture construction is the most significant in their study. This point is further crystallised in the model suggested by Zenker and Braun (2017).

3.4.2. Target Audience Associations

The *City Branded House* model by Zenker and Braun (2017) emerges from research over a decade on understanding the needs and preferences of different target groups such as residents, tourists, the creative class, students (Zenker, 2009; Zenker and Beckmann, 2013; Zenker et al., 2017). The previous studies concluded that different groups have different levels of knowledge (place brand perceptions), intimacy (identification) and needs. Thus, Zenker and Braun (2017) suggest a target audience based sub-branding approach to manage a city brand. Despite treating each target group as a separate segment, the model recognises the overlaps in their associations. This is visualised as the overlap between the circles representing sub-brands (illustrated in Figure 3.3.). They note that sub-brands cannot be seen entirely independent from one another and will impact the other. The interdependency and need for coordination between sub-brands suggest a cohesive approach. This notion of interconnectedness and overlap between the sub-brands is pertinent to the definition of region branding adopted in the current study. However, the authors only go as far as to state that sub-brands should not be contradictory in their communication to avoid conflict. Moreover, they tackle only the perceptual management of the place brand without explicating the internal stakeholder management.
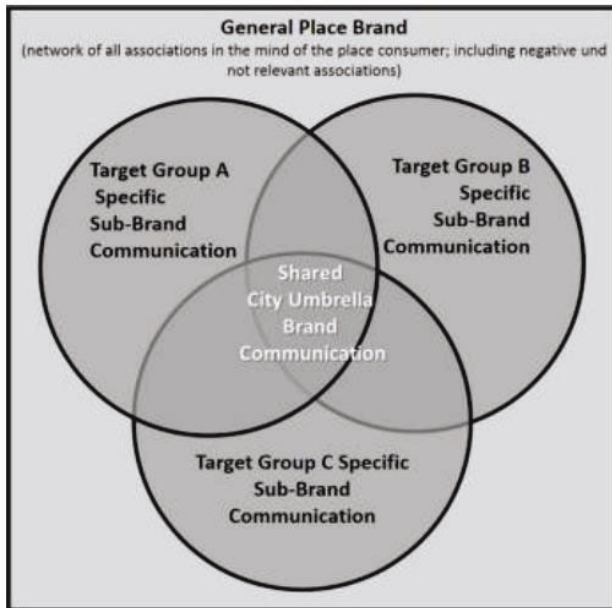
Figure 3.3. *City Branded House Strategy. Source: reproduced from Zenker and Braun (2017).*

3.4.3. Sectors of Regional Development

The concept of umbrella brands and sub-brands in the target audience-based approach is similar to Ikuta et al.'s (2007) *Conceptual diagram of Region Branding* (Figure 3.4.). Both the sub-brands for target audience-specific communications (Zenker and Braun, 2017) and 'individual brands' for regional development (Ikuta et al., 2007) align with the sectors of tourism, investment, residents and talent attraction. For Zenker and Braun (2017), the umbrella brand represents the shared traits or common aspects of city brand communication. Similarly, for Ikuta et al. (2007), the master brand or 'the roof' represents the 'regional image' supported by the 'pillars' of regional development, which may represent sectoral brands or 'individual brands'.
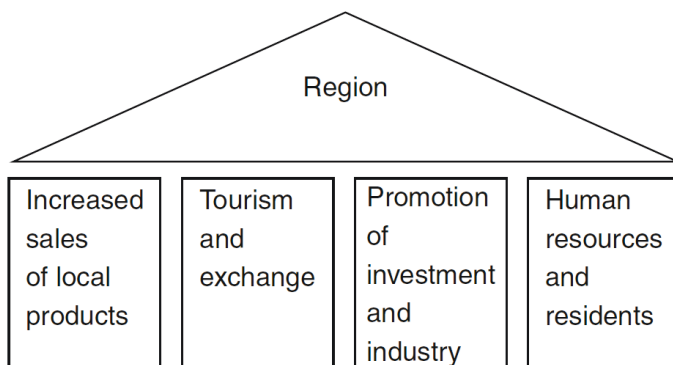
Figure 3.4. *Conceptual diagram of Region Branding. Source: reproduced from Ikuta et al. (2007).*

Theoretically, region branding measures should be targeted at the master brand (the region as a whole) to achieve results for the sub-brands or the supporting pillars (economies of scale, critical mass). However, by observing region branding practices in ten prefectures and two cities in Japan, Ikuta et al. (2007) found three relationships or 'patterns' based on the goals of branding – ripple, integrated and specialised. (i) *Ripple pattern* occurs when either the region brand or the sub-brand is targeted with a view that measures in one area will impact the other. When the goal is to add a new image to the existing regional image, a sub-brand is developed, and the region brand is impacted through a ripple effect. On the other hand, when the region has a negative or no reputation, measures are aimed at constructing a regional image region so that the sub-brands are impacted. (ii) *Integrated pattern* occurs when the measures target both the region brand and sub-brands and in turn impact one another. This pattern is observed when the region is already known, and the goal is further strengthening the existing image of the region. This synergistic effect is observed between regional image measures and individual brand measures.

(iii) *Specialised pattern* occurs when the target is improving the sub-brand only and do not include ripple effects on the regional image. Any impact of such efforts on the region brand is likely to be organic and not consciously orchestrated. In peripherally located regions, the authors observed that the main goal was to increase sales of local products to major urban spheres and boost tourism and exchange from major cities. While widely and conventionally noted in practice, they argue that this pattern cannot be considered PB. As established in earlier Sections (2.4.4. and 3.3.2.), the current study adopts the view that the strategically orchestrated link (whether ripple or integrated) between the sub-brand and the master brand differentiates region branding from sectoral branding or destination management. Nevertheless, since the study aim is to explore the scope for multi-stakeholder PBG, such patterns will not be discounted outright. Fragmented governance pattern has been linked to spontaneous tourism development triggered by specific demand segments (D'Angella et al., 2010). Thus, with time the sectoral brand may become strong enough to explicitly link with the regional image and exhibit a ripple pattern.

3.4.4.Stakeholders' Brands

Given the scope of this study, the patterns found by Ikuta et al. (2007) are crucial to understanding the link between the master brand and sub-brands in region branding practices

in line with the goals of branding. Stakeholder management is top-down as local governments are the prime responsible authority for the region branding; they are encouraged to orchestrate inter-departmental coordination and form network relations with corporate brands for region brand management. Hanna and Rowley's (2015) *Place Brand Web* model offers a bottom-up approach to brand management since the sub-brands are represented by stakeholders' brands (illustrated in Figure 3.5.). *Sub-branding* is just one type of relationship between the master and the sub-brand, often orchestrated in a top-down and centralised manner. Further, when brand architecture was enforced from top-down, the adoption of the master brand by sub-brands was limited to using the same visual identity such as logo, strapline and marketing collaterals. This was because the top-down management of brand relationships failed to consider stakeholders' brands and diverse interests that often take precedence over the master brand.
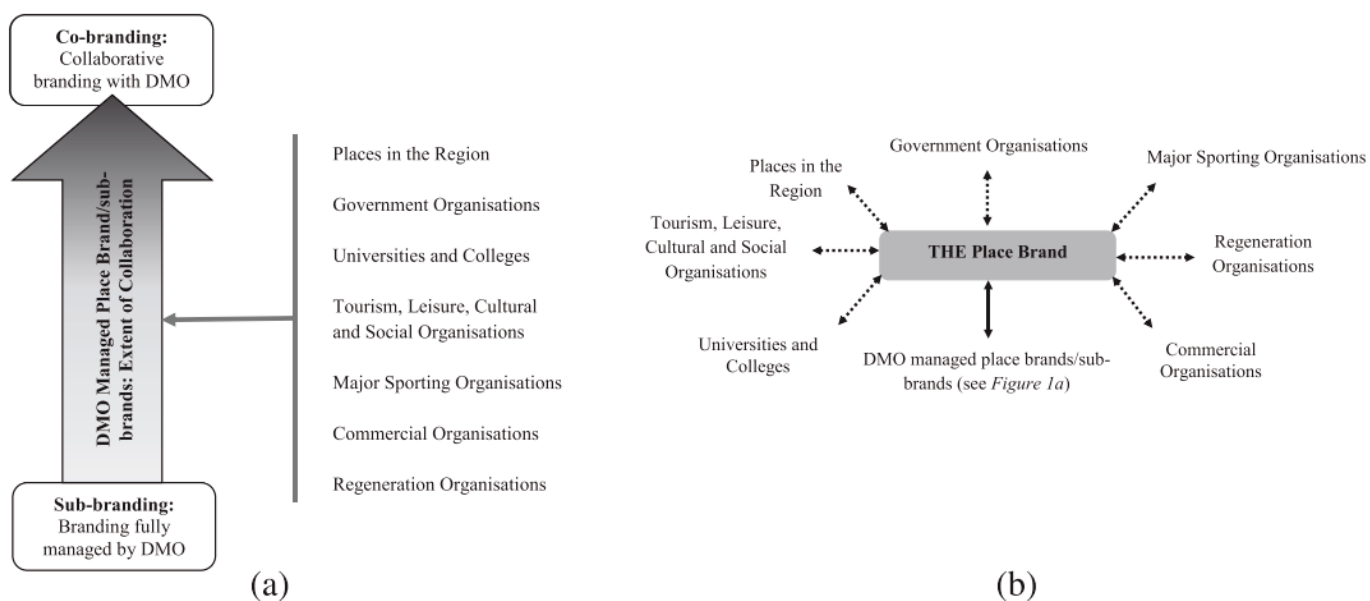
Figure 3.5. *The Place Brand Web Model. (a) Brand relationships (b) Co-creation in place branding. Source: reproduced from Hanna and Rowley (2015).*

They observed the existence of a *co-branding relationship*, a more decentralised approach to place brand management in which engagement could be orchestrated by a central organiser (such as a DMO) or the institutional stakeholders of the region. It is similar to Ikuta et al.' (2007) integrated pattern in that the co-branding approach affects both the image of the master brand and the sub-brands (stakeholders' brands). The stakeholders' brands are in no sense controlled by the DMO's master brand; the former recognises the benefit of associating

themselves with the place. They have their own brand identity and fully developed brand articulation and communications. Their brand visibility and success are not entirely dependent on their relationship with the place brand. Co-branding can take various forms associated with different levels of commitment, including placing logos on each other's documents and websites, promoting each other and developing a shared identity and articulation. Their study found that both sub-branding and co-branding relationships are in practice for managing region brands.

While Hanna and Rowley (2015) acknowledge the importance of collaboration between the stakeholders of a place, their roles in the co-branding network are unclear; further, they do not explicate how stakeholder relationships affect the brand architecture approach. Ikuta et al. (2007) only state that the diversity of stakeholders can pose a challenge to network branding. Further, the collaborators identified in their study represent institutional and organisational stakeholders' brands in education, tourism, leisure, cultural, social, commercial, regeneration, sporting and government. Both Hanna and Rowley (2015) and Ikuta et al. (2007) fail to highlight the role and engagement of citizens or residents of the region within the brand architecture approach.

While Dinnie (2018) acknowledges the significance of cultural proximity (shaped by residents) as affecting brand architecture formation, a limitation of the study is that it primarily captures the institutional perspective to region brand management. Similarly, Zenker and Braun (2017) view residents as an internal audience who might be unintended recipients of place brand communications targeted at external audiences rather than an internal stakeholder of the place. Thus, the potential for community brands and residents as collaborators is not explored in their model. Moreover, they do not indicate how collaborations can be orchestrated, particularly when a central, independent coordinator (such as the DMO or city brand managers) for PBG does not exist. Thus, the management of stakeholders, their roles and relationships with the brand and each other need further investigation

3.5. Summary

The definition of 'region' adopts a social constructivist perspective in line with Dinnie (2018, p. 31), viewing "regions as social constructs that defy reification solely as fixed territorial-administrative spaces". Adopting Quinn's (2015, p. 230) notion of 'regional cohesion', it seems

that the perceptual entity is not only shaped by the cartographic dimension; the political, economic and cultural dimensions are key factors. Regional cohesion reinforces the current understanding that the aim of region branding goes beyond achieving the functional goals of regional development. It can be a framework for strengthening the relational aspect of branding and identification with the region. The review reveals that region branding and regional cohesion are intertwined and interrelated concepts. The two areas for critical development are: (i) the management of complex brand associations to create the perception of the region as a single cohesive entity and (ii) managing the co-opetitive forces affecting local and regional political, economic and cultural stakeholders to mobilise them for a cohesive approach to region branding. Thus, research question 2 is conceived as:

Q2. How do the political, economic and cultural stakeholders mobilise for region branding?

The models of place brand architecture clearly show the value of applying this concept for clarifying the structure, brand relationships and stakeholder management in region branding. However, the models are concerned primarily with 'place brand as a perceptual entity' comprising multiple destination brands, target audience associations, sectors of regional development, and stakeholders' brands. Brand relationships (between master and sub-brand) show a ripple, integrated or specialised pattern (Ikuta et al., 2007). They have been defined as sub-branding or co-branding (Hanna and Rowley, 2015). The main gaps in the literature relate to clarifying and managing stakeholder relationships, specifically: how collaborations can be orchestrated, particularly when a central coordinator does not exist, and how residents of a region can be engaged using the brand architecture approach. Stakeholder engagement, especially the role of residents, is discussed in the literature regarding 'Participatory Place Branding', which is the focus of the next Chapter.

Chapter 4. Participatory Place Branding

".. when citizens are involved this has significant influence on the degree to which place marketing [and branding] is taken into account in other policies."
(Eshuis et al., 2014, pp.160)

4.1. Introduction

This Chapter reviews the literature on stakeholder engagement, focusing on the notion of 'participatory' place branding. Traditionally, the branding of places has been viewed as the sole responsibility of the government or public-sector agencies. PB strategies were instigated and managed in hierarchical top-down structures by one or more departments of government (Yüksel et al., 2005; Bennett and Savani, 2003). Stakeholders, such as businesses, residents and visitors, have been viewed as 'consumers' of the place. From a communications perspective, they are the recipients who have to be persuaded of the brand identity to secure their buy-in or avoid a backlash. This 'communication-dominant' (Braun et al., 2013), 'sales-oriented approach' (Eshuis et al., 2014) has been challenged since the field has become multidisciplinary. These scholars argue that place brand managers should move beyond creating and communicating the brand to various stakeholders and strive towards involving them in the process (Henninger, 2016).

Beyond the *residents as consumers* perspective, the recent conceptualisations of *residents as co-producers* ascribes them a more active role in shaping PB. The participatory approach to PB is grounded in the theoretical position that emphasises "co-creation, community and collaboration in promotional activities among myriad stakeholders who care about the future of the brand" (Warren and Dinnie, 2018, p. 304). However, an overview of community engagement literature reveals that residents are primarily engaged top-down by ISH using mechanisms such as public consultation and ambassadorial programmes. While the notion of participatory PB has gained popularity among scholars, theories and models are in the developmental stage; its proponents urge further research for pragmatic implementation (Braun et al., 2013; Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014).

The structure of this Chapter is as follows. In Section 4.2., the critical developments regarding stakeholder engagement in PB are reviewed. Next, several typologies of stakeholders are

discussed; two differentiated stakeholder groups are identified based on their roles and relationship in PB. The typology serves as the theoretical sampling criteria for the empirical study to gather multi-stakeholder perspectives. It seems that in comparison with institutional stakeholders, community stakeholders' roles in PB are unclear. Thus, in Section 4.4., the literature on community engagement is reviewed, highlighting the knowledge and gaps regarding the mechanisms, motivations and enablers/barriers to participation. To address the gaps, two research questions are conceived in the final Section.

4.2. Notions of Stakeholder Engagement

A stakeholder can be defined as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives" (Freeman, 1984, p.46). It has been argued that stakeholders are not just individuals, groups and institutions who 'affect' the place brand, commonly viewed as governments and industries; stakeholders also comprise civil society and residents who are 'affected' by the goals and process of PB (Byrd and Gustke, 2011; Hudson et al., 2017; Sarabia-Sanchez and Cerda-Bertomeu, 2018). This notion of multiple stakeholder groups in PB is further strengthened by Braun's (2008) definition of stakeholders or 'customers of city branding'. They are "all the people and organisations that are important for the functioning of the city" (p. 49). In his thesis, Braun (2008) argues that the infrastructure, services, events in a place may be organised and managed by the public, private and voluntary sector, however, they are all aimed at making the place better for residents. Thus, stakeholders are all the people who bring places and place brands to life.

Scholars from public management and urban planning purport that governments alone cannot manage place brands (Vuignier, 2017; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014). Several studies in the regional contexts have observed a gradual shift from public-led branding to private-led branding (Vuorinen and Vos, 2013; Horlings, 2012; Martin and Capelli, 2017). In the face of budget cuts and diminishing public sector resources, the PPP model has become widely adopted in various parts of the world, including the UK (Coles et al., 2012; Slocum and Everett, 2014; Haven-Tang and Sedgley, 2014). However, in the emergent models of PPP (such as DMO and LEP), participation from the private sector tends to be limited to the key industry players (Quinn, 2013; Slocum and Everett, 2014). In practice, only large industry players are allowed access to influence the process and decision making (Ward, 2000).

Horlings (2012) supported the case for the 'selective mobilisation' of stakeholders in forming vital coalitions. In her study of Heuvelland municipality in Belgium, the author indicated that branding was more actor-oriented rather than plan-oriented, steered by the alliance between the food and recreation sector. A small group of entrepreneurs were invited to take part to reduce complexity in the field of action. It is believed that the larger the network of stakeholders involved, the greater the complexity of decision making and, thus, orchestrating the process of PB (Zee et al., 2017; Ikuta et al., 2007). Since complexity is perceived as undesirable, much of PB has been centred on collaboration between government and key industry stakeholders (Zenker et al., 2017). Thus, the questions pertaining to *who should lead place branding?* and *who should be involved in place branding?* are skewed in favour of institutional stakeholders such as governments and public and private sector agencies (Jones, 2005).

In theory, value co-creation as an outcome of collaboration is central to PPP models. In this PPP organisational context, *collaboration* involves and uses joint decision-making and shared resources by stakeholders of a domain to solve problems they cannot solve individually (Bazzoli et al., 1997). Kanter (1994, p. 97) defines collaboration as "creating new value together" and distinguishes this from "exchange" which is "getting something back for what you put in to an interorganisational relationship". Adopting this view to stakeholder engagement in PB, collaborative approaches and mechanisms can encourage stakeholders to think beyond exchanging value between their brand and the place brand to value co-creation. Applying the co-opetitive model, it can be posited that stakeholders' values and mindset in such a situation will reflect an emotional attachment over and above the entrepreneurial one (Grängsjö, 2003). Studies on community-based tourism development primarily consider entrepreneurs or tourism employees as important stakeholders since these groups are manageable to the extent of their professional and economic interest in developing the place (Freire, 2009).

Stakeholder engagement (or management), like citizen engagement by governments, is usually one-directional orchestrated from the top-down by place brand managers. It is the process whereby relevant stakeholders are (i) identified, (ii) their value and interests exposed and discussed, and finally, (iii) interactions (with one another) and participation (in PB) managed (Hanna and Rowley, 2011). Vuorinen and Vos (2013) assert that the very first step, identification of relevant stakeholders, is ridden with challenges of access and dialogue entrenched in politics and power struggle. Stakeholder interests are affected by 'multiplicity',

i.e., "multiple, conflicting, complimentary, or cooperative stakeholder claims made to an organisation'' (Neville and Menguc, 2006, p. 377); in this case, the place brand managers. Finally, the roles and responsibilities of disparate stakeholders towards the brand and one another require setting a common goal and vision. Their value contribution to the brand and each other is not always apparent and requires time and effort to establish (Jones, 2005). Given the challenging nature of the task, it is no surprise that few places meaningfully engage the contributing stakeholders, let alone taking a 'participatory' approach to stakeholder engagement.

The challenges associated with wide stakeholder participation in PB are acknowledged by its proponents (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014). Nonetheless, they argue that stakeholders should be given the opportunity to contribute regardless of whether they are voicing competing or contradictory views (Hanna and Rowley, 2015). This would enable them to become supporters of the brand strategy and exemplify the brand experience (ibid). Klijn et al. (2012) argue that the more stakeholders are involved in the branding process, the clearer the brand concept will become, and the more target groups will be attracted to the brand. Furthermore, loyalty and commitments of internal stakeholders of a place are essential components of reinforcing the communication of the brand message to external markets (Peighambari et al., 2016). A notable development in participatory models has introduced the notion of 'inclusiveness' to stakeholder engagement in PB.

Inclusiveness encompasses ideas of broad participation, equitable or sustainable development, stakeholder multiplicity and democracy. In tourism literature, inclusion is linked with sustainable and equitable development. Through co-creating with communities, good governance is the goal and outcomes are planned to be shared between the many, not the few (Jamal and Camargo, 2017). For Therkelsen et al. (2021), the issue of quick wins versus long term solutions can be studied through the framework of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). They argue that the ability to balance sometimes conflicting market interests may be accentuated in SDG-based PB because fundamental preconditions for people's lives are at stake. Primarily, the measures are directed at improving the social outcomes for communities at the city or country level. The resultant improvements have been effectively utilised to appeal to an external audience at the global level. For example, the Oslo city-region has made significant progress towards achieving the SDGs to build a resilient and

sustainable economy. Consequently, its top ranking in the European Cities SDG Index 2019 is being communicated to enhance business attractiveness (BrandingOslo.no, 2021).

For Jernsand (2016), the value of 'inclusiveness' is in encouraging place brand managers to handle conflicting interests and a multitude of interpretations of the place rather than focusing solely on consensus building. The plurality of stakeholder voices is crucial to the process of PB as they contribute to the construction of place identity rather than see place identity imposed by dominant elite groups embedded within a neoliberal system that excludes dissenting views (Dinnie, 2018). This is precisely the undercurrent in the critical perspectives captured in the book on 'inclusive place branding' (Kavaratzis *et al.*, 2019). The editors urge scholars and practitioners to take a more responsible and socially sensitive approach to cater to a wider range of stakeholders and acknowledge the importance of resident participation in decision-making regarding PB. Thus, inclusiveness creates value by fostering broad participation and economic development (Svensson and Östhol, 2001; Pike et al., 2007).

The review of stakeholder engagement in the literature indicates that the development of participatory models beyond PPP is underway. To orchestrate collaborative governance, stakeholders' roles, relationships, motivations and mechanisms must be understood. Additionally, for an inclusive approach, enablers and barriers to participation need to be addressed. The following section starts by identifying stakeholders, their roles and relationships.

4.3. Stakeholders Roles and Relationships

Stakeholder typologies in PB draw from various fields and disciplinary strands. Freeman's (1984) definition of stakeholders is rooted in the corporate management literature, wherein it is common to distinguish between internal and external stakeholders for engagement purposes. Since PB starts with asking the questions, *who we are?* and *what we have to offer?* an internal to external stakeholder engagement or identity-led approach may be pertinent and evidenced in various cases (Ntounis and Kavaratzis, 2017; Casais and Monteiro, 2019). Turning to the marketing literature, needs-based 'segmentation' is widely used for targetting external stakeholders (Zenker and Braun, 2017). To a lesser extent, segmentation has informed the identification of internal stakeholders (Byrd and Gustke, 2011).

Adopting a more critical stance towards power-politics in stakeholder networks, stakeholder identification and salience theory categorises stakeholders based on their power to influence, legitimacy of relationship, and urgency of claim (Mitchell et al., 1997). Existing typologies classify stakeholders based on the influence they exert and the interest they show in PB (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008; Reynolds, 2018; Hanna and Rowley, 2011). The typologies examined in the following section are based on stakeholders' assumed and ascribed roles, interests, influence, level of involvement and mission congruence (refer to Table 4.1. for an overview). These typologies are helpful not only in the identification of stakeholder groups but also shed light on their relationships with one another, discussed in Section 4.3.2.

Table 4.1. *Types of stakeholders in place branding. Source: Author's summary of stakeholder typologies from multiple sources.*

Model and Author	Relational Network Brand (Hankinson, 2004)	Types of Internal Stakeholders (Vasudevan, 2008)	Four Stakeholder levels (Henninger, 2016)	Tourism stakeholder groups (Byrd and Gustke, 2011)
Criteria for classification	Producer-consumer relationship; role ascribed from a managerial perspective	Stakeholder influence; perceived interests and benefits from government perspective	Stakeholders' levels of involvement	Stakeholder participation in tourism and political activities; based on decision tree analysis
Case study or conceptual underpinning	Conceptual model based on 'brand as a relationship'	Tourism study in the state of Kerla, India	City branding of two post-industrial cities: Sheffield, UK, and Essen, Germany	Tourism planning in two rural counties in North Carolina, USA
Stakeholder Types	•Infrastructure providers •Service providers •Consumers •Media	•Direct •Indirect	•Primary •Secondary •Tertiary •Quaternary	•High •High-moderate •Low-moderate •Low

4.3.1.Classification of Stakeholder Types

Hankinson's (2004) Relational Network Brand model classifies and identifies stakeholders as producers or consumers of the place brand. The classification is based on stakeholders' relationship with the brand and with each other. Stakeholders are grouped as: infrastructure providers (government department of transport, hygiene), service providers (frontline industry staff), consumers (residents and visitors) and media. Infrastructure and service providers are considered key producers of the place brand as they shape the experiential aspects. Moreover, they have direct control over brand communication and, to an extent, can even affect 'media' stakeholders. The classification of 'consumers' is interesting because it includes external stakeholders such as visitors and internal stakeholders such as the residents. Further, they are consumers of the place brand and consumers of the other three stakeholders groups. The residents and local community are viewed as recipients of branding rather than co-producers. This theme continues in the following typologies.

Vasudevan (2008) suggested a typology based on stakeholders' influence and perceived interests and benefits of branding. Stakeholders are considered to be either: direct or indirect stakeholders. Direct stakeholders have a vested interest and economic motivation in sustaining the tourism brand. This group can comprise tourism boards, public-private industry associations and private businesses such as hotels and resorts. On the other hand, indirect stakeholders do not perceive direct benefits from branding and may find it difficult to accept the brand promise. Thus, direct stakeholders may take it upon themselves to engage indirect stakeholders, viewing them as recipients of brand communication. Vasudevan (2008) recounts that in the state of Kerala in India, the residents were considered indirect stakeholders of the place brand. They were recipients of promotional messages about Brand Kerala's values and the promise of being a tourist-friendly region. However, there was no attempt by direct stakeholders to invoke a sense of pride and belonging among the general public. The campaign also failed to show the general public the benefits of supporting the brand, even though the local community was vital to the actualisation of brand experience via the provision of homestays to tourists (ibid).

Vasudevan's (2008) 'indirect stakeholders' bear similarity to Henninger's (2016) classification of 'quaternary stakeholders'. These are the stakeholders who may lack the interest or awareness to get involved. When they do get involved, it is through representation. Based on Henninger's

(2016) classification, the more involved stakeholder groups are: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary stakeholders are the key decision-makers in the branding process, and they construct the brand by communicating with secondary stakeholders. Secondary stakeholders engage in specific aspects of branding that they stand to benefit from rather than supporting the whole process. This group may include educational institutions, hotel associations and airline companies. Finally, the involvement of tertiary (minor groups or individual brands) and quaternary stakeholders in PB is at the discretion of primary stakeholders.

Byrd and Gustke (2011) also use the level of participation of stakeholders as the basis of their typology of the stakeholder in tourism planning. They developed a methodology for the segmentation of internal stakeholder groups based on their participation in tourism and political activities. Groups are classified as: high participants, high-moderate, low-moderate and low participants. Unsurprisingly, government officials are identified as *high participants*. Next, *high-moderate participants* are generalised as business owners, pursuing the economic benefits of tourism; they are also influential in affecting policy change. In comparison, residents are classified as *low-moderate participants* due to their size as a group. According to the authors, *low-moderate participants* have little influence on tourism policy, even though its success depends on them. They further assert that the identification of stakeholder groups, while helpful, cannot address issues of stakeholder power or representativeness.

While contemporary notions of 'blurring boundaries' between producers and consumers (discussed in detail in Section 2.4.2.) and 'residents as co-producers' make such classifications seem outdated, the theme of residents being marginalised in terms of their role, interests, influence and level of involvement is omnipresent in all of the typologies examined. Based on these differences in power, a hierarchical relationship is evident among the stakeholder groups. Two main types are identified, and their roles and relationships are discussed in the following section.

4.3.2. Institutional and Community Stakeholders

First, the typologies provide evidence of the vertical hierarchy of stakeholder engagement in PB wherein stakeholder groups have unequal power and access to express their opinions (Henninger, 2016). Stakeholder groups labelled as 'primary', 'direct', 'producers' and 'high participants' have more power and influence in PB and are in a position to decide who is and

is not involved in governance and decision making processes. It is unsurprising that strategic actors such as senior officials and local politicians determine if and how citizens will be involved since they are responsible for creating opportunities and structures for participation (Newman et al., 2004).

Based on their similar characteristics across typologies, these stakeholders are actively engaged in place brand management owing to their institution or organisation's interest and mission congruence with the place brand. Thus, in the current study, they are deemed as 'institutional stakeholders' (ISH). Stakeholder groups within this category are further classified as public, private and voluntary sector organisations, agencies, or institutions and forums led by them. For these stakeholders, the perceived direct benefits of engaging in PB are tied to their institution or organisation's political or economic interests. Further, they are able to impact PBG due to their high influence over resource allocation and decision making. It is inferred that institutional stakeholders act as 'gatekeepers' of the place brand (illustrated in Figure 4.1.).
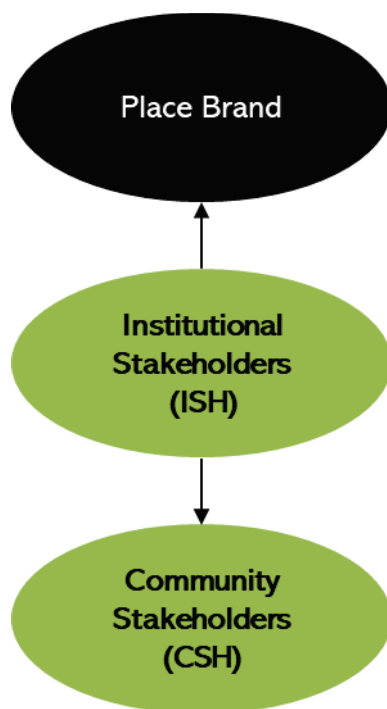
Figure 4.1. Hierarchical stakeholder relationships in place branding. Source: Author's conceptualisation based on the literature review.

The typologies and their coverage in the extant literature make evident their identification and perspective of institutional stakeholders. They are: local trade associations, regional tourism

associations, tourism department and place marketing agencies (Lucarelli and Giovanardi, 2016); culture and social organisations, universities and colleges, commercial and regeneration organisations, major sporting organisations, government organisations and DMO (Hanna and Rowley, 2015); economic development practitioners and private-sector site selectors (Cleave and Arku, 2017); and industrial sector and corporation consulting (Vuorinen and Vos, 2013). For an overview of ISH's characteristics and examples refer to Table 4.2.

In addition to their identification, their motivations are also better understood. One explanation for co-branding between ISH and PB has emerged from institutional theory. In accordance with institutional theory, institutions, for their survival and effectiveness, need legitimacy from society, responsive to the political, economic and cultural environment (Meyer and Scott, 1992; Meyer and Rowan, 1977). For gaining legitimacy, these stakeholders have been known to engage in 'institutionalisation' whereby they sacrifice a degree of independence in return for assured political support and resources from committed stakeholders (Getz, 2017). One such institutional stakeholder group whose perspectives and roles are underexplored in PB literature are: education institutions, more specifically, the universities. The wider regional studies literature recognises universities as 'repositories of knowledge' (Boucher et al., 2003; Lebeau and Bennion, 2014). They "enjoy a position as vital partners necessary for the success of particular policies and projects" (Boucher et al., 2003, p. 891). Due to a large amount of evidence on universities' contribution to regional development emerging from resource-constrained, peripheral regions, which matches the context of the chosen case study, Northamptonshire, their role will be explored in multi-stakeholder governance networks.

Second, the typologies make clear that the engagement of 'indirect', 'quaternary', 'low participating' stakeholders depends upon the wills of the institutional stakeholders. Among internal stakeholders, this classification mainly pertains to the residents of the place. This is further supported by Eshuis et al.'s (2014) survey of 600 professionals involved in the marketing and branding of cities, towns and villages in the Netherlands. The survey found that of all internal stakeholder groups, citizens were commonly viewed as 'consumers' of the place and were the least engaged group in PB. The perspectives of these stakeholders are often left out of the PB practice because they do not 'directly' affect or are affected by the brand. This is because they have little or no direct influence over resource allocation and decision making. Further, this group is considered an incoherent and heterogeneous assemblage of individual interests. Hence, their identification and engagement are not manageable.

Table 4.2. A typology of stakeholders in place branding and their characteristics based on hierarchical roles and relationships. Source: Author's list based on the literature review.

Characteristics	Institutional Stakeholders (ISH)	Community Stakeholders (CSH)
Defining characteristics of the group	Managerial or executive position in institutions and networks of place governance, policy and planning and industry	Active in civic, social or voluntary aspects of community life
Stakeholder influence	High influence on resource allocation and decision making	Low influence
Interests in PB	Politically or economically-driven; Mission congruence between goals of place brand and goals of institution or organisation	Residential interest, pride and belonging
Levels of involvement	Direct participation or institutional or industry representation	Participation through representation; direct participation is minimal and rare; largely dependent on the willingness of ISH
Perceived benefits of engagement	High benefits perceived by ISH and CSH	Unknown, unclear or low benefits from ISH and CSH
Examples from the literature	Local, regional and national institutions of political and economic governance and associated public and private sector actors such as: Local Government Authorities; Key industry players organised in public-private industry associations (such as Chamber of Commerce, sectoral networks and forums); Regional development agencies (such as Local Enterprise Partnerships); Tourism, Leisure and Cultural institutions (such as Destination Management Organisations); Commercial and public-sector regeneration agencies; Major sporting organisations; Anchor institutions (such as educational institutions).	Broadly, resident community of the region; can include segmented groups such as: Artists; Craftspeople; Resident associations; Local history groups; Small-scale, social or community entrepreneurs; Political or environmental activists; Heritage volunteers. *(non-exhaustive list)*

In this study, the lower tier of stakeholder groups is broadly deemed 'community stakeholders' (CSH). Their main qualification is their residential ties and interests in the region. Even though

the term community (singular) is used in the typology, the plurality of such resident communities is acknowledged; indeed, it was significant in choosing the term community stakeholders. The notion of 'communities' is far more inclusive than the notion of the citizenry, identifiable through their democratic right. In contrast, communities may have varying legal 'right' to the place and encompass temporary resident workers, students and migrants. They may have varied interests based on their demographic profile: with families, highly skilled workers, minority ethnic profile, business owners.

Some contemporary studies have indicated that segments of internal stakeholders can be derived by identifying the active groups or individuals who can act as representatives of the resident population in PB (Kaya and Marangoz, 2014; Andres and Golubchikov, 2016; Cavicchi et al., 2013; Mittila and Lepisto, 2013). Mittila and Lepisto (2013) position artists as 'insiders' who represent the culture produced by the community stakeholders in the form of artefacts they create, the creative atmosphere they emanate (Andres and Golubchikov, 2016). Their connection and contribution to the place are both as residents and through their entrepreneurial activities. In the same vein, independent businesses and small-scale entrepreneurs play the role of the 'economic engines of the place' and provide a platform for interactions across stakeholder groups (Kaya and Marangoz, 2014; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). Other segments that have been identified as active in impacting their communities include resident associations (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013), political or environmental activists (Coletti and Rabbiosi, 2020) and volunteers from local history or archaeology groups (Bowden and Liddle, 2018). Observing the case of North Carolina, USA, Byrd and Gustke (2011) developed a method for identifying internal stakeholder segments based on decision tree analysis. According to their study, people who participated in recreational and political activities are more likely to be influential and vocal in their community concerning tourism development.

Given that these findings were from different case contexts, it can be assumed that the active segments will be dependent on the political, economic and cultural context of the place. Nonetheless, a commonality between the *segments of CSH* is that they play an active role in the civic, social or voluntary aspect of community life. This is similar to the notion of 'publics' who actively engage in discourse and seek resolution for concerns affecting various aspects of public life (Hudak, 2015). They are important not only for their contribution to the economic, social and cultural capital of the place but also for their connections in the communities. For

example, entrepreneurs and volunteer groups represent and enhance the socio-economic vitality and quality of life of the place. Further, entrepreneurial and community spaces such as local pubs and cafes serve as common meeting grounds for visitors and resident communities of a place.

The literature review revealed the hierarchical nature of stakeholder relationships in PB since not all groups have equal opportunities and access to participation. Based on the existing typologies of stakeholders, which differentiates between the characteristics of interest, influence, perceived benefits, participation and mission congruence, two types of stakeholder groups were identified: institutional and community stakeholders (for an overview, refer to Table 4.2.). The identification and perspectives of 'community stakeholders' is not explicated in the literature. The application of 'segmentation' to the incoherent, heterogeneous resident population can aid the identification of *active CSH*. A better understanding of current practices and mechanisms for public and resident engagement will help clarify the role and opportunities for such engagement by CSH.

4.4. Community Engagement

Traditionally, community stakeholders have been ascribed similar roles as external audiences such as visitors. They are considered recipients of brand communication who have to be persuaded for granting legitimacy to ISH's initiatives. The shift towards PB as a stakeholder-led strategy, in which CSH can also be co-producers, can be attributed to the marketing theories of service-dominant logic and consumer co-creation (Kavaratzis, 2012). The emergence of social networks and brand communities have created platforms on which consumers can shape brand communications, reputation and experiences (Andéhn et al., 2014; Florek, 2011). A significant contribution to the literature examining resident engagement in decision making comes from the urban planning and policy domain (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013; Coletti and Rabbiosi, 2020; Zenker and Seigis, 2012). These studies focus on citizens or residents' 'right to the place', consequently arguing for their 'right to the brand'. Given these trends, the topic of residents engagement has gained traction in PB literature. These studies note that the pragmatic implementation of such ideals is a concern that scholars must tackle. The two most commonly cited forms of CSH engagement undertaken by ISH in PB literature are – public consultation and ambassador programmes.

4.4.1.Public Consultation

This model of participation is rooted in the conceptualisation of 'place branding as governance strategy' (discussed in Section 1.4.3.). It is usually undertaken in the pursuit of gaining approval and legitimacy from the public by engaging them in opinion surveys or focus group discussions. Hankinson (2009) asserts that stakeholder consultation provides the means for understanding what the place has to offer, including the diversity, talent, mentality, and attitude of its people. Consultation is a means to understand the community stakeholders' hopes, fears, concerns, and aspirations before developing place brands (Vasudevan, 2008).

Eshuis et al. (2014) further argue that public consultation in PB can enable the inclusion of community stakeholders' feelings and emotions in 'policymaking'. Examining the case of resident participation in the urban revitalisation of Katendrecht in Rotterdam, they noted that consultation enabled a dialogue between the government, real estate developers and the residents. While the aim was to brand the neighbourhood to external audiences, i.e., buyers and future residents, existing resident communities had their say in developing brand elements, identity and values. This was possible due to the influential and organised nature of the resident association. Residents had a clear stake in their neighbourhood's development and future, which motivated them to partake in the process (ibid). Thus, the authors concluded that if CSH perceive the benefits of participatory exercises, they will be enthused to contribute.

On the other hand, if major development plans are orchestrated without consultation, they are likely to be perceived as an 'unwanted attempt' to gentrify their neighbourhood. This may unleash protest and resentment from the residents (Zenker and Seigis, 2012). Critique has mainly been directed towards development projects that deal with socially and economically marginalised groups (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Thus, from an urban planning and policy perspective, consultation in PB is a means to minimise conflict by informing and involving CSH in the co-creation of their neighbourhood narratives (Hudak, 2015; Coletti and Rabbiosi, 2020).

Eshuis et al., (2014) warn that consultation without a plan for implementation in the place brand strategy and communications can backfire. This implementation failure was reported by Ward (2000) in the case of Manchester. The official campaign launched by the technocratic 'Marketing Manchester' came under fire for not representing the vibrant community and

character of the city. The counter-movement was instigated by an informal network of private actors from the cultural industry (a mix of designers, architects and artists) who were consulted during the branding process. However, the final output failed to capture their needs and created the feeling of being excluded from decision making. Such consultation mechanisms have been criticised for taking a 'lipstick approach', making people feel important while not allowing them any real power and influence on the brand (Colomb and Kalandides, 2010).

Eshuis and Edwards (2013) caution that such practices may lead to a place brand devoid of local character and may be perceived as a waste of the taxpayers' money, hampering the legitimacy of the place brand. They suggest that enhancing the democratic legitimacy of PB requires the process to be intertwined with the wider policy and planning process involving the community. Thus, citizens should have an influence in the broader governance process and inadvertently branding processes; citizens should be seen and perceive themselves as co-owners of the brand. This conceptualisation of how democratic legitimacy is created in PB through residents' participation serves as the foundation for this study. However, their analysis of legitimacy is based on the scholars' observations and interviews with the planners and public officials. Thus, a gap is observed in capturing residents' perspectives of the legitimacy of (such) PB initiatives. This partly contributes to the framing of *Research Question 3.*

4.4.2. Ambassador Programmes

Ambassador programmes for supporting and complementing the official brand communications are found in the PB strategies of well-recognised cities and nations, such as Berlin, Lyon, Amsterdam, Ireland and Sweden. The aim is to utilise residents' testimonials to lend credibility to the place brand in the eyes of specific target groups such as students, tourists, skilled workforce and businesses. For many years, the Only Lyon marketing group's external communications strategy has been spearheaded by an international network of ambassadors who represent the city's entrepreneurial spirit (Onlylyon.com, accessed 2018). This approach has also enabled the formation of industry-specific stakeholder networks and in aiding targeted place marketing. Similarly, ambassadors featured in the 'Faces of Australia' campaign were skilled migrant workers who had transformed their own lives by choosing to live or work in Australia and positively impacting the community through their work (Gladstone, 2018). Ireland leveraged its non-resident citizens (diaspora) across the globe to attract investment to

Ireland (Connectireland.com, 2014). The programme capitalised on these individuals' ties to Ireland and their professional network abroad to drive outcomes for the place brand.

These cases illustrate that ambassador programmes can draw on internal and international human resources, connections, competencies, and stories to attract external audiences. Ambassador networks are not only a communication channel; they are a development resource through enhancing the general competitiveness of the place (Andersson and Ekman, 2009). Success in recruiting brand ambassadors shows that the populace supports the PB. By acting as ambassadors for their place brand, people grant legitimacy to brand messages communicated internally and externally (Kavaratzis, 2012). Their behaviour also determines whether brand promise and brand reality are consistent (Rehmet and Dinnie, 2013).

Additionally, Rehmet and Dinnie (2013) found that one of the ambassadors of the 'be Berlin' network reported a stronger sense of place due to participating in the ambassador programme. Such an effect could be linked with enhanced commitment and civic pride among ambassadors. Thus, from a managerial perspective, ambassador networks are a resource for mobilising civic pride (Andersson and Ekman, 2009). This approach can become a powerful word-of-mouth tool for strengthening and communicating the place brand (Braun et al., 2013). Thus, resident and non-resident participation in ambassador networks have been known to accrue multiple benefits for the place brand.

Another argument in favour of deploying ambassador programmes is that they benefit the place brand and the participants. Rehmet and Dinnie (2013) found that ambassadors in the 'be Berlin' campaign found that altruistic motivations such as influencing societal values, representing their destination and exhibiting civic pride were less significant. Their primary motivation was to attain intangible benefits such as publicity of the individuals or their project and personal advantages. Secondary motivations were accruing business advantages through networking with other members. These findings are somewhat congruent with the study of ambassador networks across Sweden (Andersson and Ekman, 2009). Ambassadors ascribed more value to getting access to first-hand information about the place than networking and forming new relationships with fellow ambassadors. Both studies suggest that participation in ambassador programmes is driven by socio-economic motives more dominantly than altruistic motives. The benefits of participation do not necessarily need to accrue direct monetary benefits (as suggested by Vasudevan, 2008). The value added to the individual's personal, social or

professional life was perceived as the most favourable outcome of engaging in ambassadorial networks.

The main critique from participating ambassadors was the underutilisation of their participation as a development resource for the place and place brand (Andersson and Ekman, 2009; Rehmet and Dinnie, 2013). The ambassadors reported a sense of disappointment since they felt that their full potential had not been realised (Rehmet and Dinnie, 2013). Network managers were focused on creating effective communications for external targets, in which ambassadors representation was limited only to the curated stories in promotional materials. Ambassadors programmes did not give participants a real voice in identity building and governance of the place brand (Vasudevan, 2008). Thus, these studies conclude that in practice, the full potential of ambassadors as 'development resource' in PB is not being realised (Andersson and Ekman, 2009).

The gap regarding the unrealised potential of CSH is present in both the public consultation and ambassador programmes. Reviewing the underexplored role of local residents in designing tourism governance, Bichler (2019) called for further research on the perceived roles and responsibilities of residents and exploring institutional and social governance structures that enable participation and support of civil society. Thus, this gap will be explored further in this study from both ISH and CSH perspectives of their roles in multi-stakeholder governance. This is the basis for framing *Research Question 3.*

Additionally, the literature review revealed that ISH's motivations for engaging CSH in public consultation as well as ambassador programmes are better understood and explicated than the views of CSH on such engagement (summarised in Table 4.3.). To address the gap, this study will seek to explore CSH's motivations for engagement in PB; leading to the final *Research Question 4.* Exploration will benefit not only from identifying positive and negative factors that may drive participation. For instance, the feeling of dissonance with the brand created by institutional stakeholders has motivated community stakeholders to become activists and launch counter-campaigns (Ward, 2000; Colomb and Kalandides, 2010).

Table 4.3. Motivations for community engagement from Institutional and Community Stakeholders' point of view (POV). Source: Author's list based on multiple literature sources.

Institutional Stakeholder POV	Community Stakeholder POV
•Exploiting community identities in place brand creation •Mobilising CSH's place attachment and pride •Understanding community attitudes towards branding •Residents' testimonials to lend credibility to brand communications •Consistency between brand promise and reality •Formation of industry networks •Targeted place marketing •Legitimising taxpayer's money spent on branding •To avoid protest, resentment, backlash, counter-campaigns	•Increasing the recognition of own projects or business •Increasing recognition of the individual by third parties •Purposeful networking with other ambassadors and (lesser extent) ISH and coordinators •Influencing societal values and civic pride •Dissonance with institutional stakeholders' brand

The review so far has covered different forms and motivations for community engagement. The final section reviews community stakeholders' perspectives on engagement by examining the two extreme phenomena, disengagement and self-engagement.

4.4.3. Community Perspectives on Engagement

Recently, two studies investigated community engagement in PB from the residents' perspectives. Insch and Stuart (2015) studied reasons for citizen disengagement with the city brand of Dunedin, New Zealand. Martin and Capelli (2017) focused on residents' perception of advertising legitimacy of the region brand of Auvergne, France. In both cases, residents exhibited a strong sense of place attachment and pride in the place. When asked if the participants would want to be involved in the PB, some participants responded that they would participate if they were aware of the branding (Insch and Stuart, 2015). Similarly, in Auvergne, participants expressed their willingness to engage with place brand managers to build a genuine, successful place brand that they could fully embrace in their role as brand ambassadors (Martin and Capelli, 2017). However, since residents were not included in the

branding process, they felt that the institutional stakeholders were commodifying the identity of the place for their political and economic gains.

In the case of Auvergne, residents felt that "they [institutional stakeholders] are dispossessing it [Auvergne] from us [the residents]" (p. 829). In Dunedin, residents were quick to criticise that the city's brand was targeting external stakeholders. Some participants reported a sense of detachment from the elements of the place brand even though the place was dear to them (Insch and Stuart, 2015). Thus, even when there is a 'fit' between the place brand and residents' sense of place identity, they criticised the strategy as exclusively designed to attract tourists and not reinforcing residents' place attachment (Casais and Monteiro, 2019). This phenomenon has been examined as 'brand identification' crucial for residents forming 'self-brand connections' and ultimately brand advocacy (Kemp et al., 2012). Thus, due to a lack of brand awareness, i.e., initiation of engagement on the part of ISH and, more prominently, brand identification led to residents' disengagement with the process (Insch and Stuart, 2015; Martin and Capelli, 2017).

Further, Insch and Stuart (2015) found two additional reasons for resident disengagement with the place brand: cynical attitudes towards involvement and disapproval of local government actions. The disapproval of the government was traced back to the poor management of the brand and the feeling of disappointment and frustration by residents after decisions made by the local council negatively impacted them. Further, participants revealed that they were cynical of playing an active role in the PB process due to their mistrust of place brand managers. Further anecdotes from the participants revealed that the residents felt that the Council was not offering 'real' opportunities for participation (emphasis added).

In Auvergne, the strategy of associating the place brand name with local products was met with scepticism (Martin and Capelli, 2017). The region brand was perceived by residents as more legitimate when it promoted the place to firms, residents, or tourists than when promoting its functional attributes such as local products. It is interesting that in this instance, scepticism and mistrust were directed not towards the government but entrepreneurial firms who were seen to be taking advantage of the region brand by piggybacking on the strengths of a public good. These studies indicate the significance of fostering social trust and relationships between the institutional and community stakeholders for orchestrating the participatory process. These studies are significant in examining the enablers and barriers to participation from community

perspectives, without which phenomena such as brand identification and public cynicism and apathy cannot be understood. Thus, noting that enablers and barriers to forming a collaborative relationship can emerge from both ISH and CSH, the perceptions and attitudes of both groups will be explored.

In contrast to disengagement, a small number of studies examined active citizenship behaviour or place citizenship behaviour. They question *how and why* residents show discretionary behaviours to promote the effectiveness of destination or city brands (Zhang and Xu, 2019). Foremost, positive perception of the quality of life attributes of a place has been shown to affect active citizenship behaviour by triggering place attachment and satisfaction (Zenker and Rütter, 2014; de Azevedo *et al.*, 2013; Taecharungroj, 2016). These studies provide evidence that community stakeholders' engagement in PB is not solely reliant on the intervention of institutional stakeholders. CSH' self-efficacy can enable them to self-engage and impact the place and its brand. This study views 'self-engaged CSH' in PB are likely to be *active CSH* identified in Section 4.3.2. They are attributed with an active role of seeking a resolution and engaging in discourse and actions affecting many aspects of public life (Hudak, 2015). However, the mechanisms (how) and motivations (why) to do so in PB are unclear. To address the gap, the study will explore how and why do community stakeholders 'self-engage' in PB.

4.5. Summary

This Chapter reviews the literature on stakeholder engagement, focusing on the notion of 'participatory place branding'. Two key ideas that have led to the prominence of broader participation in PB are: *inclusiveness*, grounded in sustainable and equitable development and legitimacy perspectives; *collaboration*, grounded in inter-organisational value co-creation. Both perspectives recognise that multiple stakeholder groups need to be engaged for realising the success of PB strategy, governance and implementation. Thus, multi-stakeholder PBG is a key theme for exploration in the current study, with a focus on analysing the potential for collaboration between ISH and CSH.

Stakeholders in this study are defined as *'all groups of people, organisations and industries that affect or are affected by the branding of the place'*. However, PB is primarily considered the government's responsibility and, increasingly, being managed through PPP models of governance. All the while, residents are considered consumers of the place brand rather than

active stakeholders and co-producers. Based on the examination of stakeholder typologies, two groups are identified – Institutional Stakeholders (ISH) and Community Stakeholders (CSH) – they occupy different levels of power and access to participation in the place brand process. Their roles and relationships reveal that ISH have a high level of interest and influence in PBG. In contrast, CSH are considered an incoherent and heterogeneous assemblage of individual interests with low influence and involvement, who cannot be easily managed in the PB process. One way in which their identification and engagement can be tackled is through internal stakeholder segmentation (Byrd and Gustke, 2011).

Nonetheless, recognising the benefits of engaging CSH, some efforts and theory building for community engagement are underway. Two well-evidenced practices of governments and PPP agencies were identified: *public consultation* and *ambassador programmes*. While there is some evidence of the success of such practices, they are primarily explored from an institutional perspective. The gap in the literature pertains to CSH roles and participation, particularly from their own perspective. Nonetheless, knowing that these roles and participation are shaped by ISH perceptions, motivations and practices, the attitudes of both groups need to be investigated. Thus, research questions 3 and 4 are conceived as:

Q3. What roles do stakeholders assume and expect in the place branding process? How do they create legitimacy for place branding?
Q4. How can community stakeholders engage in place branding?

Further, some questions that emerged in the review that will inform the research methodology are: *who should lead PB?* and *who should be involved in PB?* Some studies suggest that stakeholders can 'self-engage' with the place brand without the intervention of ISH, commonly in the form of citizen activism and counter-campaigns. This conceptualisation of CSH's active role can challenge the hierarchical model for stakeholder engagement in PB and lead the way for developing a 'participatory' approach to PBG. Echoing the themes from Chapter 3, Brand Relationships and Stakeholder Relationships are pertinent for developing this framework.

The next Chapter builds on current knowledge to conceptualise a *Theoretical Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Place Brand Governance.*

Chapter 5. Theoretical Framework

5.1.Introduction

The framework combines theories and models reviewed on regional cohesion (Section 3.3.), brand architecture (in Section 3.4.) and notions of participatory place branding focusing on stakeholders roles and relationships (in Section 4.3.). The two key components of region branding are: brand management and stakeholder management. These two aspects have been separately explored in the literature. This study explores complex brand and stakeholder relationships under one framework. Attention is paid to the stakeholder management aspect for conceptualising roles, relationships and mechanisms for multi-stakeholder PBG.

5.2.Social Representations and Regional Cohesion

The theory of *social representations* specialises in the articulation of individual and social, and symbolic and real meaning (Moscovici, 1982). According to Moscardo (2011), social representations of tourism are what communities and other stakeholders believe about tourism (meaning), its operation (goals and processes) and its likely consequences (outcomes). In the current study, the use of social representations theory prompts the investigation into the different 'interpretations of place branding' by stakeholder groups (Section 8.5.), with the view that if we understand how stakeholders understand PB, their visions and expected outcomes, then we can understand how they will react to ISH's PB initiatives and actions. Thus, the study interrogates the diverging social representations of place branding for Northamptonshire (Q1).

The theory has been used to understand residents' attitudes towards tourism planning and governance (Wassler et al., 2019). However, it must be clarified that social representations are distinct from attitudes and representations in tourism, in that visual imagery is a central component of any social representations (Moscardo, 2011; Castillo-Villar, 2018). In the present case, the identity and development narratives of the region are analysed (in Section 8.2. and 8.4.) since they are formed at the intersection between communities' and institutions' perceptions and needs from the place. Building on the findings of Moscardo (2011) regarding the social representations of tourism development, attention is paid to the cost and benefits, non-economic factors and integration in wider development processes. Thus, investigating the social representations of PB means examining the different interpretations of PB meaning,

vision and outcomes, and the hegemonic (or dominant) and polemical (non-dominant) representations held by different stakeholder groups. The critical analysis involves questioning the narratives and interpretations of participating and non-participating stakeholders to shed light on the issues for representations and participation concerning: *whose identities are being promoted*, *who shapes the process* and *who stands to benefit* (contributing to *research objective 1*).

Regional cohesion as the basis for region branding does not imply homogeneity of the social representations of the region (as suggested by Caldwell and Freire, 2004; Herstein, 2012). A strong regional cohesion can shape the perceptions of the region as a unified entity. Furthermore, region branding can provide the framework to stimulate regional cohesion. Past studies have used the notion of regional cohesion to examine the 'functionality' of the region for forming policy networks among public-private actors (Quinn, 2015) and the 'feeling' among the residents for internalising the place marketing image (Hospers, 2004). In this study, regional cohesion will be applied to examine two key aspects of Northamptonshire: the county as a single perceptual entity by examining the cultural identity, regional identity and economic development narratives; and the motivations and practices of political, economic and cultural stakeholders to mobilise for a cohesive approach to region branding (Q2).
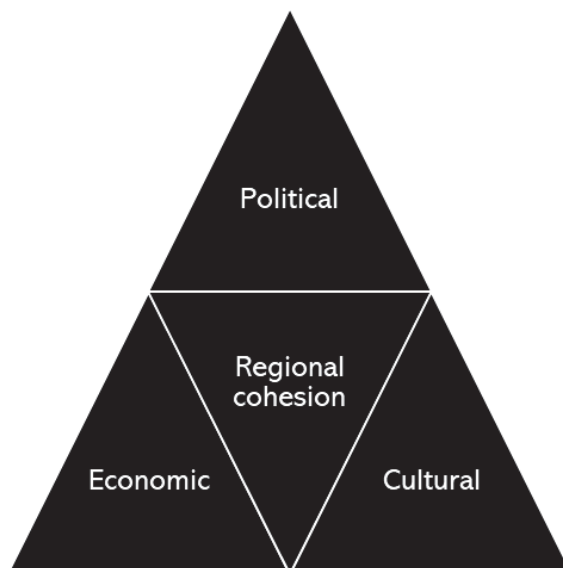
Figure 5.1. Theoretical Framework Part (a): Region Branding based on Regional Cohesion. Source: Author's conceptualisation based on the literature review.

This approach aims to identify the critical conditions and issues for mobilising stakeholders for a cohesive approach to region branding (leading to *research objective 1*); and explore the potential for multi-stakeholder PBG (leading to *research objective 2).* During the interviews, participants were explicitly asked: *Does Northamptonshire seem like a single entity?* Further, experiences of past collaboration between government, business and community, and intent to do so in the future, are relevant to understand the 'co-opetitive' forces (motivations and practices).

5.3. Region Brand Management: Structure and Components

The structure of the framework adopts Ikuta et al.'s (2007) 'roof and pillar' metaphor (reviewed in Section 3.4.3.) since it illustrates the interdependency and connections between the 'master brand' and the 'sub-brands'. The structure is symbolic of the 'integrated' relationship between the 'brand' as a perceptual entity and 'branding' as a stakeholder-led strategy for regional development. Thus, part (a) of the framework illustrates the region brand in the form of 'the roof' (in Figure 5.1.). It is not just a public sector council brand or private sector destination brand; it leverages the political-economic and cultural dimensions of regional cohesion. It extends beyond the functional aspects of regional development to represent the region (Martin and Capelli, 2017). Thus, the region brand is a symbolic, perceptual and social representation of the region constructed by its stakeholders. It is posited that even when a central coordinator such as a DMO and an official region brand campaign is missing, the region brand exists at the interaction of image and identity.

Part (b) of the framework is concerned with the management of brand relationships to promote the region as a unified perceptual entity (Figure 5.2.). The roof (in black) represents the region brand, and its supporting pillars are the sub-brands (in blue). While the region brand is the master brand, the sub-brands need to be conceived based on the goals and needs of the region. The success of PB strategies depends on the political, economic and cultural context. Thus, there can be no 'one size fit' approach for sub-branding. Sub-brands can be developed based on destination brands, target audience needs (Zenker and Braun, 2017), sectors of regional growth (Ikuta et al., 2007) or stakeholders' brands (Hanna and Rowley, 2015). Sub-brands may already exist (in the form of ISH's public or corporate brand) or may be created in response to the needs and associations of the target audiences. Thus, the sub-brand is a unit for managing

the complexities of the perceptual elements (image and identity associations) of the region brands.
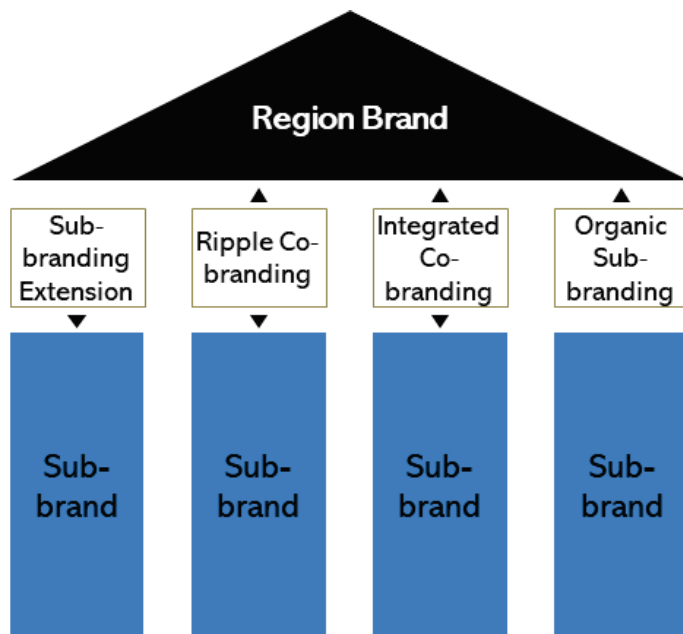
Figure 5.2. *Theoretical Framework Part (b): Brand Relationships in Region Branding. Source: Author's conceptualisation based on the literature review.*

Part (c) of the model (illustrated in green) is concerned with managing stakeholder relationships in the PB process (Figure 5.3.). The starting point for the development is that PB in the current resource-constrained context is a multi-stakeholder endeavour. However, stakeholder engagement in region branding is challenged by 'co-opetitive' forces and 'multiplicity', creating a tension between cooperation and competition in the political, economic and cultural dimensions. For fostering participatory PB, collaboration and inclusiveness are ideals to strive towards; nonetheless, unequal power of stakeholder groups and access to participation have to be acknowledged. Indeed this should be the starting point for developing such a model. Thus, the framework adopts a modified version of the 'place brand web' from Hanna and Rowley (2015). The framework proposed here addresses two key limitations of the Web model: reflecting the unequal power and access to participation and representing residents as community stakeholders. Thus, part (c) of the framework illustrates the hierarchical relations between the two key stakeholder groups – Institutional Stakeholders (ISH) and Community Stakeholders (CSH).
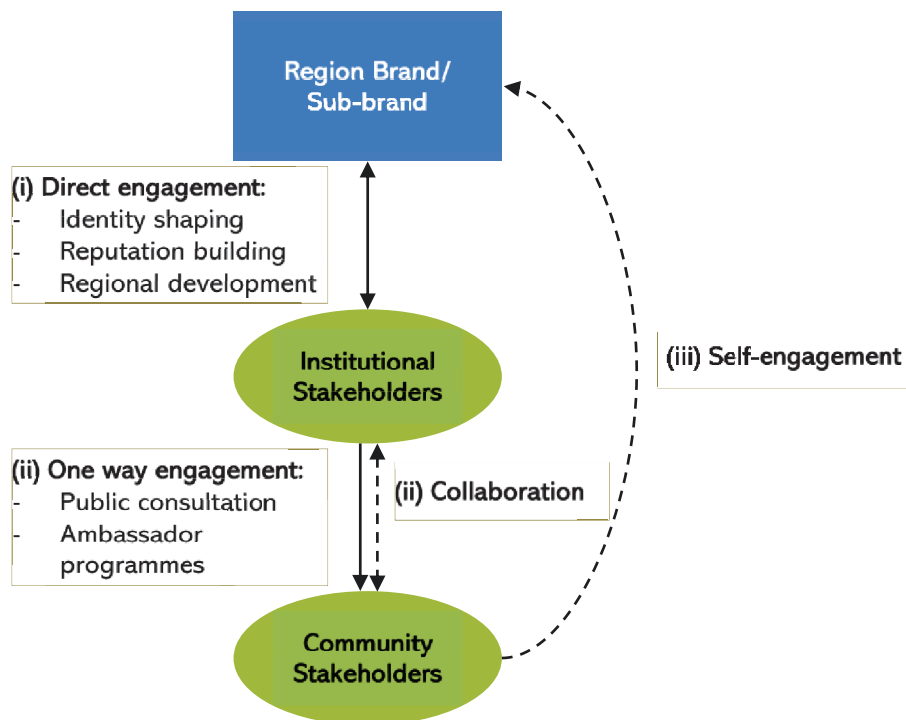
Figure 5.3. *Theoretical Framework Part (c): Stakeholder Relationships in Region Branding.*
Source: Author's conceptualisation based on the literature review.

ISH are actively engaged in place brand management owing to their institution or organisation's interest and mission congruence with the place brand. In addition to public and private institutions, cultural, education and voluntary organisations may also be engaged in brand governance as ISH. On the other hand, *CSH* have a stake in the place's brand due to their residential interests and ties in the region. Some *self-engaged CSH* may play an active role in the civic, social or voluntary aspect of community life. They are significant not only for their contribution to the place's economic, social and cultural capital but also for the connections in the communities they serve. Brand and Stakeholder relationships are illustrated as arrows between the Region brand, Sub-brand, Institutional Stakeholders and Community Stakeholders.

5.3.1. Brand Relationships

Based on current understandings from brand architecture, 'brand relationships' indicate how sub-brands relate to or coordinate with the master brand. Adapting Hanna and Rowley's (2015) sub-branding and co-branding relationships and Ikuta et al.'s (2007) ripple, integrated and specialised pattern, four types of brand relationships are conceived.

(i) Sub-branding Extension: the region brand becomes the primary frame of reference (the driver), which is extended into sub-brands to create meaningful new segments (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). This type of relationship can be beneficial when branding aims to add a new image or reputation to the region brand (Ikuta et al., 2007). This suggests a top-down approach to creating manageable segments. For example, sub-brands may be conceived to promote the place to live, work, study, invest and visit.

(ii) Ripple Co-branding: the link between sub-brands and region brand augments or modifies the associations of the region brand. Both the region brand and the individual brands must agree to reconstruct the image for rebranding (Ikuta et al., 2007). For example, in the county of Northamptonshire, this approach would see the region brand draw on the well-known individual brands of the region, such as the corporate brands of Weetabix, Silverstone, Carlsberg, to leverage positive brand associations. However, for the corporate brand, the benefit of co-branding may not directly relate to their reputation, i.e., enhancing the brand image.

(iii) Integrated Co-branding: sub-brands can act autonomously, pursuing their own goals, identity and interests, whilst also committing to the region brand (Hanna and Rowley, 2015). In comparison with the ripple effect, this relationship can be beneficial in strengthening both the image of the region and the sub-brands. Due to the symbiotic nature of the relationship, it is an ideal type to achieve. Examples can include territorially embedded corporate or entrepreneurial brands since they directly contribute to and stand to benefit from the positive image of the region (Otgaar, 2012).

The first three types of relationships allow sub-brands to be consistent with the region brand and avoid sub-brands from contradicting each other (Zenker and Braun, 2017). Thus, they are manageable. The exception is the specialised pattern culminating into fragmented individual brands that come to represent *(iv) Organic Sub-branding:* the sub-brand does not explicitly relate to the master brand (goal, vision, look and feel). However, its very existence may shape or alter the image of the master brand or the region. An example could be community and voluntary projects with a social purpose that shape the place experience but do not directly feature in or influence the branding process. In the initial stages of PB, this type of relationship may exist between the master and non-official or organic brands in the region. With time, they

may develop into a type (i), (ii) or (iii) relationship that is mutually beneficial to the region brand and the sub-brands. Dinnie (2018) indicated that region brands are amorphous entities, so the relationship patterns with sub-brands within their ecosystem may be a hybrid, adding to the complexity of brand management.

While the master and sub-brand relationships are relatively well explored in the PB literature, the interactions between the sub-brands conceptualised in this study as *stakeholder relationships* remain underexplored.

5.3.2. Stakeholder Relationships

Stakeholder relationships refer to how stakeholder groups relate to the sub-brand; and how they collaborate across the sub-brands for region branding. Hanna and Rowley's (2015) *Place Brand Web* model is the basis for conceiving the 'direct engagement' between the ISH and the master brand or sub-brand. ISH's motivations and mechanisms for engagement with the master brand and CSH (in a 'one-way engagement') are also relatively better understood compared to CSH. Thus, these two types of relationships are denoted by solid lines, whereas dotted lines denote underexplored relationships pertaining to CSH (in Figure 5.3.). Three types of stakeholder relationships are identified from the literature.

(i) Direct engagement: Broadly speaking, ISH may directly shape the PB process. This stakeholder group is known to accrue a high level of benefit from engaging in PB. Further, they are able to exert a high level of influence over resource allocation and decision making. Thus, the relationship between institutional stakeholders and the place brand is denoted by a bi-directional arrow. However, in PBG characterised by multiple stakeholder groups, there is a gap in the knowledge on the roles and relationships ISH assume and ascribe to create legitimacy (Q3).

(ii) One-way engagement/Collaboration: ISH who are directly engaged in PB act as gatekeepers, moderating CSH engagement. Their engagement practice and mechanisms could be one-way (top-down) or collaborative (co-creating value with CSH). One-way engagement practices such as public consultation and ambassador programmes have received some attention in PB research. Thus, the relationship is visualised as a top-down one-directional arrow. In comparison, collaborative relationship in which CSH are ascribed an active role to

engage as co-creators and co-partners with institutional stakeholders is not well understood. The bi-directional arrow signifies that such a relationship would require stakeholders to be open towards engagement and being influenced by one another. Understanding the collaborative potential of ISH and CSH relationships can serve as the basis for developing a participatory model for multi-stakeholder PBG (leading to *research objective 3*).

(iii) Self-engagement: Some evidence suggests that community stakeholders are able to 'self-engage' with the place brand without ISH intervention. The one-directional arrow signifies the ability of CSH to react to and impact the regional image or identity and thus the place brand. However, such self-engagement may not be systematically and consciously contributing to the brand of the place. Due to the underexplored nature of this relationship, the dotted line is used. Understanding CSH's perceptions of self-engagement has practical implications for strategising their roles and contributions in the PB process (leading to *research objective 4* and *Q4).*

5.4. Summary

The framework for *Multi-stakeholder Place Brand Governance* draws on the current understandings of PB meaning, goals and outcomes. Further, it is fundamental in identifying gaps and conceiving the research objectives (illustrated in Figure 5.4.).
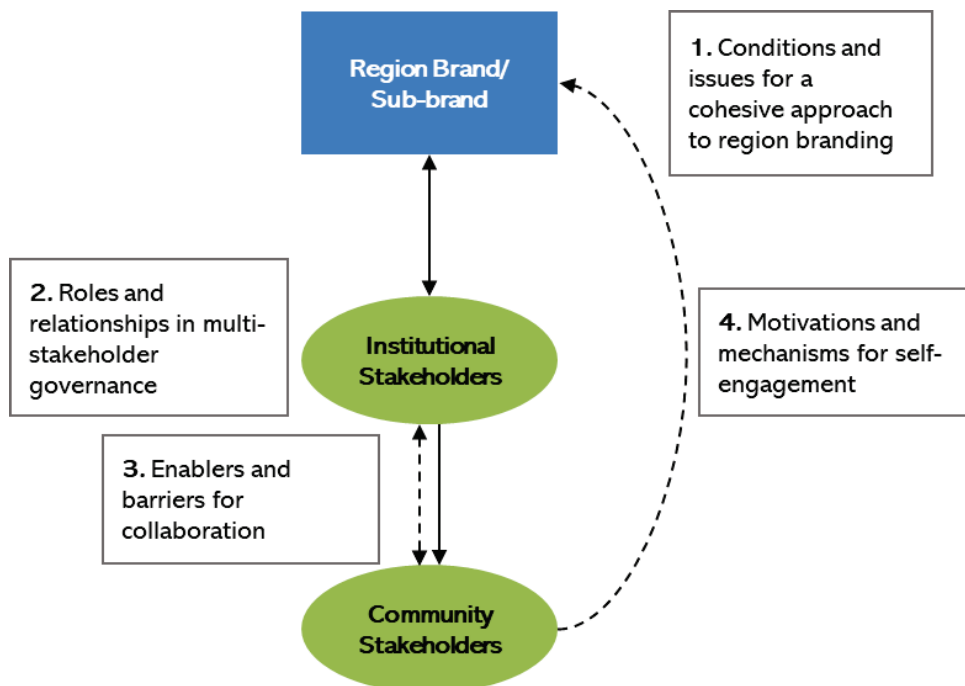
Figure 5.4. *Gaps in the theoretical framework and the corresponding Research Objectives (1-4) for the empirical study. Source: Author.*

The enquiry starts by examining the political, economic and cultural conditions and issues affecting a cohesive approach to region branding. Next, roles and relationships of ISH groups and CSH are in focus to scope the potential for multi-stakeholder PBG in the specific case context. The dotted lines indicate underexplored relationships, notably emerging from community stakeholders. The study investigates stakeholder collaboration in general and community participation in specific by exploring the enablers/barriers, motivations and mechanisms from ISH and CSH perspectives. The next Chapter details the methodological approach for the empirical investigation.

Chapter 6. Methodology

6.1.Introduction

This Chapter outlines the research strategy of the empirical enquiry, detailing the philosophical and methodological decisions that shaped data collection and analysis. The rationale for adopting the case study strategy and the choice of the case (Northamptonshire) are discussed. Methods of data collection and analysis (undertaken in phases) and the sampling and participant recruitment strategy, and the practicalities of conducting research are explained. Finally, the Chapter ends with a reflective account of the researchers' positionality, access to the research setting and participants, and ethical consideration along with the solutions adopted to minimise these issues.

6.2.Aims and Objectives

The study aim was to develop a *Conceptual Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Place Brand Governance*, and recommendations for adoption in a resource-constrained region, that incorporates notions of:

• Diverse social representations

• Regional cohesion

• Brand architecture

• Stakeholder collaboration and inclusiveness

In order to achieve the study aim, a single in-depth case study of Northamptonshire was conducted. To fulfil the research aim, multi-stakeholder perspectives were explored through the following research objectives:

1.To examine the critical conditions and issues for mobilising stakeholders for a cohesive approach to region branding by reviewing the past and current place branding initiatives.

2.To investigate the scope for multi-stakeholder place brand governance by analysing stakeholders' roles and relationships.

3.To identify the enablers and barriers to collaboration by analysing stakeholder engagement practices and motivations.

4.To recommend strategies for widening participation by conceptualising the motivations and mechanisms of self-engaged community stakeholders.

6.3. Research Philosophy

The research philosophy serves as a useful guide, setting the direction for the study through the underpinning epistemological and ontological assumptions (Schwandt, 1994). In business and social science research, the two polar stances of research philosophy are Positivism and Interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2009). The key idea of Positivism is that the "social world exists externally and that its properties should be measured through objective methods, rather than being inferred subjectively" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002, p. 28). On the other hand, interpretivism, social constructivism, hermeneutics are non-positivist research paradigms that appear in the lexicons of social sciences methodologists (Schwandt, 1994; Guba and Lincoln, 1989). The key notion underpinning *interpretivism* is that the researcher has to "explore and understand the social world through the participants' and their own perspectives; and explanations can only be offered at the level of meaning rather than cause" (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 23).

The current research is situated in the interpretivist paradigm. This echoes the non-positivist tradition observed in the field of PB research (Gertner, 2011; Lucarelli and Brorström, 2013; Chan and Marafa, 2013; Vuignier, 2017; Acharya and Rahman, 2016). Qualitative methods in the field are based on multi-sited ethnography, social representation, hermeneutic, phenomenological, ideographic, narrative and semiotic (Acharya and Rahman, 2016). A vast majority of the articles on place marketing and branding published between 1990 and 2009 were rather subjective and sometimes anecdotal (Gertner, 2011b). While not explicitly stated, it is inferred that the ontological position of these studies is that the subjective stance is acceptable for the creation of knowledge in the field.

Significantly, research on stakeholders in branding from the bottom-up is usually based on the interpretive paradigm (Lucarelli and Brorström, 2013). The subjectivist stance aids in understanding the 'why' and 'how' of the local population experiences and expressions in PB. Since stakeholders' perceptions of their roles and participation are focal to this study, it is appropriate to regard the research participants as co-creators of knowledge. Further, the researcher seeks to gain a qualitative understanding of the world of the research participants. Thus, the interpretivist philosophy appears to be a natural fit for exploring stakeholders' perceptions of Northamptonshire and their role and participation in place branding.

The key differences between positivism and interpretivism are their epistemological (nature of knowledge) and ontological (nature of reality) assumptions. Positivists view that reality is external and objective, and knowledge is created based on the observation of the external reality (Saunders et al., 2009). Interpretivists view reality as subjective and socially constructed and knowledge is created by understanding and interpreting people's social constructs (ibid). The implications of the interpretivist epistemology and ontology on the researchers' practice and design are explained below.

6.3.1. Epistemology

Epistemology guides "the researcher's view regarding what constitutes acceptable knowledge" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 119). Interpretivists are of the view that humans do not find knowledge; they construct it through interactions with the world and the people who inhabit it (Schwandt, 1994). Research is shaped by both the researcher and the researched; as a result, knowledge is created (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Interactions are fundamental in interpretive inquiries where the researcher is tasked with watching, listening, asking, recording and examining (Schwandt, 1994). In the field of PB, human interactions such as listening, recording and asking are carried out predominantly through qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups (Chan and Marafa, 2013). The researcher's aim during the interactions was to understand their views. For this reason, the interactions were prolonged, noted in terms of lengthy interview times and time spent building rapport. A conversational approach was adopted to ease the participants into giving lengthy responses. Indeed, during some interviews, participants spoke to many of the discussion points without being prompted.

Further, the interpretivist tradition encourages the researchers to acknowledge their own influence on the research and does not regard it as a feature that needs correction (Stake, 1995). By clarifying the position of the researcher in the research context, the assumptions and influence on data collection and interpretation can be made transparent (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Mirroring Jernsand's (2016a) reflexive process, "The work was influenced by what was known from before, what the assumptions were, what theory was adapted on the way, and what happened in the moments of interaction" (p. 27). Thus, subjectivity is inherent in the research process. However, in order to minimise bias, Nowell et al.'s (2017) trustworthiness criteria were closely studied.

The 'dependability' and 'confirmability' of qualitative research can be increased by providing a clear audit trail (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). For this, decisions relating to research design need to be thoroughly and rationally explained, and the sources made transparent (Nowell et al., 2017). In this thesis, the theoretical framework and its grounding in participatory PB informed the topics and questions in the interview and discussion guides. The researcher tried to tease out the significance of community inclusion and participation in decision making affecting their town and county. Further details regarding the context of interactions and the logic of the research design and interpretations have been explicated in Section 6.5.

6.3.2. Ontology

Ontology guides "the researcher's view of the nature of reality or being" (Saunders et al., 2009). Following the interpretivist philosophy, this research adopts the views of 'constructionism' to understand the nature of reality. Constructionism is rooted in sociology and views that 'multiple constructed realities' exist, and they can be understood through shared investigation (by researchers and participants) of meanings and explanations (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). This research assumes that the reality of PB practice, where they are not documented, can be understood through the narratives and lived experiences of the stakeholders of the place. The researcher's understanding of reality is only as good as the participants' understanding. Hence, 'experts' who have first-hand experience of the phenomena under study (PB) were recruited. The theoretical sampling of ISH and CSH was possible due to their relatively clear criteria (detailed in Table 4.2.). Further, these criteria were refined and confirmed by studying secondary information about the place and its stakeholders (further details in Section 6.5.1.).

Adopting a similar stance Reynolds (2018, p. 64) posited that "reality and knowledge operate in a state of flux, with meanings and understandings being constantly shaped and reshaped by multiple stakeholders". Thus, interactions with the participants are opportunities for understanding their realities and co-creating knowledge by sharing viewpoints. The researcher co-created rich knowledge and thick descriptors specific to the context by establishing a shared definition of PB. Taking caution against introducing pre-set definitions too early on in the conversation, participants views about PB were explored before sharing the theoretical definition.

Interpretation is an essential aspect of the researcher's tasks and responsibilities. Due to the ethical obligations, qualitative researchers need to minimise the misrepresentation and misunderstanding and seek validation (Stake, 1995). To establish the 'credibility' of the research, there should be a fit between the respondents' views and the researcher's representation of them (Nowell et al., 2017). In this research, 'validity' and 'credibility' were established by employing triangulation of two types: data source and methodological (Patton, 2002). Multiple perspectives can yield better interpretations of meanings through comparing and contrasting similar and conflicting views (Stake, 1995). Additionally, if several reports and data sources confirm a statement, it can be considered an accurate representation of a socially constructed reality (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Further details on data analysis and triangulation are discussed in Section 6.5.5.

6.4. Research Strategy

As stated at the beginning of this section, the philosophical standpoint of the researcher affects all aspects of research design and conduct (illustrated in Figure 6.1.). The rationale and approach of the case study, qualitative multi-methods strategy and case selection criteria are discussed in this section.
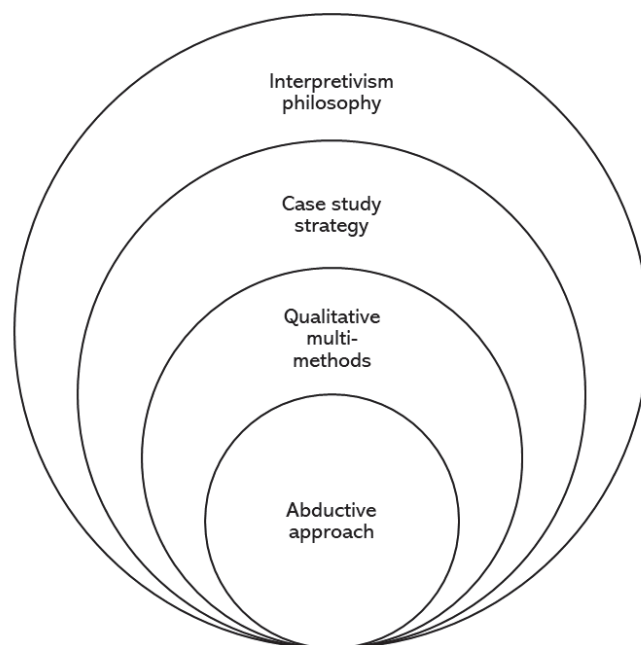
Figure 6.1. Overview of the research strategy. Source: Author.

6.4.1. Research Questions

The research questions are pertinent to address the research aims and objectives. The four questions guiding the research design are:

Q1. What are the diverging social representations of place branding for Northamptonshire?
Q2. How do the political, economic and cultural stakeholders mobilise for region branding?
Q3. What roles do they assume and expect in the place branding process? How do they create legitimacy for place branding?
Q4. How can community stakeholders engage in place branding?

The research questions were changed multiple times to reflect the knowledge that could be gleaned and conceptualised to the case study approach. Instead of simply translating the research objectives to questions, the questions reflect the state of PB practice and policy in Northamptonshire. For instance, in Q1, 'diverging' indicates not just the heterogeneity of the social representations but also the somewhat conflicting identity narratives. Q4 is hypothetical and posed in future tense due to the awareness that in Northamptonshire, community engagement practices were weak and undocumented at the time of the study. Nonetheless, since the study aimed to scope the future potential for multi-stakeholder PBG and widening participation, the framing is apt. In tailoring the questions to the case study context, the researcher acknowledges that the findings and the implications are limited to the context. Transferability is possible to some types of rural, regional contexts (discussed further in Section 6.6.).

6.4.2. Qualitative Case Study

The current study is rooted ontologically in social constructionism and interpretivist epistemologies and seeks to gather rich data from those who experience the phenomena or process through an in-depth, qualitative single-case approach (Stake, 1995). The empirical investigation was conducted between January to November 2019. The case study approach is appropriate for exploring under-researched topics concerning PBG (Reynolds, 2018; Lucarelli and Giovanardi, 2016) and the roles of stakeholder groups such as place marketing professionals (Warren and Dinnie, 2018), artists (Mittila and Lepisto, 2013) and Higher Education Institutions (Cavicchi et al., 2013; Popescu, 2012). Critics of the case study

methodology question its capacity to ensure rigour, again measuring success on the ability to provide valid, reliable and generalisable data (Gibbert et al., 2008). In this regard, the current research adopts a step by step thematic analysis protocol recommended by Braun and Clarke's (2006) for coding and generating themes.

Case studies generate context-specific understandings making it a popular choice for interpretivist research (Yin, 2018; Bryman, 2012; Flyvberg, 2011). The case study strategy permits the use of multiple methods to collect data and build a comprehensive case for analysis (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). They are used where no single perspective can provide a full account or explanation of the research issue, and understanding needs to be holistic, comprehensive and contextualised (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). In this thesis, the method is pertinent since a multiplicity of perspectives are being sought rooted in a specific context. Thus, multiple sources can be integrated. Case study research can aid theory building by providing a detailed and intensive methodology for a holistic understanding of unique phenomena (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Case studies enable abductive understandings to be advanced in a real-life setting (Saunders et al., 2009). Thus, the case-study findings can be considered to test the applicability and explanatory capacity of the theoretical framework (Braun, 2008).

While Yin's (2009) case study guidelines are most commonly used in Business and Management Studies, this research uses Stake's (1995) *The Art of Case Study* as the prime guide. Stake (1995) offers guidance for answering the *how* and *why* questions by understanding the feelings and motivations of the research participants as per the non-positivist paradigm. Foremost, the author describes the strategy as a "study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (Introduction, p. xi). In this thesis, the single case study approach enabled in-depth exploration to develop the *Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Place Brand Governance* within the time and resource limitations of the PhD degree study. Moreover, the case study enables the researcher to demonstrate the importance of a phenomenon and to inspire the creation of ideas for the readers (Siggelkow, 2007). The case study serves the purpose of illustrating how the conceptual argument regarding multi-stakeholder governance and wide participation can be applied (in Chapter 11, Discussion). Thus, the case is both intrinsic and instrumental in nature.

6.4.3. Case Selection

Stake (1995) states that the main criterion for case selection should be to maximise what we can learn. Empirical data collection in this research is done through purposeful or theoretical sampling, which involves searching for information-rich data (Baxter and Eyles, 1997). Cases should be selected based on their suitability for illuminating and extending relationships and logic among constructs (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Most importantly, Stake (1995) recognises that for a case to lend itself to understanding and to demonstrate conceptual phenomena, it does not have to be a typical or representative case because "we don't study a case primarily to understand other cases" (p. 4). This is in line with the limitation of the case study methodology in producing generalisable results (detailed in Section 6.6.). Nonetheless, for instrumental study, some cases are more fitting than others. Using theoretical and contextual criteria for case selection ensures that the research aims and objectives will be addressed. Considering that the cases typically studied in PB literature tend to be well-recognised (mega)cities and nations, Northamptonshire county-region fills the gap regarding region branding strategies, particularly under resource constraints. Further, as an intrinsic case, time and access for fieldwork are important pragmatic considerations. Northamptonshire is chosen as the case under study for three main reasons.

First, there is a gap in understanding the issues, conditions and potential of PB in urban-rural peripheral regions. Due to its geographic proximity to London and other urban conglomerations, Northamptonshire cannot be considered geographically peripheral, which is a key issue affecting rural, regional brands (Rauhut Kompaniets and Rauhut, 2016). However, the issues of socio-economic peripherality affect many of the urban and rural parts of the county (SEMLEP, 2016; NCC, 2019). In the UK context, this characteristic is not unique to the county and can be found in other Midlands towns and counties. However, compared with its resource-rich neighbours, the county of Northamptonshire does not have a city around which development can be centred. The main settlements in the county are in the towns of Northampton, Kettering, Corby, Wellingborough, Rushden and Daventry. These towns are not considered strong enough in reputational and socio-economic terms, affected by multiple deprivations (detailed in Section 7.1.). While the surrounding semi-rural and rural hinterlands are scenic, they are more or less similar in characteristics to the neighbouring counties. Thus, Northamptonshire occupies a somewhat peripheral position in the regional mix compared to its more influential neighbours (Quinn 2013; 2015).

Second, the East Midlands region in the UK in general and Northamptonshire county are not well recognised as a distinguished region in the national and international context (Quinn, 2015; Truslove, 2014; Uloth, 2017). The region hosts some of the most recognised towns and cities in the UK, namely Oxford, Cambridge, Birmingham, Leicester and Coventry. The wealthy counties of Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire are home to England's renowned universities, innovation centres, incubators, and heritage and cultural venues. On the other hand, the more homogeneous counties of Leicestershire and Derbyshire boast similar characteristics in terms of the natural and rural landscape, heritage attraction sites and market towns. Thus, there is immense potential for co-opetitive networking in this region.

Focusing on Northamptonshire, despite being a historic county region, it seems to lack a clear, joined-up strategy for the promotion of its identity (Northamptonshire Surprise, 2019; Uloth, 2017). Nonetheless, the growth potential is significant owing to being in the SEMLEP growth area. Based on the literature review, it can be argued that Northamptonshire can benefit from a county-level strategy by pooling resources to effectively place it on the map. These contextual conditions lead to the argument that Northamptonshire would benefit from the application of PB to distinguish itself by working collaboratively within the county and with regional partners. This socio-economic-spatial context of Northamptonshire creates a stimulating environment in which to study regional branding.

Third, attention is paid to Northamptonshire due to its resource-constrained context. When the study was conducted, Northamptonshire was undergoing a Local Government restructuring due to its weak governance and mismanagement of finances (GOV.UK, 2018c). This triggered the discourse and dialogue among government, businesses and the residents on the future of the county and brought to the fore the issues of 'local vs regional', 'urban vs rural', 'identity' and 'governance'. The transitionary period serves as a fertile ground to investigate the past and future potential (conditions needed and issues/barriers) for collaboration and participation in PBG. Thus, the conditions of competition, the need for coordination between the local place brands and the synergy (or lack of) for collaboration between the stakeholders in the county make Northamptonshire an appropriate case for studying the phenomena of 'stakeholder collaboration in region branding'. The research participants also confirmed these selection criteria. Chapter 7 provides an overview of the case study context based on secondary sources.

6.5. Data Collection and Analysis

Stake (1995) recommends a flexible research design where the investigation unfolds as the problem areas become progressively clarified and redefined. This permits an iterative approach to data collection and analysis that can be carried out in phases. In the current study, data collection and analysis followed a 'double diamond' approach whereby two consecutive stages of inductive-deductive analysis ensues (as depicted in Figure 6.2.). The research design takes inspiration from the Design Council UK's Double Diamond framework. This design thinking and innovation framework has been used to solve many real-world challenges and business innovation problems (DesignCouncilUK, 2015). In the current study, the framework was adopted because it enables diverge-converge thinking (Bisani and Choi, 2016). It enabled abductive analysis within a flexible or iterative research design.
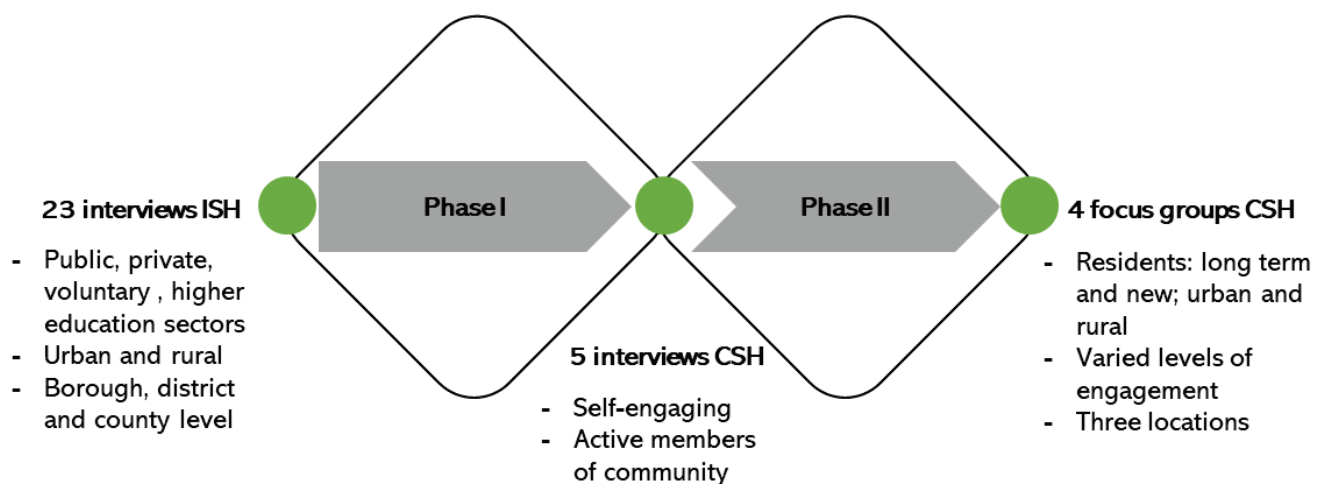
Figure 6.2. *A 'double diamond' research design depicting the two phases of data collection and analysis. Source: Author.*

The research data were obtained by collecting data from both primary and secondary sources on PB for Northamptonshire. Indeed, secondary data allowed for the refinement and confirmation of the primary data collection methods, tools and analysis. Primary data were collected in two phases, and a total of 46 participants were engaged in the study (see Data collection schedule in Appendix 2).

Phase I data collection involved in-depth interviews with 23 institutional stakeholders (5 public sector; 8 private sector; 5 voluntary sector; and 5 university) and 5 active community

stakeholders in Northamptonshire. Based on the abductive analysis, emergent themes formed the basis of the focus group discussions. In Phase II, 4 focus groups were conducted with community stakeholders in Northamptonshire. Multi-locale fieldwork was conducted in three towns: Northampton, Corby and Rushden. Following the iterative approach means that analysis starts alongside data collection. Thus, data analysis and collection are not illustrated as separate processes and stages in Figure 6.2.

6.5.1. Secondary and Primary Research

Documents such as newspapers, annual reports, correspondence, minutes of meetings serve as a record of activity that the researchers could not observe themselves (Stake, 1995). Studies on stakeholder engagement and PB identity use secondary documents such as newspapers and websites to provide the case overview and support the primary data (Chan and Marafa, 2013). The researcher was new to the county of Northamptonshire before commencing this (PhD) research project. Hence, before primary data collection, the researcher familiarised herself with the context by studying a wide variety of secondary information from wide-ranging sources such as the local and regional newspapers and magazines, government reports and publications, economic development and heritage strategy documents. The sources mainly were documentary in nature. Some survey and research-based (SEMLEP and consultation studies) sources were used. However, only credible sources were included from Gov.uk, local government sites and SEMLEP. In addition to quality sources, the relevance of the data needs to be judged before using it (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). For the current study, secondary data publications between 2014-2019 were sourced. For a full list of documents, refer to Appendix 3.

Secondary sources were found online through an extensive evaluation of accessible data from primary local authority sources, visitor attractions, business community outlets, and local community outputs. Additionally, the UK government's national statistics reports by county and local government were used to compare and situate Northamptonshire in the regional and national context. For instance, UK government's continuous or regular surveys for local authority revenue expenditure and financing helped pinpoint the percentage changes in spending by local authority area from 2010 to 2017. While ad-hoc surveys such as the Opinion Survey on *Future Northants: Local Government Reform Consultation* helped understanding of the particular conditions and perceptions at the beginning of the local government restructuring.

Organisation websites and social media accounts were reviewed prior to primary data collection. These affirmed the selection criteria for the case study, formulation of the topics for the interview and discussion guides and provided background material for the interviews. Further stakeholders were identified through PB initiative or local government websites, public-access strategy documents, press releases and newspaper and magazine articles where stakeholders were mentioned in relation to branding Northamptonshire. During the interviews, some participants provided additional secondary materials such as campaign presentations from various stages of PB (pitch, launch and post-evaluation). This enabled a greater understanding of PB practice and development in the county. Economic development strategy and governance documents were of utmost interest since these were used for triangulation with *primary data*.

For primary data collection, a flexible research design is adopted where the investigation unfolds as the problem areas become progressively clarified and redefined (Stake, 1995). The study was conducted using interviews followed by focus groups. The rationale for this research design is as follows. While interviewing community stakeholders, it was felt that providing opportunities for discussion and debate between these participants would generate richer data. This insight emerged from a duo-interview with two community stakeholders. The small group dynamic and discussions provided rich insights into the individual and shared views of these participants. Since PB is concerned with shared and negotiated identities, the focus group method was apt for orchestrating collective brainstorming and articulation of place identity and vision. The focus group enabled differences of opinions to be directly and explicitly discussed and for observing social interaction and negotiation (Litosseliti, 2003).

The method was applied with CSH to manage the heterogenous characteristics of the population. Since community stakeholders are a much broader and heterogeneous group than institutional stakeholders, 'symbolic representation' from a large population is challenging to achieve using one-on-one interviews alone (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Focus groups can gather multiple viewpoints from community stakeholders by aiming for homogeneous participants within groups and heterogeneous across groups. Moreover, as the enquiry becomes clearer and precise from Phase I interviews, the key topics can be explored in a group setting for participants to collectively articulate and negotiate their identities and participation in PB. Thus, in further engagement with community stakeholders, the focus group method was apt to discuss the complex phenomenon of PB.

6.5.2. Sampling and Recruitment Strategy

Sampling enables a reduction in the amount of data collected by considering only data from a sub-group rather than all possible cases or elements. This helps in overcoming difficulties owing to restrictions of time, money and often access. Collecting data from fewer cases also means that you can collect more detailed information, and more attention can be paid to quality analysis (Saunders et al., 2009). Indeed, qualitative studies depend on the richness of the information gathered rather than the amount of data gathered (ibid). It is recognised that a representative sample cannot be recruited within a qualitative interpretivist study. Theoretical criteria for sampling can be used when the characteristics of the population are known. Thus, the selection criteria are based on the characteristics of ISH and CSH identified in the literature (summarised in Table 4.2.).

Purposive and heterogeneous sampling has been applied to capture the views of stakeholder groups who have direct and indirect participation during the development of the brand (Eshuis et al., 2014). This type of sampling is conducive for answering the 'how' and 'why' questions in detail, providing an information-rich case study in which to explore the research question and gain theoretical insights (Stake, 1995). Heterogeneous samples are recommended to provide a detailed picture of the phenomena under study (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Two levels of sampling are considered.

The primary focus is on sampling participants to represent a wide range of institutional, community, government, business and voluntary groups. In PB research, participants often include practitioners (the so-called 'experts') (Vuignier, 2017) from political and economic institutions (Sarabia-Sanchez and Cerda-Bertomeu, 2018) and DMOs (Hanna and Rowley, 2015; Warren and Dinnie, 2018). The literature presents much fewer cases where holistic exploration was sought from multiple stakeholder groups in a particular context. Notable exceptions include Reynolds (2018) and Merrilees et al. (2012) since their enquiry included perspectives of ISH and CSH groups. Following a similar sampling approach, the present study interrogates the perspectives of muti-stakeholders from the political, economic and cultural institutions and communities. Following the methodology of Reynolds (2018), stakeholders are assigned a group based on their primary input into PB processes. The study acknowledges that stakeholders often undertake numerous roles at any given point (Braun et al., 2013). Nonetheless, the literature suggests that primarily residential or institutional interests guide the

participation of CSH and ISH, respectively. Thus, this typology is aptly applied for their grouping and identification.

Primary data were collected in two phases from 46 participants (see a detailed breakdown in Table 6.1.). In Phase I of this study, 23 institutional stakeholders and 5 community stakeholders were interviewed. Literature indicates that local and regional institutions of political and economic governance and associated public and private actors are considered to be institutional stakeholders in PB. They have been or are currently engaged in PB networks, directly shaping the identity, reputation or development agenda in Northamptonshire. At the beginning of the brand-building process, these actors are the most likely to come together to launch initiatives. Thus, this stakeholder group included the institutions and organisations who were involved from the nascent stages of PB.

In line with the research aim, the sampling of participants included ISH from managerial and executive positions who make strategic decisions and *on-the-ground* officers, coordinators, project managers, small businesses and voluntary organisations involved in operational and implementation. Further, in line with Cleave and Arku (2015), an effort was made to include practitioners from various geographic, political and economic contexts. One strategy through which this is achieved is multi-locale fieldwork. The sampling considers the recruitment of perspectives of urban, rural, local level and county level.

After the first 13 interviews, it became clear that some of the ISH engaged in the same networks tended to 'sing from the same hymn sheet'. In line with the study's aims to explore the potential for multi-stakeholder PBG, ISH engaged now and previously in different placemaking, promotions and branding networks were recruited. Efforts were taken to actively seek out underrepresented groups. These included rural participants, private and voluntary sector organisations operating at the county level and outside the town of Northampton. At first, HEI participants involved in PB initiatives were recruited to capture their perspective as academics. Further, senior management was added to this list. This was in response to the recurrent emphasis placed on higher education stakeholders during the interviews.

Table 6.1. *List of Interview and Focus Group participants.*

Stakeholder group	Codes	Number of participants (n)	Description of institutions/groups and position
Phase I: Semi-structured interviews			
Public sector	ISH-G	5	Local government: •Council representative (2); •Public administration officer (3).
Private sector	ISH-B	8	Executives/Managers: •Business Improvement District; •Industry network/forum (4); •Social Enterprise (2); •Big corporation.
Voluntary and Community sector	ISH-V	5	Executives/Managers: •Rural development agency; •Community foundation; •Arts organisation (2); •Placemaking project.
Higher Education Institution	ISH-U	5	University: •Academics (3); •Senior management (2).
Community	SE-CSH	5	•Community project (2); •Arts group (2); •Blogger.
Phase II: Focus groups			
Community	CSH-F1	4	•Small business owner (2); •University professional services staff; •University recent graduate.
	CSH-F2	6	•Local government employee; •Museum staff; •University recent graduate (2); •Residents (2).
	CSH-F3	4	•Chair of local resident association; •Active volunteer; •Voluntary sector staff; •Resident.
	CSH-F4	4	•International students (2); •Home students (2).

Furthermore, 5 self-engaged community stakeholders (SE-CSH) were interviewed. The primary selection criterion was that they play an active role in the civic, social or voluntary

aspect of community life. A distinction is drawn between the VCS category of ISH and SE-CSH. The latter is organised informally as groups or collectives or act in an unorganised fashion as individuals. CSH who were shaping the identity, reputation and development narrative of the towns or county were recruited to understand 'self-engagement' and potential for PB collaboration. All (5) participants represented a community project, group or initiative aimed at celebrating the local and regional identity. 4 participants were focused on the local area (Northampton town) at the time of the study, of which 2 participants have since expanded their project scale and scope, and 1 participant focused on the county. It was easy to identify these groups or individuals through their mention in the media, such as local newspapers and magazines, and active engagement on social media with official PB channels.

Since the case study region is named, additional care is taken to anonymise the participants, using pseudonyms and referring to stakeholders applying sectoral classification rather than specific organisations. One instance in which this was not possible was in analysing the role and stakeholders from the Higher Education Institution (HEI). Since there exists only one HEI in the case study context, it is easily identifiable. These data sources had to be signposted to shed light on their assumed and ascribed roles. Thus, anonymisation as much as possible has been applied.

In Phase II of this study, a total of 18 participants took part in 4 focus groups. The primary qualification for their selection was that they were residents in the county. Participants had different ages, gender and ethnic profiles. Most participants were white, middle-aged and lived/worked in Northampton. Further, focus groups were conducted in Corby and Rushden to recruit participants from different geographies. To increase the diversity of the age profile, one focus group was conducted with University students. Participants exhibited different levels of engagement in their community and with ISH for PB. They were recruited through unsolicited contacts, voluntary sector organisations, personal networks and university channels.

Overall, the research benefited from the inclusion of participants from different organisational and residential settings since they possess expertise and knowledge in multiple areas. 'Symbolic representation' was achieved by seeking perspectives that covered the diversity of dimensions and constituencies that are central to understanding the phenomena (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). One noteworthy occurrence was that more females than males participated in the study. This trend was evident in ISH-B and ISH-V categories comprising voluntary sector

organisations and industry network coordinators. Their participation reflected the nature of their 'voluntary' role and work responsibilities. Additionally, two of the four focus groups had all female participants.

Participants were identified and contacted through independent research on the organisations, institutions or community groups and projects mentioned in the secondary documents analysed by the lead researcher and through the University's networks. Initial contact was made through the University, snowball sampling, independent research and unsolicited requests. It is acknowledged that with this approach, participants can be self-selecting since those who respond positively to the call for participation are recruited. A determined effort was made to recruit key institutions (such as SEMLEP, NCC, Chamber of Commerce) through repeated requests during the interview phase. However, they were either unanswered or declined due to the busy schedules of the participants. Their lack of response to calls for participation implicates the research findings. While the roles and relationships of these institutions could be gleaned from other participants' accounts, the stance of the non-participating institutions on such phenomena could not be captured. This and other limitations have been discussed in Sections 6.6. and 12.4.

6.5.3. Data Collection Phase I

Phase I was conducted between January and September 2019. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 23 institutional and 5 community stakeholders. The interview method was used to explore phenomena in-depth to answer the 'how' and the 'why' questions and capture breadth by gathering multiple views of the case (Stake, 1995). Chan and Marafa (2013) found that 71.4% of the qualitative studies on 'stakeholders' and 33.3% on 'place identity' used interviews for data collection. One-on-one interviews are advisable for gathering rich data from 'those who experience the phenomena or process' (Stake, 1995) and when researching 'busy study groups' to increase access to them (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Most interviews were conducted in a face-to-face meeting with stakeholders. Three participants were interviewed via phone due to their busy work schedule. Nonetheless participants provided in-depth responses with call lengths between 50-100 minutes.

The conversational format of the semi-structured interview enabled the researcher and participants to share knowledge. In accordance with the constructionist perspective,

interviewees are considered to be sharing their subjective opinions with the researcher and co-creating knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). This philosophy implicated the instrument design and fieldwork. Participants were directly asked about the meaning, contributions and attitudes of branding Northamptonshire.

In the interview guide, the first part focused on the 'connections' and 'perceptions about Northamptonshire' to capture participants' sense of cohesion, attachment and identity. Later on, the discussion moved to 'place branding', first interrogating the meanings of this phenomenon, and then the researcher's interpretation was offered. Further, the interview questions picked up on the themes of the research objectives – roles and relationships, stakeholder collaboration and community participation. For community stakeholders, an additional topic was added to find out about their projects and group affiliations. Participants were asked to reflect on how these relate to PB. The questions were kept broad so as not to insinuate a preferred response. The main topic areas and questions covered during the interviews are summarised in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2. Semi-structured interview guide for Institutional and Community Stakeholders.

No.	Key Topics	Main questions
1	Connection with Northamptonshire	Tell me about your hometown/residence/workplace in Northamptonshire. •Where are you from in Northamptonshire? •What brought you to (..) (if you were not born here)? •For how long have you lived here?
2	Perceptions about Northamptonshire	What comes to mind when I say Northamptonshire? •How do these perceptions of the county relate to your locale? •(town/village of residence/work) •Does the county seem like a single entity? •What is unique about this county? •What do you think the county should be known for? •What is your vision for the county?
3	Your group / project (for SE-CSH only)	Tell me about your group / project and how you are contributing to Northamptonshire. •Scale and scope of the project •Motivation for initiation •Your role •Other actors involved (roles)

		•Experience of working with other stakeholder groups •Challenges faced (if any) •Attitude towards future collaborations •Support needed •How does your group or project relate / contribute to PB?
4	Place Branding Northamptonshire	What does 'place branding' mean to you? •My definition (handout) •Any thoughts/comments?
		Let's talk about 'brand' Northamptonshire and your (past/current) role in branding. •Awareness and attitudes towards past / current initiatives. •Your participation in past / current initiatives. •Motivation •Your role – institutional / intermediary / community stakeholder? •If - Part of community groups? Participating in what capacity? •Who else is involved, in what role?
5	Stakeholder collaboration (potential)	In your opinion, who else (other stakeholders) should be involved / consulted in branding Northamptonshire? •What would be their role in branding? •Who should lead PB? •Experiences of past collaborations. •What would be the benefits of collaboration at the county level? •What could be the challenges to collaboration at the county level? •How can the collaboration be organised?
6	Community participation	What is the role of the community (local people) in branding Northamptonshire? (past, current and potential) •How can they contribute to the brand? •What would be the benefits of involving the community? •What would be the challenges in involving them? •In the current setting, how are they being engaged? •In the future, how can they be engaged in PB? in what capacity?

The flexible design allowed for adding questions and probes to the instrument based on the data collected. Following a few rounds of interviews (approx 14 with ISH), it seemed that participants held different meanings and interpretations of PB. Their interpretation impacted perceptions about stakeholders' roles and participation, as well as the goals that can be pursued and achieved through the process of PB. Thus, in subsequent interviews and focus groups, they

were directly asked the question: *What does 'place branding' mean to you?* Participants were encouraged to share their views, discuss and clarify the topic among the group before a handout sheet prepared by the researcher was shared with them (attached in Appendix 4).

The schedule enabled the researcher to carry out the fieldwork consistently. About 60-120 minutes was spent with each participant allowing them ample time to express their views and cover the topics in depth. Follow up questions were similar across participants since they were prompted to elaborate on their opinions and experiences. These formalities were enacted to mitigate the expectations of the researcher or the words and actions of participants. Further, follow up questions during the interviews were used to ensure that the researcher's interpretation of certain narratives matched the interpretation.

6.5.4. Data Collection Phase II

In Phase II, 4 focus groups were conducted in November 2019 to further explore community perceptions. Small groups of 4-6 participants were engaged in each session. This method was used to stimulate thinking and discussion on a future scenario for collaboration and community participation in PB. Focus groups effectively enable participants to go beyond merely responding to the researcher's questions to evaluating points made by the group and sharing their opinions (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

The focus is on the 'discussion between the group members'. Focus groups can also provide an opportunity for different views to be directly and explicitly discussed (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). This is in line with the constructionist perspective, where the participants directly contribute to the analysis of their discussions. The method was beneficial for observing the collective articulation and negotiation of identity and generating ideas for community engagement and their role in future collaborations. Sharing their views and hearing other participants' views on the subject help participants understand, describe and negotiate their own views and contributions to PB. Thus, addressing the challenge posed by the abstract concept of 'participation in branding' since they did not have prior experience in this.

Clarity in inquiry is recommended when conducting focus groups after interviews (Saunders et al., 2009). Key topics for the discussion guide were identified based on Phase I of the study. The topics used to stimulate debate and discussion in the group were uniqueness, identity,

leadership and the role of communities. The discussion guide progressed through the following topics. After introducing *the research topic and participants,* they were asked to share their *perceptions about Northamptonshire*. The focus group format allowed activities and exercises participants could work on individually and then share and discuss with the group. At the 'storming' stage of the focus groups, participants were asked to record the responses to these questions on post-it notes, allowing them to record their perceptions independently of the group (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 175). These notes also served as a conversation starter (icebreaker) between the group.

Table 6.3. Discussion guide for focus groups with Community Stakeholders.

No.	Key Topics	Main Discussion Points
1	Introductions (5 mins)	Name, what you do, place of residence (urban/rural) and how long you've lived in the county?
2	Perceptions about Northamptonshire (30 mins)	Jot down on post-it notes: •What comes to mind when I say Northamptonshire? •What makes Northamptonshire a unique place to live, work, or visit? •How would you describe Northamptonshire to an outsider? Summarise in three words.
3	Place Branding Northamptonshire (40 mins)	What does 'place branding' mean to you? •Who should lead the PB? •Perceptions and role of the University •Perceptions and role of voluntary sector organisations •Role of the community? Expertise, contribution, capacity •How can the community be represented?
4	Scenario (30 minutes)	What would your role be in PB? •What support would you need to get involved? (from ISH) •Who do you need to work with? •What would be your motivation?

After setting the tone, discussions continued on *Place Branding Northamptonshire.* Participants were prompted to discuss issues relating to place brand leadership and governance in the county, community engagement challenges and strategies and the role and capacity of institutional and community stakeholders. Respondents spoke about their past experiences of

engaging with ISH and their current and potential role in stakeholder-led PB. Finally, they were asked to imagine a future scenario where they are empowered to participate in PB. The main topic areas and discussion points covered during the focus groups are summarised in Table 6.3.

All but one focus group lasted for approximately 2 hours. The focus group with students lasted for 45 minutes. It was noted that while discussion topics 1 and 2 elicited long responses and discussions, regarding topics 3 and 4, responses were not as rich compared to other groups. In addition to the protocols followed for interviews, two main differences were observed in using this method. First, there is a chance that participants may feel significant pressure to speak or reveal private information. Second, participants may have concerns about privacy because complete confidentiality cannot be assured. In response, the no-pressure rule was explained before the start of the discussions. The researcher requested that all participants maintain confidentiality about what has occurred in the group out of mutual respect.

The purpose of the focus group was collective articulation and negotiation of PB meaning and imagining a future scenario in which participants would be empowered to participate in PB. This goal was achieved as conflicts and consensus emerged in the process of framing PB vision and roles. A consensus emerged between participants as they emphasised 'need for proper place branding,' i.e., recognition for Northamptonshire and addressing issues of weak public governance. Conflicts were noted in the discussion of: attitudes towards ISH brands, identity facets and top-down vs bottom-up decision making. Overall, varied perspectives were captured on: the identity of the county, who should lead PB, the role of communities, consensus decision making, issues of access to participation and attitudes towards ISH and levels of engagement.

6.5.5. Data Analysis and Triangulation

Critics of qualitative methodology point to the tendency of novice researchers to fashion 'undisciplined journalism' or 'anecdotalism', picking evidence out of the mass of data to support their prejudices (Silverman, 2000 in Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). In the current study, the analysis followed a 'double diamond' approach, mirroring the data collection process (as depicted in Figure 6.2.). The implication of the double diamond is two-fold. It allows abductive analysis to be carried out within a flexible or iterative design. Due to the need for an iterative design, analysis is conducted simultaneous to data collection. Thus, transcription, coding and generation of themes were conducted as and when interviews were conducted.

Further, thematic analysis was done following Braun and Clarke's (2006) steps for coding and generating themes. In the field of PB, *content analysis* and *thematic analysis* are widely applied in qualitative studies (Acharya and Rahman, 2016). Despite some similarities between content and thematic analysis, the difference lies in the possibility of quantification of data in content analysis by measuring the frequency of different categories and themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Content analysis lends itself to mixed methodology studies, whereas thematic analysis is unique for deriving qualitative interpretations. It is useful for summarising key features of large amounts of qualitative data and provides the researcher with a well-structured approach to handling data, helping to produce a clear and organised final report (King, 2004). It is not surprising that thematic analysis is suggested for those early in their research career (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The six steps of thematic analysis are: *familiarising with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes* and *producing the report*.

The first step for thematic analysis is 'familiarising with data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006). By transcribing interview data, reading and rereading the data and noting down initial ideas, patterns of similarities and conflicts are likely to be noticed. Raw data were recorded in audio format. Data were transcribed verbatim by hand by the researcher from the audio recording. In most instances, transcription was done within 24 hours of data collection. Since focus groups were conducted consecutively after one another, data were transcribed in the months of December-February 2020. Transcribed data were stored in secure servers in WordDoc format. They were uploaded to NVivo12 and coded immediately after the transcripts were available.

The analysis process was managed primarily on NVivo12. Additionally, WordDoc and PowerPoint were used to write analysis reports and highlight key findings and visuals, respectively. Throughout the process, a paper notebook was also kept for making notes during data collection. Documenting thoughts during data collection sometimes marks the beginning of data analysis, as researchers may note initial interpretations and questions (Nowell et al., 2017). These notes provided structure and guidance for generating codes and themes. The notes recorded the initial visualisation of codes into themes. A snapshot of each of these platforms is added in Appendix 5.

Following the 'diverge-converge' (abductive) approach of the double diamond, the analysis was inductive in the initial stages. This means that despite having the theoretical framework

and the topics from the interview guide, the initial coding of the data did not adhere to these frames. This approach was followed not to constrain the interpretation of results to *fit* the framework. The second step of thematic analysis, 'generating initial codes', was carried out by identifying important sections of text and attaching labels to them inductively. Braun and Clarke (2006) offer that what is 'interesting' in the data is considered important at this stage, leading to a vast number of detailed codes. This was certainly observed during the initial stages of analysis. However, these were later categorised and collated based on thematic similarities.

After the first round of inductive coding, the researcher started 'searching for themes' (step 3) by collating and comparing codes, identifying co-occurrence, and graphically displaying relationships between different codes. It is important to clarify that, unlike codes that inductively emerge from data, themes are created in response to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For instance, concerning Q1, emergent codes such as 'county of contrasts' and 'representative identity' were grouped under the theme of *cultural cohesion*. This step enabled the researcher to check that pertinent data is being collected to address the research questions and objectives.

After the first cycle of the inductive-deductive analysis performed on ISH's interview data, the same cycle was repeated for data derived from CSH. Data from SE-CSH opinions were inductively coded during which assumed roles such as 'activism' and expected roles such as 'talking up the place' became apparent. Further, discussion topics that needed further depth of exploration were identified. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), this can be done by 'reviewing themes' (step 4). Themes that do not have enough data to support them become evident (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Significant themes or 'issues' (relating to research objective 1) were chosen to be explored with CSH during the focus groups.

Due to the iterative design, analysis using the double diamond framework allowed the researcher to revisit previous stages to recode parts or entire transcripts and even group the codes under a different set of themes. Code structures and names were revised multiple times throughout the coding process, and they were repeatedly condensed and expanded as new data became available. As the themes became clearer, a more stable structure emerged. Finally, since data from focus groups did not reveal new codes and themes, they were primarily assigned to existing codes and themes. Thus, closing the loop of the double diamond. Step 5, 'naming and defining of themes', was carried out so that each theme was sufficiently clear and

comprehensive concerning the research questions and objectives. For instance, codes were categorised into themes based on stakeholder groups, i.e., public sector, private sector, voluntary sector, University and community. As much as possible, code names were generated usually based on the own words of participants (for example, VCS as playing a community leadership function). Whereas the broader themes were based on theoretical constructs, i.e., assumed, expected and potential roles.

The ongoing analysis helped in establishing when theoretical saturation was reached and no new themes were being generated. It is the point where these theoretical avenues are no longer bringing new insights and theoretical potential (Saunders et al., 2009). Converse to saturation in other remits of interpretivist enquiry, saturation is not just of data but also of theoretical constructs. The breadth of themes derived from the data was comprehensive; it was judged that the themes would remain the same even with additional participants. Nonetheless, the researcher recognises that further dimensions might become important at a later time if these institutional structures shift or processes alter (Bryant, 2013). This acknowledgement regarding theoretical saturation is in line with the social constructionist notion that reality and knowledge remain in a state of flux (Lock and Strong, 2010).

While 'producing the report' (step 6), vivid, compelling text from the data was selected to 'let the participants speak' and to provide evidence that interpretations were grounded in the data. Thus, the data extracts capture different perspectives, both diverging and complementary. Data source triangulation was conducted by presenting both ISH and CSH perspectives thematically when addressing identity facets (Chapter 8) and roles and relationships (Chapters 9 and 10). Further, findings from primary research were triangulated with secondary documentary evidence in the report. By drawing from a variety of data sources, i.e., ISH, CSH and secondary documents, findings are corroborated, reducing the risk of false interpretations (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). In doing so, triangulation is a means for searching for additional interpretations more than the confirmation of a single meaning (Flick, 1992 in Stake, 1995).

Next, methodological triangulation was conducted by employing interviews, focus groups and document analysis to study PB practices in the case context. While the current study does not employ a mixed-method approach usually associated with methodological triangulation, this type of triangulation is still possible by employing multiple qualitative research methods (Hall and Rist, 1999). This helped in corroborating individual and institutional perspectives (from

the interviews) with group or collective opinions (focus groups). Further, since interviews and focus groups were conducted in separate phases, the findings from the latter were used to enhance, augment and clarify the findings from the interviews (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Thus, source and methodological triangulation add credibility to the findings and interpretation – enhancing the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017).

6.6. Establishing Trustworthiness and some Limitations

Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced the criteria of *credibility, dependability, confirmability* and *transferability* to parallel the conventional quantitative assessment criteria of validity, reliability and generalisability. Validity is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about (Saunders et al., 2009) or how the research findings are supported by the data collected. Reliability refers to the extent to which the data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent or replicable findings (Saunders et al., 2009). The interpretivist researchers are concerned with *credibility* – the extent to which the phenomena under the study is accurately being reflected (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003); a 'fit' between the respondents' views and the researcher's representation of them (Tobin and Begley, 2004). The terms *dependability* and *confirmability* are used to insinuate the security and durability of research findings (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Trustworthiness in qualitative research is established by describing the appropriateness and rationale behind the methods employed, participants involved and data collected for research (Nowell et al., 2017). Each aspect has been explicated and justified in the previous section to allow a clear and transparent audit trail for the readers and future researchers. This Section discusses the main criteria for rigour as per the interpretivist paradigm as well as the extent to which findings are transferable.

First, to establish rigour, the researcher needs to assess whether the study gains access to the experiences of those in the research setting reflected in the aptness of sampling, the success of recruitment strategy and the instrument design (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). *Fairness* (as a value of *credibility*) is achieved by striving for inclusive representation of stakeholders in the sampling strategy (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). The challenge with broad participation is noted by Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) since only a limited number of interviews and focus groups can be conducted. In the present study, efforts were taken to achieve 'symbolic representation' to enhance dependability using the theoretical and multi-method approaches. A diversity of dimensions and constituencies that are central to the explanation are considered

such as: spatial unit and scale (town/village, district and county level), interests (political, economic and cultural), levels of engagement with PB (from apathetic to self-engaged) and social structures (formal, informal and non-groups).

The study could have benefited from including a wider range of ISH-B representing engineering, real estate and logistics industries, representatives of county and regional level organisations such as NCC and SEMLEP, and SE-CSH operating in rural settings. The significance and role of these groups were discussed by those engaged in the current study. Nonetheless, their non-participation is a limitation of the current study since they might have added to the richness of evidence and nuanced understanding of existing themes. One way in which this limitation is addressed is by considering the literature on such stakeholders (Otgaar, 2012; Cleave et al., 2017; Sofield et al., 2017; Quinn, 2015) and by reviewing secondary documents produced by them. These considerations fed into the Discussion of the findings (in Chapter 11).

The fieldwork instruments are crucial for accurate capture of the phenomena under study. The environment, location and quality of questions are all important to elicit full responses from the participants, contributing to the *confirmability* of the findings. Theoretically grounded interview guides enabled the researcher to focus on the aims and objectives of the study. The guides allowed consistency in carrying out the fieldwork, ensuring the key topics were covered in sufficient depth. The questions are free from jargon, easy to understand and elicited long responses. Participants are given opportunities for expressing their thoughts. Measures such as prolonged engagement with the participants and data triangulation were taken to enhance *credibility* (Nowell et al., 2017). Multi-source evidence helps establish 'construct validity' by considering not only individual experiences and interpretations but the whole case (Yin, 2018). The collective nature of the phenomena generated by the participants and the meaning attached to them would be expected to be dependable or replicable (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), i.e., the constructs and factors would recur outside of the study population. For instance, some ISH participants tended to offer repetition of the organisational view, i.e., 'the party line' (also noted by Reynolds, 2018). The current study noted that 'the party line' reflected the institutional identity as the reason for their engagement. Explicit and implicit remarks from multiple sources involved in the same networks added to the confirmability of the evidence in line with the ISH typology and characteristics found in the literature review.

Establishing *credibility* in qualitative findings requires a 'fit' between the respondents' views and the researcher's representation of them (Tobin and Begley, 2004). In the present study, abductive analysis enabled the continual examination of the respondent's view, researcher's interpretation and theoretical constructs for meaning-making. King (2004 in Nowell et al., 2017) suggested that themes should not be considered final until all of the data have been read through and the coding scrutinised at least twice. Iterative coding and theme generation and investing sufficient time to develop the themes (from January 2019-February 2021) increased the probability of developing credible findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In order to persuade readers of the credibility, the findings are thematically presented, and analysis is supported by excerpts from the data (in Chapters 8-10). Similarly, *confirmability* is concerned with establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data, requiring the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached (Tobin and Begley, 2004). Notetaking and exercising reflexivity for explaining the 'how' and 'why' decisions regarding the methodological approach are measures for establishing reliability (Nowell et al., 2017). Further, the Discussion (in Chapter 11) aims to use the literature to confirm the research findings and challenge and add to theory building (Tuckett, 2005). The structured methodological approach has been explicated and justified in the previous sections to be applied again in further studies.

Generalisation is a key criterion for positivist researchers since they view knowledge as something that can be discovered and replicated having universal validity (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). Due to the differences in the positivist and interpretivist paradigm, generalisations, as concieved by the positivists, are not possible with a single case study approach. The reductionist approach, often purported by positivists, may even hamper understanding of the context of Northamptonshire and also the under-researched phenomena of region branding. A focus on the generalisations of the inquiry may take away from the academic and social impact of the current study. There is a risk of developing general models and frameworks that lack local sensitivity and contextual understanding. The researcher argues that the successes of one place cannot be exactly replicated by the other since they are bound to differ in cultural, historical, geographical and humanistic factors.

The present case study is a step in the direction of theory building regarding the branding of urban-rural, resource-constrained regions. This is significant since PB theory and case studies focus on well-known or best practice case studies of city and nation brands. While universal

generalisations cannot be made and are not desirable from a single case study, the method lends to the *transferability* or external validity of the research findings (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). The literature review shows that the concepts and constructs (themes and model) derived in this study have relevance to other settings. Thus, the *Conceptual Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Place Brand Governance* (Figure 11.1.) can be transferrable to other urban-rural, regional settings. However, transferability of the practical implications and recommendations from place-based inquiries that are affected by cultural-socio-political contexts can be problematic in alluding to a 'one size fit' approach whose effectiveness is difficult to prove. For instance, the conditions and issues for mobilising stakeholders for region branding emerged from the political, economic and cultural context. Hence, they may not be readily generalisable to all resource-constrained economies. Nonetheless, the framework can be used to analyse the factors affecting cohesion and collaboration to understand the issues and create solutions pertinent to other regional scales and geographies.

In enabling this, the researcher is responsible for providing thick descriptions so that those who seek to transfer the findings to their site can judge transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Geertz (1973) suggested that 'thick descriptions' of the context, original observations and commentaries should be provided to allow the readers to assess their transferability of other settings. The peculiarities of the case have been noted in Section 6.4.3. and Chapter 7. The inferences and models derived should be seen as hypotheses needing further study. Based on these, researchers and practitioners can devise operational models for mobilising stakeholders of a region for a cohesive approach to branding based on context specificity.

6.7. Reflexivity

In qualitative research, the researcher is the 'agent' delivering new meaning and interpretations (Stake, 1995, p. 99). The interpretivist view holds that the research is value-bound and the researcher is part of what is being researched (Saunders et al., 2009). Thus, the researcher cannot be removed completely from influencing the research process (Bettany and Woodruffe-Burton, 2006). However, subjectivity cannot be grounds for prejudices and biases to affect the quality of research. Reflexivity is a process of critical self-reflection that researchers must undertake to be aware of and make implicit and explicit constructs that influence the research process and obtain an objective position regarding the quality of the research (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). A reflexive journal was maintained by the researcher throughout the project to

record the daily logistics of the research, methodological decisions, and rationales and to record the researcher's personal reflections of their values and interests (see journal entries in Appendix 6).

6.7.1. Access and Positionality

Access is a cumbersome and timely process that can hamper the ability to research within a limited timescale (Saunders et al., 2009). The problems can be reduced by forming connections with gatekeepers, who have access to the participants and resources required (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). My institutional identity (affiliation with the University) as a PhD student and later as an Associate Lecturer at UON lent credibility among the participants, particularly when accessing the institutional setting of ISH-G and ISH-B. This also implicates the position the researcher chooses to adopt and is seen to occupy by readers and stakeholders such as funders (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002).

In the case study context, my involvement was primarily due to my academic interest and scholarship at the University of Northampton (UON). The funding for this research came from the UON studentship award with the criteria of Northamptonshire as an essential case study area. Carefully considering the knowledge gaps in PB literature and understanding the case study context through secondary research helped me craft study aims and objectives in which Northamptonshire became both an intrinsic and instrumental case study.

In a traditional sense, I occupied the position of an *outsider*, as a person who did not have intimate knowledge of the place and the people she was researching. The advantage is that *outsiders* are able to avoid bias, while the disadvantage is that *insiders* have more ability to understand the experience of those inside the culture (Griffith, 1998). However, as the research progresses, the researcher moves back and forth, depending on the time, location, topic and participants themselves (Mercer, 2007). I was neither born in Northamptonshire nor have I lived in the place until the research began. My initial assumption about Northampton and the surrounding areas were shaped by desk research wherein I started discovering interesting facts about the county. Newspaper articles also indicated that not much was known about the county in terms of its national and particularly international image. These initial explorations shaped the research context-setting; they were confirmed during primary research. I did not have a vested interest in promoting one stakeholder group over the others. Nonetheless, studying the

place through the lens of its inhabitants, I developed an attachment to the town and county and felt immersed in the community and its issues.

As contacts are established, discussions made, the familiarity with the case increases. This progression enabled me to become an insider to the topic and context area. For instance, I attended local fairs, markets, theatre and consultation events to identify and network with community stakeholders in Northamptonshire. This ability to shift along the continuum enabled me to maintain an academic position while becoming immersed in the issues of the communities. Even as the context and topic became familiar, I continued using follow-up questions to confirm meaning with participants to avoid researcher bias in understanding.

Due to my institutional identity or the location of the research setting, findings regarding 'the university as a knowledge partner' could have been implicated by a recency effect. In order to eliminate this potential for bias, triangulation with secondary sources was used to add credibility to the findings. Another aspect I was mindful of was the participants overstating the significance of the University's participation. However, data analysis revealed that both sympathetic and critical perspectives towards the University and its role were captured. Recognising this, I carefully selected data extracts to present the different perspectives in the report. This approach was applied to analysing and presenting the role of all stakeholder groups.

In my view, my academic identity as a researcher superseded the institutional affiliation with UON. Hence, the position I adopted in the narrative reporting is of a *critical observer*, whose goal is to understand the conditions, issues and potential for cohesive PB development. The other role that may be more forthcoming in the Discussion Chapter is community *advocacy* due to my recommendations for widening participation and inclusiveness. In doing so, I am guided by the theoretical framework and the stance adopted by many scholars in the field of PB regarding participation. Resultantly, efforts were taken to make a compelling case and argument for collaboration and inclusiveness on the grounds of sustainability and legitimacy of PB using thick descriptors from the data and theoretical understanding.

6.7.2. Ethics and Power

Before undertaking the investigation, ethical clearance was obtained from the UON's Research Ethics Committee (full details in Appendix 7). The ethics protocols regarding informing participants, obtaining consent, data storage, anonymity and confidentiality have been outlined in the previous sections alongside the data collection procedures. This Section deals with the ethics and politics of research as part of the researcher's reflexivity. Despite the co-constructive ontology, the researcher has far more control over what information is gathered and how it is recorded and interpreted (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). Hence, any ethical issues arising must be considered and minimised.

There was a potential power imbalance between the researcher and the participants that needed to be tackled. One way in which this is addressed is when both parties feel significant levels of involvement: participants must feel engaged because the topic is related to their experiences and 'expertise', and researchers must also feel involved because of their in-depth immersion in the experience of others (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). Expertise was a key criterion for sampling in this study. Participants were invited due to their expertise and experiences in PB (for ISH) and as holders of intimate knowledge about Northamptonshire (for CSH). Furthermore, the researcher played the role of expert on the subject domain of place branding, whereas all participants contributed expertise on the context-specific conditions and issues regarding place branding.

In addressing the power imbalance, the researcher needs to create an open, comfortable and, as much as possible, neutral environment for the participants. The location of the interview was an important consideration so that participants could express their views freely. Interview participants were given the option to be interviewed at their offices or the University campus. While the University premises cannot be considered completely neutral, most participants indicated familiarity with this setting. The campus is also centrally located and easy to access by private and public transportation and meets varied accessibility needs. Privacy, confidentiality and quality of data capture (audio-recording) were maintained during data collection by interviewing in quiet, disruption-free spaces. Moreover, some of the participants from outside the town indicated an interest to be interviewed on the campus to get a "closer look" at the newly built campus. Central location and ease of access was also a key consideration for the location of focus groups. Thus, two of the four focus groups were

conducted on the University campus. Outside Northampton, centrally-located and accessible community hubs and meeting venues were hired (£15 per hour) for 2 hours on the day of the scheduled focus group.

Researchers can use their power to persuade the participants by providing a clear explanation and information about the current research and their participation. However, it is crucial to avoid making participants feel obligated to take part and answer every question (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). Thus, it was clearly explained to all participants in the interview and focus group setting that they did not have to answer any questions they did not want to. While building a good rapport with the participants, the researcher also needed to maintain a distance to allow professional judgment (Torres and Baxter Magolda, 2002). The researcher was particularly aware and refrained from expressing patronising sentiments, rigorous nodding and positive affirmations to responses that aligned with the researchers own thoughts and values.

The focus group setting is interesting as the power balance between the researcher and participants changes since the researcher is no longer the only one asking the questions and participants answering the questions. In this setting, the researcher could embody the role of a *facilitator* of discussions between participants. Attention needs to be paid to the distribution of power between participants in the same group (Litosseliti, 2003). This was a crucial concern addressed by summoning relatively homogeneous participants 'within group'. It was emphasised that all participants were invited for their experiences as residents and not as professionals. Further, rules regarding mutual respect and listening to all opinions were made explicit.

Maintaining *anonymity and confidentiality* is an ethical imperative for qualitative researchers to protect participants from harm, in this case, reputational. As much as possible, identifying names, institutions have been redacted while transcribing data and excerpts shortened in the final report. The challenge is that qualitative studies rely on 'thick descriptors' of events, people, places to make a compelling argument to the reader (Geertz, 1973). In addition to the general protocol, this issue was addressed on a case by case basis. Overall, institutional stakeholders indicated that the views and opinions they shared during the interviews were not necessarily secret; they had made them known in communications and interactions with other stakeholders in PB construction. One participant explicitly stated that they were cognisant of their institutional identity and would not share publicly anything that could compromise their

reputation personally or professionally. Thus, the general protocol for anonymisation dictated that participants were assigned a code in accordance with their stakeholder group.

In some instances, the researcher noted that participants said, "I'm on record but I'll say it anyways..". A note was made in the notebook, and while transcribing, the researcher treated this information with sensitivity, often redacting from transcripts if it contained identifiers that would affect the participants' professional status or reputation. While the sensitive information fed into the researcher's interpretation, alternative quotes were sought for presentation (in Findings and Analysis Chapters) that relayed similar meaning. Sensitivity was necessary, especially when publicising data from operational level members of ISH groups since the research context is one in which participants were likely to be acquainted with one another. All interview participants were given the option to receive transcripts and withdraw all or part of their answers (Fletcher and Marchildon, 2014). Only a few requested the transcripts, and none of them requested changes. For CSH, due to the large population, it would not be possible for individuals to be identified. Hence, the general protocol for anonymisation was suitably followed.

6.8. Summary

This empirical investigation is rooted ontologically in social constructionism and interpretive epistemologies and seeks to gather rich data from those who experience the phenomena or process through an in-depth, qualitative single-case approach (Stake, 1995). Primary and secondary sources are used to create a compelling case for developing the Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Place Brand Governance and illustrating how the conceptual argument regarding widening participation can be applied in a resource-constrained region. Data are gathered and analysed following an iterative and abductive approach carried out in two phases with a diverse range of stakeholder groups in Northamptonshire. Multiple sources and multiple methods (interviews, focus groups and documentary analysis) enable triangulation of the findings. Issues and protocols for establishing trustworthiness in the research findings and the researcher's reflections on access, positionality, ethics and power relations are addressed. The following Chapter presents contextual information regarding PB development in the county of Northamptonshire.

Chapter 7. Case Study Context of Northamptonshire

7.1.Introduction

Northamptonshire is a county in the East Midlands of England, UK. In the 2015 survey, the population was recorded as 723,000, covering 2,364 square kilometres (913 sq mi). About 77% of the land area is occupied in farming, while 70% of the population lives in the urban, large towns of Northampton, Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough (NCC, 2019). Much like local governments across the UK, following the central government austerity programme in 2010, Northamptonshire had its budget drastically reduced (refer to indicator 1 in Table 7.1.). In 2017, Northamptonshire County Council was in a financial crisis.

Northamptonshire has higher levels of deprivation in comparison with most of its neighbouring counties in terms of education, income and employment (Table 7.1., indicator 3). In addition to these indices, participants in the study relayed the image and reputation of inequality, deprivation and 'missed opportunities' for development in the post-industrial market towns of the county. At the time of the study, the county was also lacking an independent economic development agency which is found in the neighbouring counties, such as the LEP or DMO. It is part of England's South East Midlands LEP region, linking Oxford, Cambridge, London and the Midlands.

Due to resource constraints, tourism spend in Northamptonshire remains low (indicator 2). Since 2016, key influencers in Northamptonshire's visitor economy, the Heritage, Cultural and Creative sector, have formed a Project Board to promote Northamptonshire as *Britain's Best Surprise.* Various other place management and branding decentralised initiatives exist in the county, including *Nenescape, Northampton Forward* and *Northamptonshire Heritage Gateway Board*.

Table 7.1. Northamptonshire compared with neighbouring counties based on socio-economic indicators. Source: Author's compilation from various sources (see footnote).

County Name	Area sq.km	2018 Population ('000s)	2010-2017 Negative change in total government grants[1] (%)	2017 Tourism spend[2] (£m)	2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation[3] (IMD) (average score)			
					Education	Employment	Income	IMD average
Cambridgeshire	3,046	651	34	267	16.612	0.063	0.080	13.858
Oxfordshire	2,605	688	49	328	15.153	0.053	0.069	11.656
Northamptonshire	2,364	748	63	75	24.207	0.083	0.104	18.605
Leicestershire	2,083	698	81	107	17.919	0.065	0.078	12.330
Derbyshire	2,547	796	4	82	23.805	0.099	0.112	18.392

While the study considers the broader political-economic context of the county, the visitor economy of Northamptonshire is of particular interest. According to the UK Local Government Association, visitor economy "is not just about individual experiences and tourist businesses, like accommodation and attractions, but it is also about culture, sport, heritage and retail, as well as .. sense of place, delivering good service and communicating clear messages about the destination". Thus, multiple stakeholders, government, industry and community need to be engaged in realising the full potential. The value of Northamptonshire's visitor economy in 2015 was estimated at £1 billion, attracting almost 20 million visitors per year. Northamptonshire's visitor economy can be considered diverse with Northampton town's boot and shoemaking heritage, the county homes and rural countryside, and Silverstone, the home of British Grand Prix and MotoGP. The following sections will provide a more detailed narrative of the historical, cultural, economic and political context of the Northamptonshire county region.

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[1] Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2010-11 and 2017-18 individual local authority data (Gov.uk, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)
[2] UK tourism numbers 2006-2017 (Visit Britain)
[3] English Indices of Deprivation 2019 (Gov.uk, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government). The higher the score, the more deprived the area.

7.2. History, Culture and Economy

Northamptonshire has existed on record in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (1011), as *Hamtunscire* (Mills, 2011, p. 500). While human activity dates back to the Palaeolithic period, larger settlements came in during the Roman invasion, followed by the Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Normans. The outbreak of rebellions and battles across the country, the First and Second Barons War, War of Roses and the First English Civil War brought havoc upon the county (Ireson, 1974). By the 18th century, the heart of the county, Northampton and its monumental buildings, including the castle and All Saints Church, was severely damaged by natural and man-made catastrophes (Harris and Hartop, 1950). Additional noteworthy historical events that have shaped the identity and development of the county are: abolishment of a university establishment in Northampton (1261-1265) by Henry III, which would have made Northampton the 3rd university town in England (Cawley, 2016b); and decline in the national significance of Northampton town after upsetting Charles II during the English Civil War. This led to the destruction of the Northampton Castle, which served as an occasional royal residence and regularly hosted the Parliament of England (NorthamptonCastle.com, accessed 2021).

At present, Northamptonshire is characterised by large urban towns surrounded by rural and semi-rural hinterlands and farmlands. Northampton Borough Council tried to gain the city status in 2000 and 2002; however, neither attempt was successful. The rural countryside is home to the largest number of stately homes and churches in the country, which are considered the main visitor attraction sites in the county (Uloth, 2017; Northamptonshire Surprise Group, 2018). Northamptonshire's business infrastructure comprises a mix of small to medium-sized enterprises and mainstream high brand organisations across multiple sectors; they are developed in three core areas: food, high-performance engineering and the supply chain sectors (Fassam et al., 2016). Owing to its semi-rural landscape, farming and Food and Beverage (F&B) production are important industries in the county (SEMLEP, 2016). Historically, cattle rearing and farming have been significant for the livelihood of the inhabitants along the Nene river valley. In 2017, the industry employed more than 4,000 people, spanning over three-quarters area of the countryside (BDO LLP, 2019). Internationally and nationally recognised brands such as *Weetabix* and *Carlsberg* have production facilities in the county. The other historically significant industry in Northampton, Brewing, was mainly supported by local pubs and the F&B industry. At the turn of the 19th century, better transport links across the country and competition from large brewing companies threatened the survival of the small breweries

(NorthamptonshireHeritage.co.uk, accessed 2019). More recently, the real ale and craft ale movements across the country have led to the appearance of several microbreweries in Northamptonshire, including the revival of the *Phipps Northampton Brewing Company* (ibid).

Northamptonshire's historic steel-making centre, Corby, is still seen as an outpost of Scotland in the heart of the Midlands (Harper, 2013). The national and international reputations of the county rely on its shoemaking heritage. Almost every town and village in the county has had a flourishing footwear industry, each with its own distinct specialism. In the 18th century, post-industrialisation, as wartime demand for boots increased, shoemaking factories employed almost half of the county's male population (Insley, 2007). However, the 20th-century post-war era saw a sharp industrial decline in Northamptonshire's shoemaking industry. Shortly after, Northamptonshire redefined its image for making gentlemen's shoes. At present, only about 25 manufacturers operate in the county, producing quality footwear, including well-known brands such as *Dr Martens, Church & Co.* and *Trickers*. After the decline of the shoe trade, the productive brands associated with Northamptonshire are Motoracing and F1 British Grand Prix at Silverstone (Motion, 2014). In 2014, tourism spend in Northamptonshire's visitor economy amounted to £57 million (VisitBritain, 2014), of which £30 million is associated with spend from British Grand Prix (NEP, 2014).

7.3. A History of Place Marketing and Branding Campaigns

While the county is seemingly cohesive due to its shared history, almost uniform rural geography and industrial legacy in the towns, the image and the identity of the county are not clearly defined. In 2009, Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) realised the need for a coherent regional identity and formulated the slogan, *Let Yourself Grow*. The press was quick to point out that the initiative did little to improve the county's reputation. The slogan primarily adorned the welcome signs on the motorways, had little resonance with the local community and attracted ridicule of the passers-by (Leach and Copping, 2010). Other campaigns highlighted below have suffered the same backlash from media and the public due to a lack of public awareness and dissonance with sloganeering.

In 2010, North Northants Development Company launched a controversial campaign called *North Londonshire* to attract people from London to live and invest in the county. The Telegraph (2010) reported that "the suits charged with revamping the area have perhaps not

factored into their equation something which many locals consider to be equally as important as business investment: pride". The executives clarified that North Londonshire aimed to gain publicity for the development area. The public criticism was that "Every county has got its own identity. This place is a hidden gem. Calling Northamptonshire 'North Londonshire' does it down tremendously". Soon after, a Facebook group called 'Northamptonshire is NOT North Londonshire' was created and had 1,100 members in the same week.

In 2013, the digital campaign, *Love Northamptonshire*, was conceived as an umbrella branding campaign for all the local government authorities to jointly promote the place to prospective enterprises, talent and residents (Cawley, 2016a). However, the adoption from the lower level borough and district councils was limited. While the brand Love Northamptonshire has been disbanded, the same nomenclature is reflected in the destinations brands of some of the towns. *Love Northampton*, led by the Northampton Borough Council, exists as the town brand. However, the only brand asset to its name, the website, is not up to date and lacks links with county-wide campaigns such as Northamptonshire Surprise (Love Northampton, 2021). On the other hand, *Love Corby* and *Love Daventry* logos and website clearly signpost their links with Northamptonshire and Britain's Best Surprise campaign (Love Corby, 2021; Love Daventry, 2021)*. Love Corby* is an industry-led network for visitor economy stakeholders in and around this northern town, with little support from the local council. In other towns still, each council is promoting its own brand for the visitor economy and economic development such as *This is Kettering* and *Destination Nene Valley*.

The latest campaign for the visitor economy launched in Spring 2017, *Britain's Best Surprise*, was conceived around the idea that little is known about the county nationally and internationally. Thus, there are new experiences to discover at its lavish stately homes, nature trails, shopping villages and fringe theatre (NorthamptonshireTelegraph, 2017). Further, development networks in the town of Northampton have formed for successfully securing the bids for *Northampton Social Enterprise Place* and *Northampton Forward.* Along the river Nene between Northampton and Peterborough, *Nenescape Landscape Partnership*, a five year Heritage Fund project (2017-2022), was set up for riverside regeneration (Nenescape.org, 2017). It is a partnership initiative between the public and voluntary sector organisations, environmental agencies and universities. Other initiatives in the county include *Made in Northamptonshire,* a network representing the F&B producers in the county (Made In Northamptonshire, accessed 2021)*;* and *Northamptonshire Heritage Forum*, representing local

authority heritage services, museums, national heritage bodies, individuals and local history societies (Northamptonshire Heritage Forum, accessed 2021).

7.4.A History of Political-Economic Governance

Until 2010, the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) was the Regional Development Agency that had Northamptonshire as its member. The appetite for engagement in the policymaking process among the private sector in Northamptonshire was apparent. However, allegedly, EMDA struggled to engage with the private and public sectors in the county (Quinn, 2015). In 2004, Northamptonshire already had a DMO, *Explore Northamptonshire*, funded mainly by the public sector-led EMDA. However, in 2012 due to limited financial resources to support tourism development and destination marketing, the Regional Development Agencies were abolished (Bentley et al., 2010). The tourism function became one of the remits of the new public-private led LEPs that had the broader scope of generating growth and development in their local areas.

The LEP for Northamptonshire, named *Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership* (NEP) supported businesses, encouraged new start-ups and attracted investment and enterprises of national and international standing (NorthamptonshireGrowthHub, 2015). NEP prompted a new style of governance through the formalisation of networks in the region that continues to remain vital to the destination management strategy of Northamptonshire. However, in 2016, NEP was merged with the South East Midlands Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP). While this means loss of autonomy over economic development and governance in Northamptonshire, it has also made the county part of a larger network, including Oxford and Cambridge. Thus, the county is a stakeholder in the development of the SEM Local Industrial Strategy, a.k.a. the *Oxford-Cambridge Arc* (SEMLEP, 2019). However, under the SEMLEP, support for cultural and creative industries is weak.

The public sector leadership in PB and destination management have been weak due to the impact of the austerity policy of the central government. The headline "Northamptonshire goes bust" appeared in The Economist's Britain Section of the print issue on March 24th 2018 (Economist.com, 2018). Northamptonshire County Council, in effect, declared bankruptcy (GOV.UK, 2018c). It was estimated that since 2010, the council had lost £390m, cumulatively, from its budget owing to the central governments' austerity measures. Meanwhile, demand for

services has risen. Northamptonshire's population of over-65s grew by 12.5% in 2013-16, the fastest rate in the country, increasing the pressure on social care. An independent inspection commissioned by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government in March 2018 refuted this claim. They found that "failures at the council were not due to a lack of funding, but a result of poor management, a lack of budgetary control and a culture which discouraged challenge" (GOV.UK, 2018c).

Following the inspection, the county council and the district and borough councils in Northamptonshire have been abolished (Caller, 2018). In August 2018, an Opinion survey report on the restructuring revealed that among the existing councils, Northampton Borough Council, Daventry District Council and Corby Borough Council expressed their will to remain independent and form their own unitary rather than merging with other councils (OpinionResearchServices, 2018). South Northamptonshire Council also expressed their concern regarding the loss of connections with the community in the light of the proposed restructuring. Nonetheless, the new structure comprising North and West Northamptonshire unitary authorities came into effect in April 2021 (Craig, 2021).

While multiple stakeholder groups with diverse interests co-exist in the county's visitor economy, the PBG in the county remains fragmented due to weak economic and political institutions. There is an ambition among certain industry stakeholders to build an overarching brand identity for the county and formalise its governance by setting up a DMO. Efforts are underway since the formation of the Northamptonshire Visitor Economy Project Board in 2017. The Board, a.k.a., the *Northamptonshire Surprise Group,* consists of voluntary representatives from the Culture and Heritage sector (and the former NEP) who want to develop a strategic plan for the visitor economy as a whole. The Group is enterprise-led, with members from F&B businesses, Fashion businesses (footwear), owners of Stately Homes (and Heritage Society) and Creative, Arts and Theatre businesses. The Group has made transparent its objectives, activities and capacity. Their main agenda was to draft a Destination Management Plan and set up a DMO for Northamptonshire in the near future. They are preparing to formalise an appropriate institutional structure and decision making procedures for the DMO. However, at present, the Board is informal and only accountable to its industry partners. In order to implement the plan, they will need to mobilise (or formalise) to gain a legitimate leadership position among the various stakeholder groups in the county.

7.5.Summary

This Chapter utilises secondary data sources to examine the political, economic, and cultural context implicating PB practice and stakeholder mobilisation in the Northamptonshire county region in the UK. The contextual factors strengthen the rationale for case selection based on the theoretical criteria (explained in Section 6.4.3.) They are:

• Resource-constrained condition

• A lack of national and international reputation

• The need for PB to gain a competitive advantage

• Co-opetitive conditions within and outside the case study area

• Urban-rural region, can be considered marginalised

• Data availability on past PB initiatives and campaigns

• Presence of multiple stakeholder groups and multiple identity claims to PB (leading to decentralised local and regional branding initiatives)

• Initial indications of complexity in the PB governance process

The following Chapters systematically present the findings and analysis from the empirical enquiry in line with the research objectives. The findings are presented in three Chapters. Chapter 8 covers the *Perceptions of Northamptonshire* by exploring the broad topics of identity, development and reputation of the county, and stakeholders' interpretations of PB. By reviewing the past and current PB initiatives, the critical conditions and issues for mobilising stakeholders for a cohesive approach to region branding are identified. Thus, research objective 1 is achieved.

Next, Chapter 9 covers multi-stakeholder perspectives on *Institutional Stakeholders' Roles and Relationships,* i.e., the public, private and voluntary sectors and the Higher Education Institution. The findings emerge from exploring the past, current and potential roles of ISH and structures of PB governance and collaboration, with a particular emphasis on understanding ISH's practices and motivations for engagement. By analysing ISH's roles and relationships, the implications for multi-stakeholder PBG become evident. Furthermore, the institutional practices and motivations shed light on the enablers and barriers to collaboration. Thus, through this exploration, research objectives 2 and 3 are met.

Finally, Chapter 10 covers *Community Stakeholders' Participation*. Data pertaining to community engagement practices and ascribed, assumed and potential CSH roles extend our understanding of the enablers and barriers to collaboration from both ISH and CSH perspectives. Furthermore, motivations and mechanisms for SE-CSH engagement have been identified. These findings chart the path for recommending strategies for widening participation in PB. Thus, the final research objectives 2, 3 and 4 are addressed.

Chapter 8. Perceptions of Northamptonshire

8.1. Introduction

This Chapter presents the findings on stakeholders' perceptions of identity, reputation and development of Northamptonshire and interpretations of 'Place Branding'. The findings in this Chapter emerged from the first segment of the interviews and focus groups. The interview participants relayed their diverse associations with the towns, villages and the county. These discussion points were crystalised by the focus group participants, covering four main aspects: the mental image of the county, uniqueness, communicating the image to external audiences, and vision. These are captured under the broad theme of 'identity narratives' (in Section 8.2.). Dominant and non-dominant identity narratives of Northamptonshire are identified based on stakeholders' perceptions of distinctive and representative identities of the county. This includes place associations (emotional and symbolic aspects), strengths and weaknesses and attitudes towards ISH's place marketing campaigns.

In Section 8.3., participants' expression of their sense of affinity and engagement in the local community and sense of cohesion (county as a single entity), pride and reputation shed light on the regional identity. Section 8.4. explores the interplay between cultural identity narratives and the socio-economic development in the county. Next, in Section 8.5., the interpretations of 'place branding' are explored, followed by awareness and attitudes towards past and current PB campaigns for the county. Diverging stakeholder interests, plural identity narratives and disparate development within the county shed light on two critical issues regarding the interpretations of PB: balancing 'distinctiveness and representativeness' in region brand identity construction; and shared understanding of 'vision and outcomes' of PB for an integrated approach to regional development. The final section (8.6.) summarises the key themes and findings pertaining to the research objective:

1. To examine the critical conditions and issues for mobilising stakeholders for a cohesive approach to region branding by reviewing the past and current place branding initiatives.

8.2.Identity Narratives of a Region

The underlying assumption for analysing the identity narratives of Northamptonshire is based on Horlings' (2012) proposition that the 'inner storylines' of a place is its 'brand'. Thus, they are social constructions of a place. In the process of 'brand' construction, some elements are chosen to constitute an identity narrative, and some others are excluded as an expression of power in delimiting, naming and symbolising space and groups of people (Paasi, 2011). The findings in this Section capture participants' perceptions of strengths, associations, uniqueness and vision for the place brand. Unsurprisingly, multiple identity narratives were recorded in the county of Northamptonshire (overview in Table 8.1).

Table 8.1. *Identity narratives of Northamptonshire. Source: Summary of codes from the data.*

Key themes	Participants keywords and phrases	Descriptions	No. of participants (n)	References
The image of the 'shire'	'Rose of the shires'	Rural beauty, countryside, villages.	10	23
	'Spires and squires'	Churches, historic houses, kings and queen.	10	20
Industrial town heritage	Boot and Shoe county	-	11	51
	Motorsport and Engineering	-	11	28
	Steelworks and New town	-	4	20
Maverick Northampton	Democratic history	Political identity, Charles Bradlaugh, protests, non-conformism, rebellion.	7	10
	Arts and Culture	Independent, underground, counter culture.	7	11
	Entrepreneurial	Independent businesses, Market town, Social enterprise.	7	8

The narratives emerged primarily due to the differences in the urban and rural environment in terms of the (i) history and heritage, (ii) landscape and architecture, (iii) income and people, (iv) high and low culture and (v) transportation and network. The first two aspects are widely recognised for shaping identity in the rural, regional domain (Vuorinen and Vos, 2013), while the latter three have been relatively underexplored. In the following sections, the dominant and non-dominant social representations of Northamptonshire are explored.

8.2.1. The Image of the 'Shire'

In the first instance, the mention of 'Northamptonshire' evoked an image of a 'rural' county. Participants who expressed a sense of affinity to the 'county' appraised the idyllic, natural beauty of the countryside. The phrase 'Rose of the Shires' was used by rural stakeholders to denote that Northamptonshire is the loveliest of the county in comparison with its neighbours. The rural icons of the countryside and the built environment were mentioned with fondness. These included the ironstone construction, thatched cottages, and the many historic houses and churches in the county. Further, the phrase 'Spires and Squires' was used for emphasising the prevalence of a great number of churches and stately homes belonging to the British gentry and aristocracy that adorn the rural landscape of the county. Institutional stakeholders' accounts described the image of the 'shire' as:

> ".. back in the day, shire counties were a place where you went and you had a really nice life but you didn't shout about it, it's very quiet, very beautiful." ISH-B-10

> "There was a distinctive appearance to these villages and towns and they were slightly off main roads and it was quite interesting to see this little other world really. With some of the Northamptonshire villages, I thought that wow these are you know very old historical sort of market type villages." ISH-G-01

Among ISH, the 'history and heritage' combined with the 'rural beauty' and affluence of the inhabitants of the countryside created a favourable image for tourism promotions. The tourism-related publications, mainly comprising of walking and cycling guides, produced by South Northants council, 'rural' was the dominant theme, followed by 'history and heritage' (SNC, 2017). The tourism promotion campaign for Northamptonshire, *Britain's Best Surprise* (BBS), actively focused on stately homes and churches in the first two years of the launch. These

stakeholders justified the promotion of the 'shire' identity for tourism promotion stating that the stately homes, churches and the rural landscape were an apparent strength of the county due to their prominence and spread across the county (Figure 8.1.). Through these promotional campaigns, stakeholders of the heritage and visitor economy sector have shaped the identity narrative about Northamptonshire.
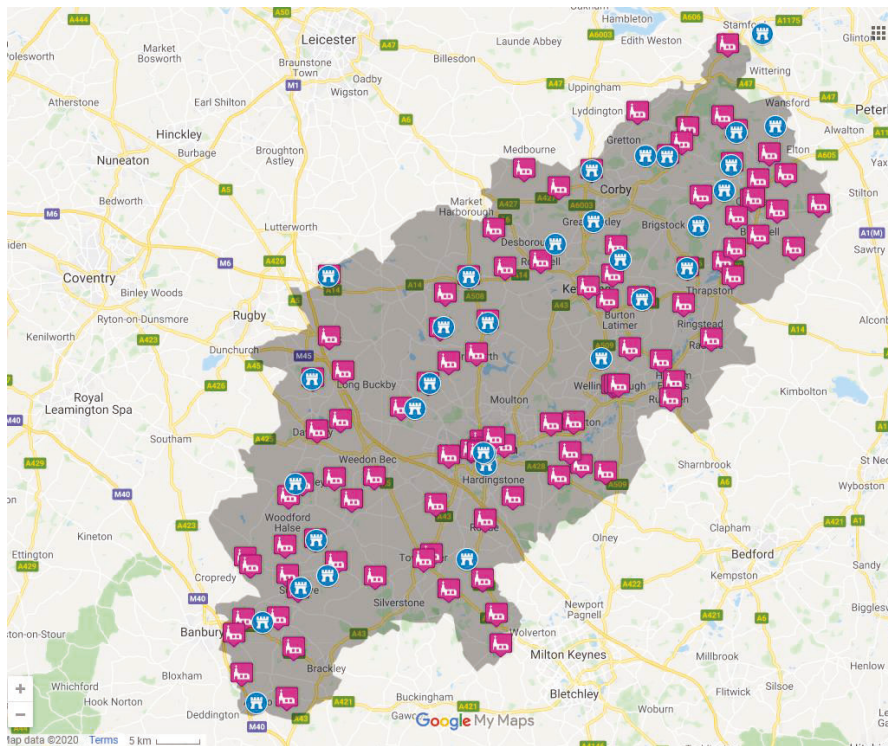
Figure 8.1. *A map of Northamptonshire showing churches (in pink) and historic houses (in blue). Source: https://www.northamptonshiresurprise.com/churches/*

ISH-led initiatives in the county created a favourable 'image of the shire' among CSH. The focus group participants noted significant historical events in the county, such as the Wars of the Roses, Battle of Naseby and the Gunpowder Plot. Focus group (3) participants offered that the various historical accounts and sites can be packaged under the umbrella of 'Kings and Queens', which varied audiences would easily understand. In focus group (1), a participant who wrote down 'Princess Diana' in response to the question, *How would you describe Northamptonshire to an outsider in 3 words?* elaborated:

"... particularly to international students or international people, if you mentioned the royal family, they suddenly kind of get you like, oh, we're only an hour from London and Princess Diana and that's where she grew up in Northamptonshire." CSH-F1-07

The above accounts indicate that the 'image of the shire' was favoured for ease of communication and reducing the cognitive load and complexity for audiences. The main criticism directed towards the proponents of this identity narrative for PB was their "conservative" and "conventional" view of 'history and heritage'. One university stakeholder pointed out the tendency of these campaigns to value only a specific type of "English Heritage" celebrating ruralness, open green spaces, kings and queens while overlooking other types of cultural identities and heritage in the towns.

"... the image of countryside and villages and so on presents quite a particular sort of quite conservative view of what matters and what counts as heritage [..] one is very aware as well that those kinds of tourist experiences are typically accessed by quite narrow set of segments of the population in terms of class and ethnicity and background and age as well." ISH-U-21

One explanation for this could be that since Northamptonshire is at the nascent stages of PB, ISH are primarily focused on establishing a positive image for the county using already established representations of the 'shire'. However, the territorial approach emphasising rural assets failed to consider the emotional and value-based identities of urban stakeholders in constructing a distinctive place brand identity.

8.2.2. Industrial Town Heritage

At the town level, the industrial heritage of the former manufacturing and cottage industries was a dominant identity narrative. Proponents offered that while the industrial identity had its difference from the rural image of the shire, they did not have to be mutually exclusive in place brand promotion. As a significant part of the history and heritage of the county, the industrial and manufacturing heritage needed to be better recognised and celebrated through PB. Emphasis was placed on the 'Boot and Shoe' heritage of the county town of Northampton. This was followed by the post-industrial regeneration of Corby. The more recent development of the 'motorsports and engineering' cluster in South Northamptonshire were mentioned.

When speaking about the North of the county, participants often mentioned the rapid growth in housing development and inward migration from Scotland during the peak of the industrial boom. Corby's historical narrative of deprivation was predominantly cited in contrast with the affluent rural areas. This was followed by the story of regeneration from the closure of 'steelworks' to being granted the 'New Town' status. The narrative of 'transformation' through investment was noted in terms of changes in the 'demographic composition', 'look and feel' and 'community pride and confidence'. Both the decline and regeneration were a part of Corby's identity, which did not necessarily align with the socio-economic development of the county. This led participants to offer that Corby has a "separate" identity from the rest of the county.

> ".. you see that in stately homes because they're extremely wealthy houses, people who used to do very well or still do very well and then there are very ordinary houses you know places like Corby with the whole of everything that happened with the steel industry and the reputation of Corby." ISH-G-01

> ".. there's always been a lot of negativity about Corby, the whole of my growing up here. It was like a little island in the rest of the county, was always really rough up in Corby and had that because it's almost like a very northern town in a Midlands area. [..] I always felt it was different. And I always felt the need to defend Corby." CSH-F3-17

Referring to the South of the county, a small group of participants mentioned the 'motorsports' and high-performance 'engineering' business cluster as a strength of the county. The South cluster was primarily valued for its contribution and connection with the wider South East Midlands economic growth area. As a well-recognised destination, 'Silverstone', situated in the South of the county, was a key stakeholder in the Northamptonshire Surprise Group. It is interesting to note that while neither the North nor the South region offered a representative identity narrative for the county, the South cluster was better integrated with regional networks and decision-making due to its economic and reputational value-add to the county's image. The only apprehension participants expressed were that it was a relatively new industry to the county, and thus lacked the rich historical narrative that could be found in Boot and Shoe identity.

".. as a county, we're proud of having Silverstone and we'll claim it as our own. So the motorsports bit although that's kind of a little thing on its own, I think the county feels it's it belongs to us. So perhaps that's less problematic. But I do think Corby feels like a separate thing." ISH-U-20

The 'Boot and Shoe' heritage of the county town of Northampton emerged as a dominant identity narrative among ISH and CSH alike. Northamptonshire was known as the 'Boot and Shoe capital of England' as the industry was the main employer in many towns and villages during World War I. In the modern-day, the industry's economic contribution and cultural significance in the county have reduced.

The image of the 'shire' and the industrial 'Boot and Shoe' identity narratives were not necessarily in opposition with one another. However, proponents of one tended to argue against the other. This was evident in the discussions between participants in focus group (2), where one participant simply stated that the 'spires and squires' was the authentic and timeless representation of the county. In contrast, the shoe narrative was opportunistic, as industries tend to be. Another participant defended that the 'Boot and Shoe' identity was unique to the county, whereas 'the image of the shire' was identical with other rural counties in the UK. While the 'Boot and Shoe' sectoral identity was currently underutilised in the county's economic development policy and PB campaign, there was potential for mobilising this facet in the overall region brand and not only tourism promotion.

".. it was always called the county of squires and spires, and that is what it should be. It's nothing to do with the shoe industry and the only reason that came was because there was leather here from all the agriculture and the water." CSH-F2-12

".. people are saying well we are fed up with shoes or whatever. Shoes, everybody has a connection with shoes, it's the men shoes made here, but you can branch out because if you go for the fashion label, trainers [..] the fact that this all linked with modern industry going forward, it's not always looking at the past. That's the way I would promote your county in a bigger way." CSH-F2-14

The findings capture participants' diverging views and interests in PB, indicating the need for 'distinctiveness' and 'representativeness' of place brand identity.

8.2.3. Maverick Northampton

In toponymic terms, participants tended to use Northampton and Northamptonshire interchangeably. Northampton being the county town, featured prominently in the interviews and discussions about 'region' branding. However, in terms of the place identity, the associations and character of the town and the county were vastly different, aligned with their urban and rural nature, respectively. The term 'maverick' was used to describe Northampton town's 'independent' character, which was often contrasted with the 'genteel' character of the shire. The political history, arts and cultural scene and independent entrepreneurs in the town all contributed to the construction of 'Maverick Northampton' (illustrated in Figure 8.2.).
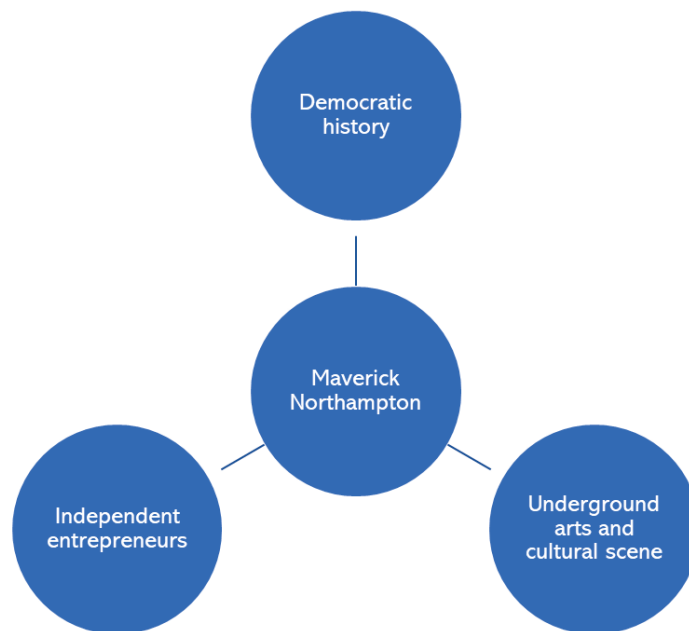
Figure 8.2. Sub-themes for 'Maverick Northampton' identity narrative. Source: Codes from the data.

The 'democratic history' of Northampton town was described in terms of "non-conformism", "rebellion", "resistance and protest" due to the iconic personalities, reformists and incidents that took place in Northampton. These icons had greater resonance with some of the urban participants than the icons of the countryside as they represented the "dynamic" and "edgy" urban environment. The "maverick" identity was seen as an alternative to the conservative image of the shire that dominated tourism and PB discourse in the county.

".. stately homes and forests and nice things on the river Nene, but I worry that's a bit disingenuous to all the people that live in some of the urban environments, because maybe it isn't to them. I would love it if we became the kind of county of like *mavericks* and changemakers." ISH-B-09 (participant's emphasis)

".. the sort of *understated* nature of Northamptonshire, the quiet, go about your business in a fairly reserved way. I suppose there's a paradox between that and the outspoken politician. But maybe that's the difference between the town and the county." ISH-G-05 (participant's emphasis)

A greater level of diversity and inclusion was observed in the town (similar to cities). They emphasised that PB should cater to diverse segments of the resident and visitor population. The image of the shire was one facet of the county identity, and the sub-identities of the urban environment provided a fuller picture. This discussion predominantly emerged among the participants in the focus group (1), where one participant claimed that the 'diversity' in Northampton town was a vital strength of the place. Diverse and alternative identities make the county richer in culture and heritage, and these need to be celebrated more through representation in PB. In a broad sense, participants realised the need for plural identities and experiences to be represented in PB.

".. you only have to watch the carnival to realise how many different communities are here [..] There's 20 or 30 different, it's amazing but should I know about them? Should other people know about [them]. I don't know whether they should be advertising. But we have so much diversity that's unknown, or at least not promoted [..] But that's clearly a strength of the town and the county most likely." CSH-F1-08

Moreover, participants from the entertainment industry criticised the 'mainstream' focus of these institutions. They reiterated that certain forms of cultures were being valued and promoted as part of the branding campaigns. For example, the core group for the 'Arts and Culture 2020' did not reflect the ethnic diversity in the towns in the planning stages of the campaign (ISH-U, B). The 'counter-culture' offerings were included as part of the programme at a later stage.

"There's really good representation of galleries, choirs, performance groups, theatres from across the county. [..] there was virtually nothing of community groups representing the groups of people who arrived in the county in the last 20-30 years so there was no sort of Eastern European presence, there was virtually no Afro-Caribbean presence, there's virtually no Asian presence. And I think that's something that needs to be rectified fairly quickly." ISH-U-22

From ISH perspective, community groups had limited capacity; they contributed to low-value productions and created a "DIY feel" about the place. Due to the lack of institutional support and value ascribed to small entrepreneurs and independent groups in PB, the ability of community groups to contribute to unique cultural offerings and the authenticity of the place brand remained limited (further findings in Section 10.5.4.). This homogenised offering has been dubbed as the 'clone town' effect (Duignan et al., 2018), indicating a pervasive threat of domination by large institutions by the displacement of micro and small enterprises.

".. a lot of it's very kind of bottom up, it's very kind of community oriented. It's not a place that has a great orchestra or anything like that. It's somewhere where there's a kind of a DIY feel." ISH-U-19

"The Derngate is obviously our big commercial [theatre], which attracts the biggest audience. It's huge. But it produces the Gospel, like Dirty Dancing, you can pretty much see in any city in the country. Like, if you're a tourist, you're not going to come here to see that you see anywhere. Why would you go to Northampton rather than Birmingham or London or Edinburgh? It doesn't make any sense. Like we need to be supporting our independent businesses and our independent organisations that are producing something unique." SE-CSH-03

Proponents of the 'maverick' identity and 'independent' arts scene further added the 'entrepreneurial' character of the town as a key identity facet. Their vision for the place was a 'thriving independent scene', and sustainable business environment wherein the local businesses and groups in the town were supported by ISH and consumers. To support this identity narrative, participants stated that Northampton had the highest number of start-ups in the UK outside of London. The development of enterprise was attributed to the provisions of the UON in terms of the infrastructure, human capital, training and incubation of students and

entrepreneurs. For example, some participants spoke about the University's role in securing the title of 'Social Enterprise Place' for Northampton town. However, a challenge for a cohesive PB strategy was noted in terms of managing the dominant and non-dominant identity facets.

> ".. what Best Surprise does, they are for the visitor economy. At some point, if Northampton changes because it's got the Social Enterprise status, they're going to have to do something where there's a brand for everything." ISH-B-11

Overall, the findings in Section 8.2. indicate the challenges in reconciling the 'local-regional' identities owing to an 'urban-rural' divide in the social representations of PB Northamptonshire. The implications for cultural cohesion in Northamptonshire are presented in the following section.

8.3.   Regional Identity to Engagement

Figure 8.3. *Codes from the data pertaining to Regional Identity. Source: Author.*

This section builds on the themes from the identity narratives by exploring the data on the 'regional identity' or consciousness of the county's inhabitants. The identity narratives of a region are based on the natural and cultural elements that have been classified and promoted

by institutions (Paasi, 2011). Further, the notion of regional identity links the individual 'self-concept' with the local and regional 'collective' identity. The codes pertaining to regional identity are illustrated in Figure 8.3. They are: 'sense of community feel', 'interest-based engagement' and 'institutional practice'.

8.3.1. Sense of "Community Feel"

Participants noted a strong "community feel" at the local level in Northamptonshire towns and villages. Those who were engaged in community groups, projects and initiatives were more aware of the "closeness of community". One participant who worked in a VCS organisation commended "the spirit of generosity" in Northamptonshire, even in socio-economically challenged communities. Further, the below quotes show that CSH were much more able to mobilise for group action and exhibiting activism for their town and village compared to the county level. This led to heightened place attachment and identification with the local level compared to the regional county level.

> ".. we have a very strong village hall committee we have been running Friday coffee mornings for six years and everybody from the village comes in and drops in at some point [..] and people support one another [..] And that's what it's like in the community." CSH-F3-18

> "I like being in a place where I feel I can get 'into' the place [..] I felt like Northampton had that vibe [..] in the last year, the amount of people that I've met and been able to work with and building those relationships to work with, it's got that same feeling." SE-CSH-04

While participants exhibited identification with their local area (town, village and neighbourhood), regional identity was perceived as weak. Focus groups (1 and 3) discussed the functional 'connectivity' between the towns and villages. One CSH stated, "I don't go there" (referring to a town in the South of the county) due to the lack of accessible transport and road network. Further, a lack of awareness of leisure and cultural offer in other parts of the county were mentioned. On the other hand, participants who had a physical, social or professional connection and familiarity with the other parts of the region exhibited a heightened

sense of regional identification with 'Northamptonshire'. Some focus group participants explicitly commented on their connections and affinity to the county:

"So I've travelled and worked around the whole county, so I feel very familiar with it. I have friends across the whole county, so I go out in Kettering. I go out in different areas. So I guess that's why I feel that there is more of a connection to the whole county even if I haven't lived outside of the town." CSH-F1-07

".. have to admit that places like Daventry, don't really mean a lot to me. That area, I never go anywhere near Daventry or Towcester, unless I am driving South. So Northampton's about as far as, you know, I still feel an affinity within. I do feel affinity with the whole of Northamptonshire but not if you asked me about any of those places." CSH-F3-17

Thus, it seems that in terms of spatial or territorial identification, place attachment and affinity was observed primarily to the (functional) local area and secondarily to the (symbolic, cohesive) region. Participants' weak regional identity (noted in terms of lack of affinity to the constituent parts of the county) was shaped by community engagement and efficacy (at the local rather than county level) and the functional and psychological (dis)connections between the urban and rural communities. These 'urban-rural' and 'local-regional' divides may pose a challenge for reconciling Northamptonshire's competitive identity narratives.

8.3.2. Interest-based Communities

Further, the findings indicate a link between regional identity and pride and non-territorial interests. Participants evaluated and appraised the quality of life in the county based on the fulfilment of their interests. For example, green spaces were highlighted as a key feature and strength of Northampton town by a participant interested in natural spaces, outdoor sports and activities like running. Another community participant explains:

"A lot of people that I deal with through work, their community is the music community, that's Northampton to them. I'd say that's probably what struck me is the music community in town. That's where my passion and where my work has been." CSH-F1-08

Interest-based engagement created greater awareness of the specific provisions and assets in the region. Further, interest-based engagement led some participants to perceive those regional and local features as a 'big' and legitimate strength of the region that could be developed and communicated through PB. For example, participants who expressed their vision for the county as a renowned tourism destination also mentioned that they were consumers of visitor attractions sites of heritage, natural beauty, and arts, culture and entertainment. A voluntary sector participant who works with rural communities illustrates this point:

> "I'm very proud of Northamptonshire [..] and I would like to celebrate that sort of heritage I was talking about earlier [..] it's not all about Northampton, Wellingborough and Towcester and all that. It needs to be some bright villages [..] Sulgrave, for example, George Washington came from there, went to America and became fairly famous over there so we ought to be promoting that more." ISH-V-15

Further, among ISH, attachment and pride in certain aspects of the place were also linked to their institutional and professional interests. For instance, ISH participants often used the expression "wearing many hats" to refer to the balancing act between their institutional and residential interests in governance networks. While ISH participants primarily spoke of their institutional identity in relation to PB representation, one participant's account indicates that a conflict between the residential and institutional interests can limit their capacity to act.

> "And at that point, I suddenly realised there might be a conflict of interest, it's because how angry I felt as a resident about this being steamrolled through by politicians might have been in conflict with my position as a speaker [..] for the [institution] [..] that's the one time when I suddenly wondered whether I was representing [the institution] or representing me." ISH-U-20

The findings in this section indicate that non-territorial interests of ISH and CSH affected attachment and value ascribed to the territorial assets. For ISH, their institutional interests tended to be more influential in shaping regional engagement and identity. For CSH, these interests were primarily linked to their residential wellbeing (quality-of-life) in the place. Thus, 'place attachment' is linked with (i) territorial interest and affinity towards a socio-spatially bounded local area and (ii) non-territorial interest-based activities through which a sense of community is felt. It may be suggested that fostering 'brand identification' can utilise territorial

and non-territorial interest domains of regional identity formation (elaborated in Section 10.5.4.1.).

8.3.3. Institutional Practice

Another key facet that affected regional identity and pride was related to the institutional capacity and reputation of Northamptonshire County Council. CSH participants' accounts indicate that pride in place was intrinsically linked with the county's 'reputation and recognition'. The negative reputation of the county created cognitive dissonance and affected the sense of pride. A record number of participants linked the county's reputation with the negative press about the local government (n=22). In response to the question, *What comes to mind when I say Northamptonshire?* Among other things, focus group (2) participants wrote down "local government chaos" and "crap government". Unprompted, one participant spoke about the 'mocking' and 'teasing' reaction from their friends and family, which affected their sense of pride.

> ".. my family and friends who don't live in the county, they're forever saying to me, you guys are on the news again. You're bankrupt. Because that's all what everyone's heard about us for two years. That's our brand, our brand is bankrupt, possibly corrupt." CSH-F2-10

> ".. the short term vision would be to somehow get away from the National perception that the county's bankrupt. [..] the perception is that I get from my friends that live outside of town, and maybe internally as well is there's no money [..] the new plans for the town centre [..] I was really surprised that the small amount of people that actually went to the [public consultation] exhibition [..] there's been so much bad press about Northamptonshire. But that's only on one level, isn't it? That's only on a government financial thing." SE-CSH-05

Participants' accounts reveal that the reputation of the county council (the public brand) was intertwined with the identity of the place brand of Northamptonshire. As a key institution in the county, NCC has a vested interest in the regional identity creation of 'Northamptonshire', which it has previously promoted through various place marketing campaigns. However, as the quote above illustrates, due to the negative public brand of the council, participants argued

against synonymising the county's identity with the council brand. They stressed that the council only represented the administrative structure of the county.

> ".. the Boroughs and Districts [councils] want to distance themselves from brand Northamptonshire because that's the one where the money ran out. Actually, brand Northamptonshire is so much more than an administration, it's a place." ISH-B-13

Even ISH-G from the district and borough councils tended to disassociate from the negative brand of NCC. They stressed that their institutions were not directly implicated in the issue of financial mismanagement. However, as lower-level councils in the area, they are affected by the proposed local government restructuring. Thus, they faced challenges of public cynicism and negative reputation. For some of these participants, the local government restructuring was perceived as the turning point, which could be a challenge or an opportunity to change the way the county is run and to tell a new and positive story about Northamptonshire.

> "Now the fact that there won't be a county council, there will be two unitaries, it gives you the opportunity to do it properly, or you end up with two small ones with their own identities." ISH-B-10

This Section found that the leadership capacity and reputation of the county council (as a leading regional institution) impacted the 'social identity' and recognition needs of the community. Evidently, the institutional practices of the public sector (particularly NCC), weakened by a lack of political cohesion, consequently affected regional identity and pride. The following section examines the intertwining of the development and identity narratives of Northamptonshire and its effects on regional identity and pride.

8.4. Intertwining of Development and Identity Narratives

The findings in this section shed further light on the urban-rural identity divide by examining the socio-economic development narratives. Four identity-development narratives emerge from the data: 'county of contrasts', 'missed opportunities', 'dormitory county' and 'hidden secret' (illustrated in Figure 8.4.). These narratives shed light on the challenges for fostering a cohesive regional identity and feeling of pride and recognition in Northamptonshire.
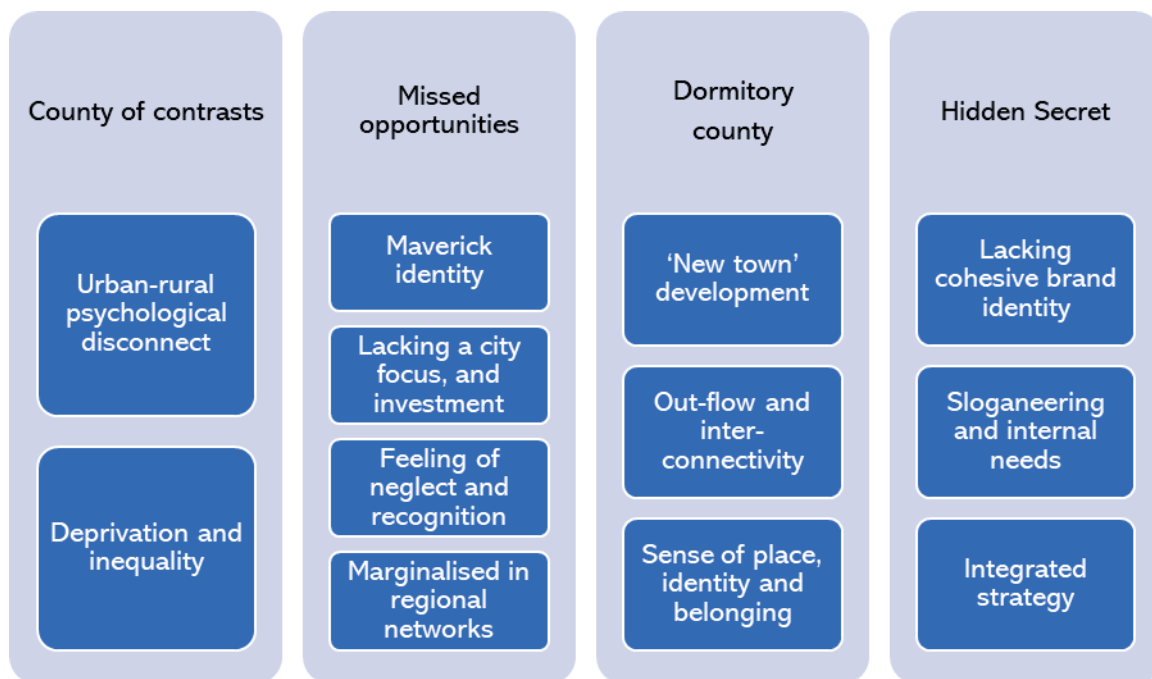
Figure 8.4. *Sub-themes and codes from the data revealing the interplay between development and identity narratives. Source: Author.*

8.4.1. Inequalities and County of Contrasts

The variances in the income and wealth distribution in the urban and rural parts of the county were often cited as critical factors affecting the regional identity and character of Northamptonshire. These participants repeatedly stated that there were pockets of wealth in rural areas inhabited by "high net worth individuals" within the county of Northamptonshire, alongside some of the "most deprived boroughs". The towns were described as "working class", whereas the rural areas and the stately homes were "affluent". The contrast of wealth, poverty and deprivation contributed to the two separate forms of heritages and high and low cultures in the county.

> ".. if you're talking about the contrast between almost picturesque little postcard village and Northampton, I think there's a *huge* difference between the two." ISH-G-01 (participant's emphasis)

> ".. there's the rural county which is full of people in Barbour jackets, snobs, and then there's the towns which tend to be very sort of industrial and I put *working class*

inverted commas [..] it's a strange blend Northamptonshire." CSH-F2-14 (participant's emphasis)

Historic houses under private ownership dominated the visitor economy. Participants criticised the emphasis on 'ceremonial titles' and the influence these individuals (lords, aristocrats, landowners) continue to have on shaping the county narrative. "the past is still living with us" (CSH-F2-11). There is the feeling that those 'old' structures of power (including governments) do not care about the people 'at the bottom'.

Among the urban dwellers, the perception was that wealth in the rural areas had remained the same due to most of the county houses remaining in private ownership rather than part of the National Trust. They generally perceived rural inhabitants to be more wealthy, affluent and looking down upon the townspeople. Urban dwellers felt that their culture and heritage was perceived as low-value in the regional discourse, which seemed to create a more significant "contrast", "divide" in their minds regarding the urban and rural environment. Similarly, rural stakeholders felt that the socio-economic issues and rural challenges were often 'neglected' by political elites and urban dwellers.

> ".. people who live in villages consider themselves superior to people who live in town [..] people become affluent and move out of town, and then kind of have negative perceptions. Because, the one time they're going to town, they see homeless people, and it freaks them out, because they don't experience that in a village." ISH-U-20

> ".. a lot of people maybe feel like they're in their *bit*. Even the posh people of certain villages, probably don't feel like there's areas in Northamptonshire that are for them, in the same way that some of those actually have disadvantage don't feel that there are things that for them. So those bubbles [are] not very helpful." ISH-B-09 (participant's emphasis)

Both urban and rural dwellers tended to agree that the character of the towns had changed vastly due to the post-industrial decline in the urban centres. Rural stakeholders argued in favour of the 'image of the shire', stating that the towns were "not up to the mark". It seemed that the perceived contrast in the urban and rural environment led to the feeling of disconnect between the people living in urban and rural areas. The disconnect between the urban-rural

communities was not only functional in socio-economic-spatial terms but also psychological, expressed in terms of their 'feelings'.

> ".. when you come along and see these fantastic buildings along the countryside [..] and you go into Northampton, it's a bit sad, frankly. Northampton, the town itself needs to be rejuvenated somehow." ISH-B-12

> ".. we've always got greater prosperity 'around' Northampton, so many of the villages [are] quite prosperous places, there are people who you know, [have] good incomes and so on. Some of the connection between those people and Northampton has been lost." ISH-G-05 (participant's emphasis)

Rural and urban stakeholders exhibited a more nuanced understanding of the socio-economic character of their local area. Further to the findings in Section 8.3.1., there was a psychological disconnect between the urban and rural communities expressed in Northamptonshire being a "divided county" due to disparate socio-economic development.

8.4.2. Missed Opportunities

The staggered development in the county town of Northampton was attributed to its past 'maverick' identity and because "it's not a city". The key historical moments wherein Northampton was disadvantaged were recalled as: the removal of the seat of learning (which would have made Northampton the 3rd university town in England); being reduced to just a market town after being the 'capital' of England by housing the parliament outside of London; and having its castle destroyed due to upsetting the King. One of the effects of the "chequered history" was that Northampton town was not granted city status despite being the 'largest' town in the country. Northampton Borough Council has tried to gain the city status in 2000 and 2002; however, neither attempt was successful. The quote below links the "missed opportunities" in the development of Northampton to the history of non-conformism, which has consequently led to the feeling of neglect in the county.

> ".. the fact that the county is so often overlooked. I'm currently reading Alan Moore's books. You know, the author based in Northampton very curmudgeonly gentlemen reading his book, Jerusalem, which is a fantasy novel, and he repeatedly makes the

point that there is a history of rebellion and long conformism within Northampton which is led to it not necessarily getting favour from royalty or from government. And I think that's true. I think historically, the town has been seen as a problem, I think probably the county has too, and therefore it hasn't received funding, it hasn't received investment at some key points in its history." ISH-U-22

Some Northampton residents exhibited a sense of pride in being a town. They felt that they could maintain and preserve the community feel due to their scale and identity as a 'town rather than a city'. However, for some others, as a 'town', Northampton was not considered to offer the same level of production value and quality associated with the cities in the neighbouring counties. Consequently, participants noted the underrepresentation and marginal role of Northampton stakeholders in the regional arts and culture forums.

> ".. last year they [Regional Arts Network] had their first annual event and they did it in Northampton, first one ever. Normally they do it in Leicester, Nottingham, Derby, all the sort of like the big guns of the East Midlands. [..] because we're not a city [..] that places our identity differently, because we [are] still seen as the town." SE-CSH-04

In the past regional economic governance network, Quinn (2015) found that Northampton stakeholders were perceived to be insular and inward-looking, perhaps because they felt neglected in regional policy implementation. Similarly, Northamptonshire's representation on SEMLEP was seen to be 'peripheral' rather than a major influencer and leader. Participants mentioned the Cam Cox Arc, where Northampton was at the fringe of development. The expected benefits were likely to be a ripple effect rather than focused on the town.

> "The concern that we express a lot within the SEMLEP organisation is don't forget us. Because we were once on the periphery of East Midlands. We were in the South and ignored broadly speaking, the view in these networks was it was all about Leicester, Derby and Nottingham [..] Now in the South East Midlands, there's a feeling [that it is] very much about Milton Keynes, Oxford and Cambridge." ISH-B-10

Further, the lack of city status was perceived to affect the reputation and development of Northampton. International students in focus group (4) explicitly stated that when thinking about England, their familiarity was with the big cities and Northampton became known to

them only after joining the University. The proximity of Northampton to London was one of the USPs of the University to attract international students. Multiple participants pointed out that Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, have seen regeneration affecting their cultural offer and recognition due to the investment being focused in cities (ISH-U, G). Unsurprisingly, the "town" was described as 'boring' and 'average' by young people (students) and stakeholders who worked with them.

> ".. I'm an international student. So I didn't really know about Northampton before. When you talk about England it's London or Birmingham or the big cities. But yes, I do know that it is really close to other big cities because it's what the university said." CSH-F4-23

> "There's not a lot of leisure for the younger ones, for 21year olds [..] genuinely, I think we are good at the stately homes, bed and breakfast that type of hospitality. But not so good thinking about the people here that need to shop and spend leisure time as well." ISH-B-11

The quotes in this section shed light on the feeling of neglect experienced by ISH in regional networks and CSH in the town as their needs are perceived to be marginalised in regional development policy.

8.4.3. Dormitory County

The perception of Northamptonshire as a "dormitory county" was shaped by the location, transport connectivity and affordable housing development in the county. Following the designation of 'new town' to Corby (1950) and Northampton (1968), these towns saw an inflow of a significant residential population. Later, this type of development was extended to cover towns and villages in the 'North Northants' (2001-active) and 'West Northants' (2006-2014) area. Unsurprisingly, in the rural context, participants expressed dissatisfaction with these developments because they created 'commuter bubbles' and changed the identity and character of the villages.

> ".. villages where they've had quite big development, where families come in, you think the family's been involved, but they haven't necessarily engage[d], they will go out [of] the village all the time." ISH-V-15

".. the lifestyle here in Northamptonshire is good. It depends on what you're looking for, and what you need, and it's good to have that opportunity to go to other places. So Milton Keynes, Rushden Lakes has just come on board, Peterborough, Leicester. It's got enough around it, but it's not keeping the money here in Northampton." CSH-F3-16

In the above quote, participants explicitly stated that Northamptonshire towns and villages had become functional units for accommodation rather than a place with a sense of belonging and affinity. Disproportionate investment in housing development compared with retail, culture, and leisure meant that urban and rural, new and long-term residents had to seek these experiences outside the county. Leisure and cultural offerings were being developed in pockets. The Olympic pool and Cube Theatre in Corby were cited as examples. These sites were not well-connected with other parts of the county. The previous section found a lack of focal point for regeneration in the county due to the lack of a city. These findings further elucidate that regeneration investment and infrastructure were fragmented rather than part of an integrated regional development and planning strategy.

Further, in regional economic development plans, 'location' was noted as a critical strength of the county (NEP, 2014). Being situated on the North-South rail and motorway and in proximity to London and other big cities, and has been used as a selling point for the attraction of residents, students, visitors, investment and businesses to Northamptonshire. However, in terms of constructing a distinctive identity and regional pride, participants questioned this approach. The quote below by ISH-U refers to a controversial brand campaign, '*North Londonshire*' by North Northants Development Corporation, to attract residents from London. However, the campaign was criticised in the media for disregarding local identity and pride (Bbc.co.uk, 2010; Telegraph, 2010).

".. Northampton and other towns in the county were valued because they were convenient locations [..] it's easy to get to London, to go to Milton Keynes which seems a bit strange to me that one the main selling points of Northampton was that it enables to go somewhere else." ISH-U-21

Further, due to the arterial motorways running through the county, there was a feeling that people were often 'passing through' or 'passing by' to go somewhere else. Participants offered

that this was not only the case among the general public but even shared among their peer-circles (friends and family) who lived in other parts of the country. The quote below elucidates the community feeling of being "undervalued".

> ".. you can't drive up and down this country without seeing Northampton on the road signs for most of the middle stretch of this country, and yet it seems to be undervalued." ISH-U-20

Supporting the findings in Section 8.3.1. the effects of location, transport and housing development (economic and functional connections) were noted on regional identity and pride. Findings indicate that the economic development approach in the county did not integrate the feelings and social identification needs of the community. Stakeholders expressed that clear, distinctive brand identity was needed for putting Northamptonshire "on the map".

8.4.4. Hidden Secret

To reconcile the dissonance arising from the lack of recognition, a common explanation offered by the participants was that Northamptonshire was a "hidden secret". Some participants went as far as claiming that Northamptonshire has remained unrecognised for its visitor economy offer because the inhabitants want to keep it a secret and enjoy it for themselves.

> ".. one of the biggest problems we've had with promoting and marketing the county is that a lot of people don't want people to know how lovely it is. They don't want them to know how nice the villages are, they don't want them to know how good the restaurants and the pubs are within 10-15 miles of where we're sitting. It's our secret and we'll keep it that way." ISH-B-10

The theme of 'hidden secret' was the inspiration for a tourism promotion campaign launched by the Northamptonshire Surprise group. The stakeholders claimed that Northamptonshire is a "well-kept secret"; hence it is "Britain's Best Surprise". Most ISH and some CSH participants in this study commended the initiative for filling a gap in tourism promotions at the county level. However, it was interesting to note that the negative reception from the respondents who themselves described the town and county as "underrated", "secret", and "delight". While these participants' feelings about Northamptonshire were in sync with the BBS campaign, their

critique was pointed at the framing and the focus of the campaign. First, the BBS slogan was criticised for 'admitting' the feeling of neglect among the community and, on the ISH's part, a lack of a brand strategy and ambitious plan for the county. Next, the campaign approach to PB was criticised for its external target audience focus rather than considering the needs and identities of the resident communities.

> ".. Britain's best kept secret or something or Best surprise, which always seemed like.. (chuckles) I kind of agree with it. Except that it's almost like admitting that they've been really crap at marketing." ISH-U-20

> ".. it's that feeling of actually, yes, we're a town and we are a county but actually we're more interested in people that come in. Like we've got Silverstone we've got other big events that happen here, where we like, 'Come on everyone look at how beautiful we are. Look at our big rich privately-owned state houses and things like that'. But actually like does that benefit the people that live here?" SE-CSH-03

The campaign approach for BBS was felt to be serving the interests of the few elite stakeholders rather than the goals of endogenous regional development. While the county is home to some regional and nationally recognised sites and events, visitor attraction sites like Althorp House, Silverstone, Royal and Derngate Theatre and the Shoe factories were visited in isolation. The benefits of visits to these attractions did not necessarily strengthen the visitor economy in terms of the reputation and recognition for the county of Northamptonshire. This university respondent attributes this weakness in the visitor economy to a lack of cohesive brand identity. Some of the assets of the county that were considered a strength were named in isolation (e.g. the historic houses, motorsports, canals, theatre) – lacking a package. Another ISH added the need for a cohesive PB strategy that aims beyond visitor attraction to cater to the needs of various internal and external audiences.

> ".. people kind of come for motor sports events at Silverstone. People come to the theatre or to sporting events, but I'm not quite sure that there's a real package of cultural events in Northampton that really defined or are really linked to the distinctive identity of the county. Really need to situate and put Northampton on the map so that people would come here to a destination." ISH-U-21

"Britain's Best Surprise and a destination management organisation, which is very much about travel and tourism, which is great. That's one quadrant of what you need to try and cover off. For me, it's then what about business? What about resident? What about inward investors?" ISH-B-10

The analysis reveals the challenges faced by resource-constrained economies for balancing 'economic and community development' outcomes. Participants in this study noted this in terms of prioritisation of external target audiences' needs. The data links the development (policy) to the dominant social representations of Northamptonshire to find that a lack of a joined-up PB strategy seemed to aggravate the issue of recognition. These themes are crystallised in the interpretations of place branding by participants in this study and the issues it posed for devising a joined-up strategy.

8.5. Interpretations of Place Branding

Participants' discussion on 'place branding' revealed a varying interpretation of its goals and outcomes. In the first instance, participants usually interpreted 'branding' as a form of marketing communication for raising awareness, reputation and profile among external audiences. To decide on the identity narrative for PB, both ISH and CSH considered the purpose of PB corresponding to an external target audience group. As a marketing tactic, the means to achieve the goals of PB were envisioned through the production and dissemination of promotional and creative collaterals such as billboards and signs in the towns and motorways, catchy slogans and spreading the word through social media marketing and hosting events. Further analysis of the data pertaining to the direct interpretation of 'place branding' and implicit observations from participants criticism and appraisal of past and current PB initiatives are presented in this Section.

8.5.1. Distinctiveness and Representativeness

On the one hand, the construction and promotion of a 'distinctive' identity narrative was perceived to be crucial for PB. The mention of 'identity' evoked a discussion on the USP or distinctive characteristics of the place. Participants emphasised the need for representing a unique identity facet of the county for PB communication. On the other hand, some participants expressed the need to capture the county's diverse and 'plural' identities, especially the

alternative identities and sub-cultures. For example, the key criticism directed at BBS was its lack of consideration for urban heritage and alternative identities. Urban participants stressed that diverse cultures are a strength because it meant that "there is something for everybody". However, participants who were akin to branding in the county argued that a place brand cannot be "everything to everybody" (ISH-B). At the regional (master) brand level, they noted the challenge of creating a cohesive brand identity (perception of a single entity). Thus, the issue of achieving distinctiveness and representativeness in PB became evident.

> "It's a double-edged sword for me, like this is great. You sit down to write your website content list or your social media plan and brilliant I've got content for days here, but actually when you go, ok how do we boil this down to an A4 poster? But how does this look on a billboard, on the back of a bus? Actually, that's the real tricky part is distilling all of that into something like this." (holds up a post-it-note) CSH-F1-06

The challenge in balancing distinctiveness and representativeness was evident as urban participants stressed that diverse cultures are a strength because it meant that "there is something for everybody". However, participants who were aware of the place branding initiatives in the county argued that a place brand cannot be "everything to everybody" (ISH-B).

> "Northamptonshire needs to understand what it is standing for. What does it want to be known for? [..] it's got to be a meaningful identity, and actually, if [it is] that I want to attract big businesses here, you must have to accept that that's okay. I don't think you can go off for absolutely everything." ISH-B-06

In response to this issue, the application of brand architecture was seen as a solution. The 'abstraction' technique was applied to the highest level of brand architecture (master brand). It was felt that a broad-based catchphrase and visual identity could capture and represent the overall image of the county. The specific aspects could be communicated as 'sub-brands'. For instance, in the conception of *Britain's Best Surprise* tourism campaign, ISH explained that the slogan was intentionally kept broad to encompass all the relevant sectors and strengths of the county under one umbrella, instead of honing on only one identity narrative. Sub-brands were conceived as annually changing campaign themes. In the first year of launch, the campaign theme was Stately homes, followed by the year of Churches, F&B, Arts and Culture etc.

".. we've talked about the concept of *'surprise'* because we cannot package this county in any other way. Because it is so many things. [..] we are really strong on food and drink, we've got one of the Britain's best craft gins is produced here. Now if you were talking only about motorsport, or only about houses, or only about shoes, you wouldn't be able to talk about that. But we can talk about that craft gin because we've said we are a county that's full of surprises." ISH-B-13 (participant's emphasis)

Similarly, the public-sector led campaign '*Love Northamptonshire'* was phrased to capture the love and passion of the stakeholders for bettering the county. The sub-branding strategy was envisioned based on council brands and private sector brands. One participant explicitly stated that it was hoped that the tangible elements of the brand, such as the 'label', 'logo' and 'strategy plan', would provide common grounds for discussing identity and vision among internal stakeholders and give the impression of joined-up working. In essence, the rationale for using a brand architecture framework and abstraction strategy was one of 'unity' and broad 'representation'. However, the slogan was criticised for being too abstract, as it could be applied to any place in the world, and it did not communicate any of the USPs of the county. More importantly, a key challenge to realise the campaign was a lack of political cohesion, noted in terms of the competitive relationship between the councils, the need for creating distinction for their own council brand and reluctance to subsume under the county brand.

".. we developed a piece of branding called 'Love Northampton' and 'Love Northamptonshire'. And the idea was that [..] [we were] graphically trying to develop a family of brands that look like they belong to each other but retained their own individual identity [..] And that work showed how you could make the place look like it was it was one place, but with a number of related places within it. [..] So although people were broadly embracing the Love idea, and we were selling it in quite hard, there were certain towns didn't want to do it." ISH-B-10

While the brand architecture model was seen as a solution for representing 'plural' identity narratives, however, the abstraction of stakeholder identities and interests under a logo or slogan failed since it did not stimulate discourse among stakeholders on individual and shared goals and outcomes.

8.5.2. Vision and Outcome

A common critique of ISH's PB campaigns was the lack of consideration for community interests and identities. Participants pointed out that campaigns and slogans were intended to be "clever" and "catchy" rather than being rooted in the population's sense of pride and (emotional) attachment to the place. For example, one proponent of the 'rose of the shires' narrative complained that the slogan had been dropped since it did not resonate with external audiences, despite high resonance with the internal heritage stakeholders. Multiple participants pointed out the contentious language used in the framing of the *'North Londonshire'* campaign. The explicit focus on attracting new residents from London while disregarding the sense of pride of the community led the 'rebranding' to be criticised for ineffective use of the public money (Bbc.co.uk, 2010; Telegraph, 2010).

> ".. all these things are contentious aren't they because on the one hand, if they are to make any impact, they've got to smack in the face of it. And then it causes the local folks, they 'don't want to be London, they are Northampton', but they kind of miss the point actually, it's an attention grabber. So that's perhaps the problem with place branding is that you're trying to brand it for visitors and investors. But actually, you know, it's got to appeal to local people." ISH-G-05

> ".. there was a county council initiative about 10 years ago, and it's called 'tasting the strawberry' and it was very bizarre [..] I don't think it went down very well with local people [..] you don't have to be conventional. You want something that captures people's heart, rather than being deliberately clever [..] branding like that needs to be something that just captures a bit of spirit or emotion and people go 'yeah!'." ISH-V-16

However, the perception of PB as merely a promotional tool for attracting external audiences created dissonance with the exercise, as evidenced in the participants' critique of the former public sector-led campaigns. Further, participants noted dissatisfaction with the current approach to place marketing and branding in the county due to its fragmented nature rather than a long-term, strategic development view.

".. when they're looking at planning submissions or restrictions, perhaps link the branding [..] [for the] big companies that want to come here or even if they want to expand here, get that message connected. Because I don't think there's a connected message, at all." ISH-B-06

".. if you look at the kinds of tourist materials that are coming out of Northampton at that time, you'll see again stately homes, greens spaces, nature, plus the Grand Prix or Althorp Literary Festival [..] it seems a quite a sort of hollow offering, a hollow brand. It's not kind of rooted in the community as such. It's sort of a, yeah people like green spaces and footpaths and canals." ISH-U-21

For most participants, the vision for PB was usually articulated as increasing visitors and establishing Northamptonshire as a tourism destination, especially among CSH, as their understanding of the benefits of place branding were limited to tourism marketing. For participants who considered the promotion of the county beyond tourism, the brand architecture model was a means for managing communications with the different target audiences. Compared with place-based sub-branding, there was relatively more support from the participants for target audience based sub-branding to capture and promote all aspects of brand Northamptonshire holistically.

".. are we branding it as a visitor attraction for its heritage or its art? Are we branding as a place to bring industry to? Are we branding it on a world stage, an English stage, a UK stage, European stage? There are different ways that you would promote yourself and essentially, it's a marketing thing that when all said and done, so you've got our marketing expertise. [..] I'm listening to sort of lots of little people saying lots of little things. But that just ends up with a cacophony of voices, doesn't it? And nothing gets heard." CSH-F2-14

"Break it down into half a dozen different campaigns that suit a very targeted, specific audience [..] and just go, this campaign is about bringing people to look at the beautiful countryside. That's what we're talking about. This is a campaign designed to get small businesses to move into the county." CSH-F1-06

To effectively respond to target audiences' needs, most participants possessed a willingness and interest in systematically approaching the process of PB. There was a feeling among the participants that PB efforts and narratives in the county have been "half-hearted" attempts, and there is a need for a 'proper' PB campaign and strategy. When participants stressed on 'proper', they tended to refer to: assigning responsibility and accountability; leading with a big and bold vision; involvement of professionals and experts; based on case study evidence and market research; accompanied by flagship development; joined-up working among stakeholders; long-term plan for funding and investment; and ultimately reaching a broad audience at the national and international stage.

> ".. what would matter to me would be, is that being done properly? [..] what we could do is have an evidence base for it. So something that has been done and worked in this town, we could try here or do something that has done well with a focus group." ISH-U-20

> "What is it about your village that makes it such a surprise? Do that with not just the villages but all different districts and the town. It needs to get engaged with the local people and get their ideas. Have a proper campaign that's funded properly." ISH-V-15

The quotes above capture a key concern of these stakeholders which was incorporating expert knowledge and community experiences and considerations for orchestrating PB vision and outcomes. The theme 'distinctiveness and representativeness' (in Section 8.5.1) captures attitudes towards *brand management*, i.e., which identity narratives should be included. The theme 'vision and outcomes' (in Section 8.5.2) captures attitudes towards *stakeholder management*, i.e., which stakeholders should be involved in the place branding process.

8.6. Summary

In response to research objective 1, the critical issues affecting a cohesive approach to PB policy and practice in Northamptonshire emerged from the disparate interpretations of PB. First, the need for balancing 'distinctiveness and representativeness' in the construction of identity narrative became apparent in Section 8.2. Multiple competing and complementary identity narratives of Northamptonshire were offered by ISH and CSH. However, the social representations of tourism and PB were dominated by the identity narratives of rural, regional

stakeholders. In contrast, urban stakeholders' value associations of 'independent', 'edgy', 'multicultural' and 'industrial heritage' were not included in regional discourses.

Further, the findings in Section 8.4. clearly linked the development policy to the dominant social representations of Northamptonshire – leading to unequal development in towns. The sub-theme from this section, 'neglected community' and 'marginalised position in regional networks', situate 'recognition' at the core of PB in a rural, regional context. However, a critical issue for adopting this view is the narrow interpretation of PB as a tourism marketing exercise. Community perspectives were felt to be neglected in favour of economic perspectives. Further, the undercurrents of 'urban-rural' and 'local-regional' divide are observed in Section 8.3. shed light on the functional and psychological (dis)connections. In the current scenario, weak political and cultural cohesion affected regional identity and pride. Some implications for mobilising stakeholders of the region for constructing a joined-up narrative were observed in terms of territorial and non-territorial interests. Potential solutions for managing the plural identities and stakeholder needs were explored in Section 8.5. The following Chapter will continue this enquiry by focusing on institutional stakeholders' roles, relationships and networking for PB Northamptonshire.

Chapter 9. Institutional Stakeholders' Roles and Relationships

9.1.Introduction

This Chapter presents the findings on ISH's assumed, ascribed and potential role in PB Northamptonshire from the perspective of ISH and CSH. The interviews with ISH explored participants' perceptions of their role and the expectations from other stakeholder groups in Northamptonshire. Firstly, participants spoke of the existing PB initiatives in the county, explaining their own roles and motivations, and the engagement of other groups. Some participants were aware of the current initiatives but not actively contributing at the time of the study. They relayed their past experiences of engagement with PB campaigns and networks. These participants were also prompted to draw on their institutional relationships and experiences of collaborative working with the different stakeholder groups. They reflected their willingness for future collaborations for PB Northamptonshire.

While all participants affirmatively expressed willingness to contribute to future PB efforts, many struggled to clearly articulate their role in the group. Imagining a future scenario, participants shared their expectations on who should lead, who should be involved and in what capacity in PBG. Further, they deliberated over the benefits and challenges of such collaborations. These same topics were discussed with CSH during the interview to glean their expected roles from ISH and experiences of working with them. Particularly in the focus group, participants discussed the role of various ISH groups to determine the 'leadership' and governance arrangements for 'proper' place branding.

Table 9.1. provides an overview of the roles corresponding to primary ISH groups in Northamptonshire. The findings establish that the public and private sector assume and are ascribed the roles associated with the 'primary' and 'secondary' stakeholders in PB (Henninger, 2016). Thus, in the past and current scenarios, the crucial place brand leadership function was ascribed to these groups. Further to this, the case study revealed the prominent role of the voluntary sector and HEI in regional development and branding networks. These non-governmental stakeholders created legitimacy for their participation in regional networks by filling deficiencies in public-private sector service and leadership capacity. Moreover, their participation shows potential for sharing roles and responsibilities in multi-stakeholder PBG and widening the scope for community participation in PB.

Table 9.1. Institutional Stakeholders' roles in PB Northamptonshire. Source: Author.

Public Sector	Private Sector	Voluntary and Community Sector	Higher Education Institution
From sole leader to 'enabler' •Service and leadership capacity •Enabling policy and planning development •Representing the 'public' interest	Sectoral branding •Reputational value exchange •Networks and clusters as sub-brand teams •Economic governance structure	Community leadership •Bottom-up regeneration •Developing community engagement tools •Representation and advocacy	Knowledge partner •Research and consultancy •Facilitation and training •Network coordinator

The findings in this Chapter are structured as follows. Section 9.2. discusses the receding public sector role in PBG owing to the resource-constrained environment. The leadership gaps and deficiencies, primarily fulfilled by the private sector (or industry stakeholders), is discussed in Section 9.3. Next, the gaps filled by the organised voluntary and community sector (VCS) and their current standing and engagement in the local and regional context reveal their potential role in place branding in Section 9.4. In Section 9.5., the findings on HEI's novel role in regional branding networks is presented. The analysis of the role of different ISH groups reveals two key themes (summarised in Section 9.6.) that partly address the following research objectives:

2. To investigate the scope for multi-stakeholder place brand governance by analysing stakeholders' roles and relationships.
3. To identify the enablers and barriers to collaboration by analysing stakeholder engagement practices and motivations.

9.2. Public Sector

This Section analyses the perceptions towards the public sector role, assumed by the politico-administrative institutions and actors and expected by other ISH and CSH groups (overview in Table 9.2.). The public sector comprises "the set of agencies, organisations, levels of public administrations and institutions that generate laws and manage universal and critical services for general interest" (Cerda-Bertomeu and Sarabia-Sanchez, 2016, p. 301). In this study, ISH-

G participants (total 5) comprised of (democratically elected) council representatives and public administration officers from four different local government authorities (councils) in the county. The participants represented different interests (political and administrative), agendas (departments relating to place management) and geographies (borough and district) within the county. The overarching theme is the shift in the public sector role *from sole leader to an 'enabling' partner* to the private sector in place branding.

Table 9.2. *Public sector role in PB Northamptonshire. Source: Themes and codes from the data.*

Roles	Codes from the data
Service and leadership capacity	- Weak governance and reputation - Public mistrust and cynicism - Multiscalar, competitive relations and fragmentation - Practice legitimacy (expertise in marketing and branding)
Enabling planning and policy development	- Affected by wider regional and national policy (austerity) - Ownership of assets - Legitimising authority (statutory power) - Interdependencies among regional actors leading to partnerships
Representing the 'public' interest	- Democratic legitimacy of political institutions - Statutory power and mandate - Public consultation methodology

9.2.1.Service and Leadership Capacity

All stakeholder groups stated that the local councils have the responsibility to raise the profile of the place, and in an ideal scenario, they would have the responsibility of leading and initiating PB. However, due to the austerity and context-specific public sector issues of the councils, their role was described as just a "service provider" in charge of collecting tax and trash. One participant emphasised that the councils could barely manage resources and services, let alone lead creative place marketing and promotions. Owing to the bankruptcy of Northamptonshire County Council (NCC), participants' expectations from councils to fund and lead on PB were low. While the financial situation explicitly related to NCC, ISH-G participants from local (town and district) councils felt that it had tarnished the reputation of the local government in the county. Participants expressed concerns about synonymising the council brand with the place brand (ISH-B, CSH). As one participant stated, "brand

Northamptonshire is so much more than an administration, it's a place" (ISH-B-13). Thus, cynicism and mistrust of the public sector hampered their reputation and leadership ability for PB. The quote below captures this sentiment:

> "In practice, we know that the challenges that Northamptonshire County Council are going through at the moment, it's really difficult to see in the current situation, how any leadership in this [place branding] field would come from that setting." ISH-U-21

Moreover, some participants worried about the implications of local government restructuring in Northamptonshire, which would dissolve the overarching county-level authority (NCC) and 'divide' the county into two administrative areas. The willingness to collaborate among the two new authorities was crucial for a united agenda and effort for region branding Northamptonshire. However, due to the competitive relationship between councils observed in the past initiatives, expectations from the local councils to work collaboratively and jointly lead the PBG were low.

Public and private sector stakeholders who had been involved in PB in the county recounted the competitive relationship between the County and Borough Councils. With seven district and borough councils operating in the area, each council had their own brand campaign with a local area focus. Some examples of this are: *This is Kettering, Love Northampton, Destination Nene Valley* and *Enterprising Wellingborough*. Attempts at aligning the various council brands under one umbrella brand for the county had been contentious, as evidenced in the development of *Love Northamptonshire* branding. Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (LEP organisation) led the charge of brand-building and stakeholder consultation. They were commissioned by the NCC and funded through a national scheme. Fragmentation occurred at the adoption and launch stage as each council wanted to assert their leadership authority and retain their council brand identity. Some of the councils refused to subsume their council brand under the umbrella county brand leading to the abandonment of the *Love Northamptonshire* campaign even before the launch.

> "We spent two years developing Love Northamptonshire off the back of Love Northampton. Great then we'll do Love Corby and Love Daventry. None of those people wanted to work together. They all had their own individual campaigns, refused to speak to anybody else around the table about it. You know, how can you build this

overarching thing all together if you refuse and speak to each other? There was a bit of a tribalism thing between the towns as well, which is competition." CSH-F1-06

".. we had problems with Northampton Borough Council back in the day who didn't want to be subsumed under a county brand when they'd had the first iteration which was Love Northampton [..] so then they weren't happy with the Love Northamptonshire [..] it's the same idea, we've just expanded it slightly but we got into a bit of, no you can't use it here." ISH-B-10

The quotes above clearly demonstrate that a lack of political cohesion has affected the implementation of an umbrella branding policy in Northamptonshire. Public sector respondents acknowledged the past competitive relationship between councils and other regional institutions (such as the University). The "poor relationship" was attributed to the councils' senior management team taking a 'super leader' approach to place governance and branding. Their efforts were directed at creating a distinctive identity for the political leader and their institution. One participant described it as 'personality issues' between leaders at different institutions where each felt that they would not "dance to somebody else's tune" (ISH-G-01). As this public sector stakeholder admits:

"The relationships with partners were not good. There's two main reasons for that. At a political level, that coincided with the time when people's personal ambitions was (sic) such to want to be identified as a big mover and shaker in the town. [..] it was more important whose logo is going to appear on it, who's going to be quoted in the press release. [..] at an officer level, the senior officers, their relationships with other partners were not good. [..] So we're currently very 'actively' seeking to enhance those relationships to come together in a common purpose." ISH-G-05

Additionally, a key component of PB leadership was identified as the ability to make creative and commercially adept decisions. There was a consensus among stakeholder groups that local authorities were not commercially adept at making creative decisions regarding PB. They were perceived to lack expertise in design, marketing and branding. The public sector was concerned with communicating facts and reality, statistics and success cases, using the existing strengths of the place for generating "positive press" about the place. Another aspect the public sector seemed to focus on was creating a PB image by emulating the 'look and feel' of well-known

157

destinations. There is no surprise then that the public sector approach to PB was considered to be 'conservative' and lacking creativity by other participants.

> "If you're in the commercial world, if you're marketing director of Carlsberg, you probably are a pretty good marketer. If you're a 'Comms' manager in a local authority you're probably not the same level, and if you're a politician who's done a bit of marketing for his business, you definitely are the wrong person." ISH-B-10

In response, local authorities defended themselves against this criticism stating that they took a measured approach to place marketing and branding. One of the ISH-G explained that spending public money on catchy campaigns and slogans had previously drawn cynicism and backlash from the general public. Hence, the councils tended to take a more cautious and risk-averse approach to place promotions. Nonetheless, the other ISH and CSH groups ascribed weak *practice legitimacy* to the public sector due to their low capacity for service delivery, governance functions and expertise in marketing and branding.

9.2.2. Enabling Policy and Planning Development

From the council's point of view, austerity measures of the central government led to a decline of public sector finances, ownership of land or property, and constraints in resources to provide and manage essential services and infrastructure, which affected the public sector role in PB. In the visitor economy context, the proliferation of private ownership of visitor attraction sites led one of the councils to re-value its membership in an industry-led PB network. This respondent explained that the membership fee was no longer justifiable under public spending. In another instance, the reduced council role was evident in the formation of *Love Corby*, an industry-led place promotion group. The local authority, Corby Borough Council (CBC), initially planned to lead the initiative dubbed 'We Love Corby' by appointing a Tourism and Marketing Officer (CBC, 2016). However, constrained by capacity and budget, 'Love Corby' was established as a private-voluntary sector partnership network with support from CBC in running costs for the website, advertising and administrative staff. These contributions have further been revoked in light of the budgetary and local government restructuring since 2018. Thus, it seems that the receding public sector role, leadership and ownership of PB projects is not (necessarily) voluntary, instead, it is conditioned by dwindling public sector resources.

".. the whole nature of the town is impacted under private ownership. So then we have no control, as we are not a landlord, reducing sort of rent, so then we don't have no control over rate, it's a nationally set thing, so it's very difficult to extend and offer good deals to people [..] But what is within our area of influence is to enable planning and to bring in leisure uses or residential uses or apply for funding to enhance our heritage." ISH-G-03

In response, council leaders and officers noted the benefits of 'partnership working' between councils and institutions in the local and regional areas. Collaborative working between councils was aimed at efficient service delivery and 'economies of scale' where mission alignment was established. These collaborations usually took the form of 'projects' between the same-function departments at different councils, usually for social services delivery, housing and development planning and putting together funding or grants applications. Thus, the primary role of the public sector was described as an 'enabler' for affecting changes in planning and policy through their statutory powers.

"The [Northampton] borough [council] will have responsibility to actually sign the bid. But the important thing is that people work together. [..] it's quite important for us to 'genuinely' show the limits of what we can do, but also genuinely tap into the people who got the talent in other things like the university, business community and so on." ISH-G-05 (participant's emphasis)

".. it's a natural partnership, that university to involve because as far as our student recruitment, the wellbeing of our staff and students when they're here, attractive place for international students, for all those reasons, it's really important that the county is promoted as best it can be. [..] There are a lot of amazing things in the county, the town is not brilliant at present. And the university needs a better town if we're going to attract students." ISH-U-23

As the above quotes indicate, both the public sector and their regional partners found symbiotic gains in engaging in multi-stakeholder networks and were mostly satisfied with the partnership working. As evidenced in the *Northampton Forward* project, Northampton Borough Council took the lead in applying to the High Street Regeneration Fund. It secured support and endorsement from key institutions (such as the University) and industry stakeholders (such as

the Business Improvement District). For the public sector, partnership working served to bridge the gap in resources and public trust by dispersing responsibilities and risks of funding and making creative and commercial decisions. The regional partners realised that while the look and feel of the place (physical landscape and servicescape) were crucial to institutional and business stakeholders, transformative changes could only be achieved by working with the local authorities (ISH-U). Thus, their engagement in policy networks was a strategic means to exert their influence on regional development and policy decisions.

The findings illustrate a shift in stakeholder attitudes towards the council's role as an 'enabler' rather than the sole leader for PB. The 'product development' function through planning and policy making were both ascribed to and readily assumed by ISH-G. The public sector exhibited an interdependency among the councils and with regional partners for achieving common goals.

9.2.3. Representing the 'Public' Interest

Regarding public sector ownership, it was found that councils primarily took ownership of projects in the 'public' or 'civic' interest where private sector ownership was weak. The role of the councils was fulfilling its statutory function and responsibility to the public.

> ".. you get to projects that spread across a whole area. No individual business would take ownership, so we take ownership across to enable that. It's not commercially viable, it's no one's responsibility. The public sector especially has responsibility to the public [..] they [local authorities] sort of champion that cause and then try to work together to get funding" ISH-G-03

It is important to note that this role implicates community engagement in PB. Since they are (part) funded by public money, local government-led partnerships, such as Northampton Forward, had a mandate for public consultation. From the private sector point of view, public sector engagement in sectoral networks represented the 'public' view due to their *democratic legitimacy*. However, strained relationships, as described earlier, between the residents and the public sector led some participants to emphasise that the local councils did not represent their views (CSH-F1-08). One participant pointed out the dissonance between the experiences of the council leaders and the common man (SE-CSH-01). Furthermore, some community leaders

160

and organisations (ISH-V and CSH) indicated a barrier to access and involvement with the councils at a strategic level.

> "I've tried so many times, to try and engage with them at the sort of more strategic level. It is very difficult, especially as it keeps changing all the time." ISH-V-15

> "I've seen instances where I know people have gone to the council and said that these are my ideas. This is what I could do with you. This is how I could really help promote the county and everything else. I'd like to come and work for you, work with you to do it. And they go, Well, there's no money to do that." SE-CSH-05

> ".. they [Northampton Borough Council] can lead on it as a statutory body and as a body that is probably the most representative of the people because essentially, people have elected these members of council. But the council 'doesn't know about Northampton' [..] they don't understand how people feel here, what they see, what they're proud of, and what they identify with." ISH-B-06 (participant's emphasis)

While public sector leadership in PB networks is conducive to public consultation in the initial and final stages, the means and process of community engagement are limited. Even within a context that necessitates multi-stakeholder governance, not all stakeholder groups have the same ease of access to participation. Stakeholder participation was concentrated among established partners, whereas CSH tended to be involved in a consultative role or when decisions were already made (further findings in Section 10.3.).

The findings in Section 9.2., illustrate the shift in the public sector role in PB from 'super leader' to 'enabling partner' in regards to service and leadership capacity, policymaking and planning, and representing the public interest. The deficits in public sector resources and leadership led non-governmental actors to play a more vital role in branding Northamptonshire. On their part, the public sector was actively looking to strengthen and build relationships with regional institutions. Their main contribution was their 'public' role, lending *democratic legitimacy* to ISH's PB initiatives.

9.3. Private Sector

This Section analyses the roles assumed by businesses and industry forums and the expectations of other stakeholder groups from the private sector (overview in Table 9.3.). The private sector comprises organisations with a profit orientation, which operate in a legal framework regulated by the public sector (Bobbio, 1989 in Sarabia-Sanchez and Cerda-Bertomeu, 2018). In this study, social enterprise respondents are classified as ISH-B. Business advisers and network managers are added to this group since they have the experience of industry engagement, sometimes spanning sectors. Further, these participants are considered ISH-B because they represent organisational and economic interests in PB, and they work closely with industry and government (Slocum and Everett, 2014). ISH-B participants (total 8) comprised of representatives of small and big businesses in managerial and executive positions and industry and sectoral networks that had mainly private sector members. The represented sectors are: F&B, creative and cultural industries including heritage, arts and entertainment, tourism and leisure and social enterprise.

Table 9.3. *Private sector role in PB Northamptonshire. Source: Themes and codes from the data.*

Roles	Codes from the data
Reputational value exchange	- Co-branding and endorsements - Embeddedness - CSR and social value
Sectoral networks and clusters	- Identity pillars (sub-brands) - Critical mass - Ownership of the touchpoints experience - Marketing and branding expertise
Economic governance structure	- Funding pressures and resilience - The usual people (exclusive networks) - Membership structure

Industry stakeholders were mobilising for joint action and branding through sectoral networks and forums. The networks and forums represented were formalising; however, they were not institutionalised. The formation of the 'vital coalition' among these actors created a perception of (relatively) stronger economic cohesion compared to weak political and cultural cohesion. Industry-led initiatives were perceived favourably by institutional stakeholders since they filled a gap in public sector leadership, expertise and resources. However, there was "healthy

scepticism" about the economic interests and goals being pursued by industry stakeholders. The overarching theme pertaining to the private sector role is their ability in 'sectoral branding'.

9.3.1.Reputational Value Exchange

Approaches to collaboration between the private sector brands and the place brand ranged from simple brand associations (such as *ripple co-branding*, discussed in Section 5.3.1.) to sectoral branding networks. From a place brand perspective, association with reputable and well-established corporate brands was seen as a means of gaining awareness and recognition for the place. As one PB network coordinator pointed out, big and small businesses can be the basis of creating brand content such as success stories. They can act as the 'face of the brand' as ambassadors for the business community (ISH-G). This approach was applied in the *Love Northamptonshire* campaign, as successful business brands (such as Avon, Barclays, Carlsberg, Silverstone, Weetabix) were utilised to attract inward investment to the county. A business representative explained that the idea came about in a focus group discussion with marketers from the big brands. They identified the big businesses based in the county as the USP for place promotion.

> "..with 'Love' we wanted to say things like Carlsberg Love Northampton, Barclaycard Love Northampton, Weetabix Love Northampton, Travis Perkins Love Northampton. Those big companies you will recognise. Why do they love Northampton or Northamptonshire, because they're in that county. and suddenly, people go, Ohh if Carlsberg's there or Barclay's there, that's quite big, isn't it? Yeah. And you get that certain feeling of, Oh, well, maybe it's not the sleepy backwater that I've never heard of." ISH-B-10

The above quote indicates that PB strategy was based on a mere 'reputational value' transfer and endorsement strategy from the big corporate brands to the region brand of Northamptonshire. This approach posed challenges for business network coordinators (ISH-B, G) as they struggled to engage big businesses. With their well-established and reputed brand, it was felt that "they don't really need anybody else" (ISH-G). The lack of spatial embeddedness of the big corporations in the county was mentioned. One participant noted that by their nature, the private organisations are "business focused rather than area focused" (ISH-G-04). Especially big corporations were perceived to be spatially mobile and lacking

attachment to the area. They were susceptible to relocating for operational and economic gains. Participants expressed concern over basing the brand identity of the county on business brands that were not embedded in the place (for example, the Grand Prix event at Silverstone).

A further challenge for engaging more prominent brands was relating to the negative reputation of the town and county. A participant involved in the bid for *Northampton Social Enterprise Place* noted that big businesses in the county were guarded about their brand image and did not want to be associated with 'negative Northampton' (ISH-B). Thus, the disparity between big and small-sized businesses and embedded and non-embedded businesses were noted in terms of the implications for engagement. The quote below by an industry network coordinator (ISH-B-13) illustrates the difference between small and big business engagement regarding the perceived value from association and 'opportunity'.

> ".. the leather and footwear businesses have probably been established for hundreds of years. And these are big, often global brands that you are dealing with [..] it's very much hard and much more difficult to deal with Prada than it is to deal with Jelly's Vodka that's been established two years and appreciate the opportunity to work as part of a collective." ISH-B-13

While acknowledging many of the challenges outlined above, a big business representative emphasised the lack of 'value exchange' between the corporate and region brand for engaging in co-branding. The benefits of business engagement with industry forums such as networking, marketing, funding and grants, and training opportunities were catering to small businesses. All the while, big businesses were expected to make monetary contributions for funding the forum's branding activities. As the below quotes indicate, big business engagement with PB networks was somewhat weak due to the unclear 'value exchange', expressed in terms of a strategic and well-defined 'ask' (what value can be contributed by the corporate) and the 'value add' (what value will be added to the corporate's brand).

> ".. we're actually in the long run bigger than [the place promotion network] is. So people that come to us for a specific reason. They don't go to find us on [the place promotion network website]. We are so unique in what we do, it [membership] wouldn't benefit us at all. It was about being a part of it, rather than not being a part of it." ISH-B-11

".. get your budget sorted out properly with what you want to do and how you want to do it, then that feels a little bit more inviting, then it's more about the county without this price tag being attached to it." ISH-B-06

Interestingly, this respondent (ISH-B-06) provided a unique solution to big business engagement in PB. They expressed an interest in enhancing their reputation and contributing to the local area through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and local giving in the community. The participant's business was already doing this by supporting: local charities (donations, sponsorships, staff skills, time, resources), schools, skills training, employment centres and local sourcing. Another ISH participant indicated that big institutions and organisations in the county were more receptive to adding social value to their local community and neighbourhood for the attraction, retention, and well-being of their employees, and these activities can be used in their company's marketing. The quote below completes the earlier comment from ISH-B-06.

"..where we prefer to spend our money is on local community things. We have a thing called [name of a CSR initiative]. So each month if colleagues have their child's football team or there's a local charity or something that they want us to donate money to, that is where we would rather spend our money in the local community in that way." ISH-B-06

It must be noted that the nature of this business (big and B2B) could be the reason for viewing the CSR activities more favourably than sponsoring network events. Nonetheless, the finding on reputational value exchange enhances our understanding of the relationship between big corporate brands and PB. It can be argued that co-branding relationships should go beyond (simple) endorsement and cross-promotion to create impact in the local communities to enhance outcomes for the business as well as the community. The *embeddedness* of economic actors in their local context can be viewed as a source of value creation by enabling organisations to contribute more actively and directly to the sustainability and resilience of local and regional economies (Di Gregorio, 2017). In addition to big corporations, another business group that can contribute to this dimension is social enterprises due to their mission and ethos being driven by social value. In Northamptonshire, this suggestion is especially relevant since the social enterprise sector is growing, supported by the local universities' social innovation focus. Moreover, efforts to establish Northampton town as a hub for the sector is

underway as the stakeholder have recently (2019) secured the title of Northampton Social Enterprise Place. Some respondents emphasised the potential for the 'social enterprise' dimension to become a brand identity pillar for Northampton town and the county.

9.3.2. Sectoral Networks and Clusters

The recent attempts at branding the county, since 2016, have been spearheaded by industry-led partnerships and forums, which has contributed to the development of sectoral brands. For example, *Made in Northamptonshire* represents a network and the brand for the F&B producers in the county. Similarly, *Northamptonshire Heritage Forum* represents the stakeholders from the museums and historic houses in the county. *Northamptonshire Surprise* group for the visitor economy has membership from both of the networks mentioned above as well as the Arts, Creative and Culture industry. It is noteworthy that sectors that were perceived to be embedded in the territory were more likely to be represented in PB. This usually tends to include the agricultural and F&B industry, visitor attraction sites and location-based clusters (e.g., BID and Town Centre Partnerships). Further, historically significant sectors (such as leather, boot and shoe) are being considered as potential themes for the branding campaigns.

The sectoral branding approach was beneficial for creating a legitimate economic identity that could strategically and operationally act as a *'brand pillar'* (sub-brand). As evidenced in the industry-led campaign for Northamptonshire's visitor economy, *Britain's Best Surprise*, stakeholders in the arts, creative and culture, F&B and heritage sectors came together to achieve a *critical mass* at the county level. It was felt that strategically the county's strengths in the visitor economy domains could be packaged under an umbrella brand. From an operational point of view, the campaign adopted a thematic focus each year, starting with stately homes (in 2016), Churches (2017), F&B (2018-19) and arts and culture (2020) and so on. In this way, the sectoral domains became the sub-brands for Northamptonshire's visitor economy.

> "We're basically looking at our USPs, our strength. So we've got the most incredible motorsport, got the most incredible houses, we've got so many beautiful churches and some of the best in Europe in certain styles. And you've also got incredible food and drink, we've got the footwear and leather heritage, so we're picking them off year by year based on the capacity of that group of businesses to work with us, the appetite, the

capacity, do they want to, can we raise funds to do it." ISH-B-13

In these networks, private sector businesses were the primary stakeholders. They were considered crucial for delivering a positive *brand experience*. In the visitor economy, assets, products, services, and attraction sites were privately owned and managed by private landowners and businesses. Thus, buy-in from private sector stakeholders who have direct ownership and control of the place product was necessary for regional branding to fill a gap in local government 'capacity' (and funding) at the county level.

> ".. it's just as important and possibly more so actually, really, that the businesses themselves that are working in the visitor economy feel that they have a voice and that they're contributing because moving forward, this [Britain's Best Surprise] will either survive or not, this project based on the support that we get from industry, because we can't rely on support from the public sector." ISH-B-13

> "it's [Britain's Best Surprise] got a [membership] package that it's offering to people, that people have to buy into in order to market itself. And that's great. It seems to be driven by a private individual who's got an agenda, we're not entirely sure where they got that agenda from, doesn't matter. But that's interesting because they are trying to fill a vacuum that a) the county and b) the local authorities just couldn't fill." ISH-G-01

As a public sector participant pointed out, industry-led initiatives presented a more 'united' face for the place brand. Sectoral networks and clusters created a perception of economic cohesion by taking on lobbying and representation for its business members. These conditions have led to the proliferation of the mostly industry-led PB networks in the county, with the public sector taking on a secondary stakeholder role.

> "..if I want to send out a good united message, it would need to come from these business networks that are already in place, established, rather than the council. While the council has a big enough stake to do it but the reputation that is with any council already puts it two steps back." ISH-G-04

Not all respondents shared this view. One participant pointed out the danger of the funding-focus rather than message-focus. They felt that the dilution of the brand message in accordance with the funding actors and groups would result in the loss of 'clarity of voice':

> ".. you need lots of different people around the table to bring you money because no one's got the money to do these campaigns properly. [..] someone comes in and goes, right, well, I've got five grand lined up for this project 'but' … and then someone else comes and goes, that'd be great because actually I've got 10 grand 'but' … [..] You end up with a product that was really removed from where you started out." CSH-F1-06 (participant's emphasis)

Nonetheless, most participants conceded that the key strength of the private sector, especially in comparison with the public sector, was their expertise in marketing, branding, and creativity. Big businesses were expected to be the most creative and commercially adept in comparison with other stakeholder groups. The ascribed role for private sector representatives was feeding into the creative process through ideation of brand strategy, campaign development and steering creative decisions. As discussed in Section 9.2., public sector deficiencies were noted in terms of leadership capacity, reputation and creative expertise. In all these aspects, the private sector is perceived to be relatively more proficient. Thus, they were seen to fill the gap in regard to the practice legitimacy of the public sector. However, some issues were noted in terms of the leadership capacity of the private sector stakeholders.

9.3.3.Economic Governance Structure

From CSH perspective, the main criticism for the PB initiatives in the county was the lack of continuity. Respondents pointed to the weak governance arrangements (in terms of policy, structures, and funding) for PB Northamptonshire. The head organisations in charge of economic development in the county are "constantly changing". The wider national and regional policy for economic governance were mentioned here, which had caused the former economic development agencies to dissolve, such as EMDA, NEP and NEL (refer to Appendix 1 for full form of the acronyms). Participants felt that these changes have affected institutional resilience in the county and made the stakeholders risk-averse to make bold decisions. Due to the funding pressures and the voluntary nature of the members' work, network coordinators

reported a 'charity fatigue' among the key members. Speaking of the former DMO, *Explore Northamptonshire*, one respondent explains:

> "Explore Northamptonshire were it seemed constantly worried about being restructured or being downsized or cut. I think that really limited how confident or bold they could be and doing something a bit different or try something a little bit experimental. They just wanted to do tried and tested things." ISH-U-21

> "There doesn't seem to be the resilience throughout a lot of the organisations because as soon as you get challenged, the temptation is to sort of give up, we're all just trying our best to do the right thing for the town." SE-CSH-02

It was interesting to note that despite the structural governance changes, the same institutional and industry stakeholders' interests dominated the social representations and governance of PB. Further, public-private actors showed significant dependence and cooperation in protecting existing relational and power structures. While the direct influence of the public sector in PB was receding, the relational networks created by them have been the basis for creating new governance networks, such as *Northamptonshire Heritage Board*. The economic actors pursuing PB in the region are not necessarily new entrants. Instead, they have been ascribed power and access to other stakeholders through years of 'structural embeddedness' in policy networks (Lebeau and Bennion, 2014; Lebeau and Cochrane, 2015). To maintain these structures and gain legitimacy, private actors engaged public actors in 'behind the scenes negotiation' and securing direct backing of democratic institutions (Horlings, 2012; Ward, 2000). Observing the recurrent pattern of 'the usual people', some participants expressed scepticism about the social representation of particular demography groups of a particular class, age and gender in PB networks. The social representations in PB were felt to be controlled by a few elites that have created a circle of exclusivity. This was considered one of the key barriers for new members (notably from voluntary groups and small businesses) to get involved at the strategic level (further findings in Section 10.4.2.).

> "..it all comes back down the same route of just talking to the same people again [..] there's never really been any concerted effort that I can see from one side delivering the campaigns to being on the other side, being a business going, actually, how can I get involved in something like that as a stakeholder, as a partner. There's not really ever

been any real drive to get out of the comfort zone and then talk to someone new." CSH-F1-06

".. because the funding is largely coming from the industry, they need to have much more input into what it is. So at certain levels of membership that's written in there [Destination Management Plan], you can influence what we do, if you buy-in to a big enough degree, you can influence how we invest the money, which is right isn't it." ISH-B-13

The stage membership funding model adopted by DMOs across the UK, to which Northamptonshire is no exception, seems to exacerbate further the issue of engaging stakeholder groups with limited capacities. In the visitor economy context of Northamptonshire, stakeholder engagement and consultation are at a nascent stage since a formal DMO does not exist, and a voluntary group is steering the tourism brand. While this type of governance arrangement is flexible and adaptive, it also creates issues of accountability and legitimacy. Some participants noted that while membership on industry forums is open to VCS organisations operating in these domains, their capacity and resource constraints inhibit their active engagement.

9.4. Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

This Section analyses the perceptions of the voluntary sector's assumed and potential role in region branding Northamptonshire (overview in Table 9.4.). The voluntary sector is considered as formal collectives or organisations that employ staff working for a social or community purpose (Sarabia-Sanchez and Cerda-Bertomeu, 2018). A distinguishing feature from the community stakeholders (individuals and collectives) was that VCS was embedded in an organisational setting and structure, driven by their organisational mission. ISH-V participants (5 in total) were paid employees (executives or coordinators) with the responsibility of project and stakeholder management. Some of these also had the responsibility of marketing in their organisations because they tended to work in relatively small teams. They worked in local and regional, urban and rural settings in heritage and nature conservation, arts and culture, philanthropy and public service delivery. All were prominent VCS organisations in the county, and they were part of a national network of similar organisations.

Table 9.4. Voluntary sector role in PB Northamptonshire. Source: Themes and codes from the data.

Roles	Codes from the data
Bottom-up regeneration	• Filling public service gaps • Managing community grants • Training and upskilling CSH
Developing community engagement tools	• Networking with community of practice • Ethos and decision-making methods • Capacity building and empowerment
Representation and advocacy	• Relational networks with ISH • Trust of communities • Community cohesion

These rising demands from VCS to fill gaps in the public sector service capacity have been studied in public administration and non-profit and voluntary sector literature (Guo and Acar, 2005; Moore, 2000; Emerson et al., 2012; Stoker, 1998). This study observed the prominence of the VCS in public life and as a potential partner in PB networks. The overarching theme from the roles is *community leadership*.

9.4.1. Bottom-Up Regeneration

Overall, participants perception of the voluntary sector's role in the local and regional economy was positive, especially among CSH and ISH-G, who saw voluntary organisations as key stakeholders and contributors in the Northamptonshire community. Unprompted, participants appreciated the role of voluntary organisations in filling a service gap left by the public and private sectors. This was evidenced in a range of services provided by the voluntary sector, from tackling homelessness to arts engagement to volunteer-run museums. This role emerged in response to the weakness in public sector funding and service provisions (austerity cuts). As service providers, they were filling a gap that the private sector may not want to engage with (because it is not economically viable), and the public sector may engage with varying levels of success. In addition to representing engaged community groups, some participants pointed out that it is their mission to engage 'hard to reach' or 'disengaged' groups to strengthen community cohesion.

"A lot of the businesses are looking for high value customers, whereas we're [voluntary sector] actually the opposite. We are looking for people who find it difficult to access the [provision]. We are looking for people who are low-income, disabled, have mental health issues. We are getting these people to engage with us. What we do is counter-intuitive for businesses." ISH-V-18

Similar to the role of industry stakeholders in shaping the 'identity pillars' (sub-brands) for Northamptonshire (Section 9.3.2.), the prominence of the voluntary sector organisations in public service delivery and community and social development contributed to a strong sense of "community feel" in Northamptonshire towns and villages (identified in Section 8.3.1.). Voluntary organisations saw themselves as part of the "bottom-up regeneration" of the area in response to needs in the community. One of the VCS' organisational objectives was: "engaging local people in making communities better places to live, work, play and do business". Driven by their organisational mission, some VCS organisations were engaging communities in planning and regeneration of their area, supporting community projects through funding, skills training, capacity building and putting on events etc. This role was evident in *Nenescape Landscape Partnership*, led primarily by the public and voluntary sector organisations. Community engagement for river regeneration was their core mission. They put on training workshops, consultation and showcase events and provided grants to community projects aligned with their objectives.

".. we funded them [community groups] to put on activities, to improve the space, to recruit volunteers. So in that sense, yes, we are part of that kind of grassroots level regeneration of local areas [..] which help improve local areas and people's wellbeing through it." ISH-V-16

Other VCS organisations were affecting the bottom-up regeneration as an implicit effect of their grant-giving and engagement activities. An ISH-V participant reported that as a grant manager, they were consolidating information on funding sources, securing funding from public and private institutions to support community initiatives, projects and events. However, a key challenge on their part was 'the pressure' to provide public services, with already constrained resources and capacity, and an over-reliance on voluntary groups in the county.

9.4.2. Developing Community Engagement Tools

ISH-V participants' accounts and the information on their websites revealed that the prominent VCS in the county were usually part of a national network of similar organisations. This connection gave them a greater capacity than small and informal groups to engage in regional policy and development networks. For instance, some participants shared that their organisations had access to national knowledge databases as part of national or regional consortia. Further, the consortia were undertaking research to enhance their local knowledge to set priorities and meet community needs. Thus, their practice and community engagement were evidence-based.

Due to the voluntary sector's community-centred ethos and social values, ISH-V participants were creating more open, inclusive and 'participatory' interventions and mechanisms for community engagement and decision making. This usually took the form of advisory panels where members of the community would be formally involved in decision making for wide-ranging activities, from organising events to selection panels for awards and grants. While this approach to community engagement was linked to organisations' funding requirements, all ISH-V participants expressed their interest to enhance their practice in this domain. The quotes below from ISH-V clearly reflect the VCS ethos and values and their receptiveness to developing a more 'inclusive' decision-making practice.

> ".. it's about taking the decision making we normally do [..] where various members of the senior management (chuckles) would sit down [..] we do that, but we do it after we've done it with the [community advisory] panel. We go, oh, so these were the panels favourites, how do they work together? [..] all the conversations any organisation or any event has, we just have them with different people. [..] a requirement of the funding is to test out new ideas to engage new audiences, and to experiment with models of community led decision making." ISH-V-17

> "It's not an ongoing built-in representation. There's some one-offs, some of the volunteers have been involved. We have voluntary panels for the community grants for decision making. I would like to do something more structured, regular and meaningful than the advisory panels." ISH-V-14

Moreover, these participants recognised the importance of inclusive decision making for empowering communities from the bottom up. This is evident in the following account on skilling or educating community groups and volunteers as means of "giving them control" and ultimately fostering pride in place. As evidenced in the following accounts, VCS pursued this by building community resources (skills, capacity, spaces and events).

> ".. we try and encourage them to be proud of the village they live in. And things like community planning, neighbourhood planning, help us to do that, by giving them that control [..] And that often will bring out quite a lot pride in the people in the village they live in, their rural area." ISH-V-15

> ".. we also provide workshop and support to groups to upskill them. So we provide a draft checking to support funding applications, we provide impact workshops to upskill small groups on how to measure their own impact, because we feed that information and data back to our donors, so they can see the difference, demonstrate the difference their funds are making." ISH-V-16

These practices and engagement activities have an implication on the *discursive power* of VCS. It is argued that VCS can use it as a source of legitimation for participation in region branding networks.

9.4.3. Representation and Advocacy

A final role of the voluntary sector was as an 'intermediary' between the ISH and CSH. Owing to the aforementioned functions of the VCS, they had the knowledge, connection, and trust of the communities they served. Prominent VCS described their own role as 'community leaders' since they were able to represent community interests and advocate for their sector. In the face of resource and capacity constraints, *VCS networks and consortia* comprising of large and small organisations were a means to consolidate the voices and interests of the sector to lobby policy and decision-makers. The consortia creating strategic relationships with other ISH for identifying partnership and funding opportunities at the local and regional level. VCS promoted strategic relationships through their trustees and board members, who were usually influential individuals from the private and public sector. According to some of the ISH, VCS was ascribed the role of 'community representatives' due to their connections in the community.

ISH-G formed and maintained connections with the VCS. Thus, they were easy to identify and engage with compared to community groups. Thus, VCS showed the potential to leverage their relationships with ISH and CSH to play the role of 'brokers' or 'intermediaries' in multi-stakeholder governance networks.

> ".. it's in our interest to know about what's going on in terms of improvements with Northampton Forward. And where relevant, we'd make organisations or [community] groups aware of any opportunities that they could get involved with that." ISH-V-16

> ".. the most important thing, you know, that we've found, for things being successful is about having that mutual understanding of each other [..] we are always about getting people to engage with high quality [provision], but for a community group, it might be about community cohesion, it might be about reducing antisocial behaviour from young people. So actually, it's about understanding how two priorities can sit together." ISH-V-17

The findings in this Section indicate that voluntary sector organisations were affecting bottom-up regeneration of the place owing to their social value ethos and organisational mission and activities. The voluntary sector's core contribution to PB could be through performing a specialised role of community engagement. Based on this group's relationship with other ISH and community groups, voluntary organisations can be potential intermediaries, brokering trust and collaborative working between ISH and CSH. It is noteworthy that despite the evident contribution of VCS to the regional and local economy and cohesion, they have not been strategically engaged as an ISH in place brand networks for vision setting and community engagement.

9.5. Higher Education Institution (HEI)

This section analyses the perceptions of the University's assumed, expected and potential role in region branding Northamptonshire (overview in Table 9.5.). As an anchor institution in the county, the university respondents) have been engaging or previously engaged in regional and local policy networks. They provided a critical perspective on PB in the county and stakeholder relationships. Further, due to the vocational focus of the institution, the perspective provided

was not limited to academia and research; it included employer outreach, addressing skills gaps and talent shortages in the county.

Table 9.5. *Higher Education Institution's role in PB Northamptonshire. Source: Themes and codes from the data.*

Roles	Codes from the data
Research and consultancy	• Filling the knowledge gap • Partner for resource-constrained public sector • Conceptual knowledge and practicalities
Facilitation and training	• Process management • Multidisciplinary 'experts' • Upskilling and capacity building of network actors
Network coordinator	• Leveraging social capital for legitimacy • Civic role and public engagement • Intermediary position

In all of the university's engagement in regional development and branding networks, its identity as a knowledge institution was significant. The overarching theme from the data is the 'knowledge partner' role of the HEI. The university fulfilled its role as a 'knowledge partner' through the provision of *research and consultancy*; *facilitation and training*; and its role as a *network coordinator* (Bisani et al., 2021).

9.5.1. Research and Consultancy

The university plays a strategic role as a supplier of research and insight in line with its four Changemaker challenges. In 2017-18, 30% of university staff were involved in delivering the changemaker challenges through research and enterprise activities with the aim to increase this to 50% by 2020-21 (UON Operational Plan, 2018). UON is driven by its dual ambition of strengthening the 'Changemaker' brand and 'placemaking' to improve the quality of the town for its students and staff (UON Annual Report, 2019). This was evident in the university's engagement as a key partner for securing funding for *Nenescape* project, a river regeneration and landscape scheme. UON's engagement aligns with Changemaker Challenge (iii) for enhancing development opportunities for its staff and students and wellbeing in the county through the provision of leisure, educational and heritage activities (UON Annual Report, 2018). This university respondents' account reinforces this finding:

".. that's a two and a half million pound project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. There are lots of opportunities for students to get involved and for my colleagues to be funded to do bits of research [..] part of what we're looking to do is to develop a broader suite of cultural assets and events that occur regularly and let people know that they are part of the university." ISH-U-22

Institutional stakeholders and community stakeholders were cognisant to the university's economically driven pursuits and vested interest. The main critique of the university's role as a knowledge provider was that they were more interested in "selling academic studies" (ISH-B-10) rather than offering practical solutions to real-world problems. The perception that university researchers were primarily concerned with appropriating knowledge to create intellectual property and reputational value for the university created a preference towards external consultants as knowledge partners.

"Universities in local areas could take a lead by being, seem to be 'balanced' in the approach [..] one of the problems, it can become quite academic, theoretical, with very little true practical knowledge of delivery, particularly around place marketing." ISH-B-10 (participant's emphasis)

Participants who favoured university students and staff as consultants on PB projects valued their scientific objectivity, as they felt that the university was in a unique position to provide evidence-based insights. The financial troubles of the local government created a favourable position for knowledge institutions to take a more leading and active role. In addition to UON's role as a partner in spatial regeneration, it is supporting the public sector through research on service improvements and innovation in healthcare (UON Changemaker Challenge, 2015). In the context of PB Northamptonshire, this community stakeholder (CSH) explains their positive disposition towards knowledge institutions:

"But I'm just thinking given the dire financial situation of county council [..] if it can't be afforded to have probably quite expensive consultants come in, could the universities and the colleges come together and make it one big project for the people who are studying that sort of thing?" CSH-F3-17

As the only Higher Education Institution in the county, UON occupied a favourable position to play the role of knowledge partner in regional networks (Cavicchi et al., 2013; Salomaa, 2019). UON's activities reflected the interdependency between the public sector and the university to shape the place image and spatial regeneration and its structural embeddedness in regional partnerships for achieving its strategic and operational objectives (Boucher et al., 2003). However, a key challenge was managing the expectations and outcomes of knowledge transfer. While academics and researchers were motivated by enhancing conceptual knowledge and understanding, other stakeholders emphatically lamented on the practicalities of PB. The differences in the interests of researchers and their regional partners were noted in terms of a theoretical and practical divide (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015). The discrepancy can be attributed to a lack of shared understanding of the aims and outcomes of PB.

9.5.2. Facilitation and Training

The university was perceived to possess the skills and capability that the public sector was lacking, described in terms of creativity and expertise in place marketing and branding. While the private sector is seen to possess this expertise, most participants were suspicious of their economic interests. Relatively, the university was perceived to offer an "impartial" and "holistic" view as a knowledge institution with expertise in multiple fields. In one instance, the university filled the 'skills and confidence gap' through their expertise in community engagement and participatory practice, which was not possessed by other ISH. These accounts describe the 'facilitator' role of the university in public-private partnerships, as well as between ISH and CSH:

> "It's not public authority so it's immediately not got any of the red flags and the raised eyebrows [..] it's not really got the agenda of what we're big business and we're paying for this, so this [Northamptonshire Surprise] campaign can look like we want it to. The Uni has an impartial place and actually will take a more holistic view of things [..] quite a unique role I think, facilitator." CSH-F1-06

> ".. we got planners and policymakers in conversation with young people and local residents, they all really benefited from those experiences and they may act on quite a lot of the things that were suggested. But beforehand, they [decision makers] were

telling us they were quite anxious about going into it, and that they wouldn't be able to do it themselves because they didn't have the knowledge, training, skills." ISH-U-21

However, in terms of enhancing the skills and capabilities of ISH and CSH, their role was limited. The university primarily contributed to the upskilling of students engaged through research, volunteering or work placements in regional networks and enhancement of entrepreneurial capacity (Northamptonshire Heritage Strategy, 2019). A voluntary sector respondent explained that partnership for the filling of the knowledge gap alone was not sustainable in the long run. There may be untapped potential for the university to take up the role of in-house training partner for enhancing institutional stakeholders' skills and capabilities.

"We commissioned the university to do it [research], we won't be asking them to do it again, because we've invested in our own open source data platform [..] So we'll be able to do live data research in house. The problem with it was fantastic report and a wonderful piece of work but as you know, research goes out of date very quickly when it's in paper form [...] it's also about skilling people in house." ISH-V-16

".. [our] department here in Northampton we are always trying to engage the public wherever we can [..] the stuff that we write is accessible to a lay person [..] we do quite a lot with local community groups, we go out and talk to schools [..] we see it as part of our mission, in engaging the public with [our subject area]." ISH-U-19

Universities as boundary organisations are in a favourable position for expediting multidisciplinary expert knowledge (Cavicchi et al., 2013) as well as training place leaders on matters of complex collaborations (Bowden and Liddle, 2018). Further, through their public engagement, linkages in local community groups are formed. In the unique role as educators, the university can widen participation beyond traditional public institutions undertaking consultation for planning and policy (Charles, 2006). It can contribute to the strengthening of community capacity for involvement in local issues (Fernández-Esquinas and Pinto, 2014) by engaging CSH in co-designing spatial imaginaries through service learning, public lectures, conferences, training workshops and engaged scholarship research (Boucher et al., 2003; UPP Foundation, 2019).

9.5.3. Network Coordinator

As a key player in Northamptonshire, the university's leadership team has representation on the Boards and Committees of various regional partnerships and forums. These representatives were gathering information on potential partnerships and projects for academics and students, in line with the strategic priorities set out in the Changemaker Challenges. Through their 'presence' on various networks, these actors can influence the regional agenda by utilising their social networks and influence. This was evident in UON's role in securing the title for Northampton as a 'Social Enterprise Place'. The operational team comprising of research and professional services staff initiated the bidding process. They planned and gathered evidence for the application by researching the social enterprise landscape in the town and county (know-what). Next, they approached the university's leadership team to utilise their social networks among ISH in the town, particularly politicians and big corporations, to grant legitimacy to the initiative.

> ".. we went to the university, and we said, look, this is what we're doing, it's beginning to take off. But we would like now the university's blessing to take this on and make this happen. [..] We were having difficulties getting the big corps on board, [name of UON senior management member] said that they if they are proving difficult, we [university] could try and wine and dine them. [..] The university has some clout in this town, it's a big thing, they know people and people know them" ISH-B-07

The connections were forged with the public sector owing to the regeneration of the place and policy networks; with industry stakeholders through the setting up of industry forums and business support hub and student placements; with local communities and voluntary organisations through the university's civic role and academic and research activities of the staff. These well-connected university representatives described their role as a "coordinator", ensuring that "the right people are talking to each other" (ISH-U-22). In PB networks comprising of partners with equal resources and power, the university' ability to mediate trust and mutually beneficial relationships between stakeholders has been previously noted (Cavicchi et al., 2013; Rinaldi and Cavicchi, 2016). In this role, the university was valued for occupying an 'intermediary' position between various stakeholder groups. As this stakeholder expands:

".. half the reason why we've got all these amazing little projects happening in complete isolation, it's because there isn't that mechanism, or that kind of forum for people to come and have that kind of collaborative space [..] the council's got better things to worry about. But somebody from the university feels like a natural fit for that." CSH-F1-06

Further, the findings indicate that through their social linkages with various stakeholder groups and favourable intermediary position, they can tackle the issue of fragmentation of stakeholders' efforts in PB. However, the challenges relating to access and power imbalance were noted by stakeholders with lesser resources and power, such as the voluntary sector and community stakeholders. As the account below indicate, stakeholders who are not already connected with the university may find it challenging to find the entry point into the network.

".. university is a kind of entity in itself. And with any university as well, it's about knowing who to talk to." SE-CSH-03

The challenge for interaction and engagement between institutional and community stakeholders due to the differences in power, resources and legitimacy is evidenced in the literature (Insch and Stuart, 2015; Reynolds, 2018; Braun et al., 2013). Filling network gaps would require the intermediary actors to balance their high levels of power and power of other well-resourced ISH and create more opportunities for open and accessible participation for communities (Purdy, 2012).

These roles constitute their 'knowledge partner' potential in PB as they were ascribed practice legitimacy in multiple disciplinary areas. To a lesser extent, they were also ascribed discursive legitimacy (primarily by ISH) due to their access to various groups. As for the HEI itself, they utilised their legitimacy to strengthen their position in regional networks for reputational and relational gains.

9.6. Summary

In response to research objective 2, the main finding is that non-governmental stakeholder groups were filling gaps in public sector service and leadership capacity for regional development and branding. As the key beneficiaries in forging a regional identity, political and

governmental actors are expected to be initiators and primary stakeholders in region branding. However, the findings in Section 9.2. illustrate the shift in the public sector role in PB networks from 'super leader' to 'enabling partner'. Due to the austerity measures affecting local government funding and resources, the deficits were noted in terms of: negative image (reputation), public trust and knowledge about community experiences (discursive power), and expertise in marketing and branding (practice legitimacy) - illustrated in Figure 9.1. The gaps in the public sector's leadership capacity raised the critical question, "whose job is it?".
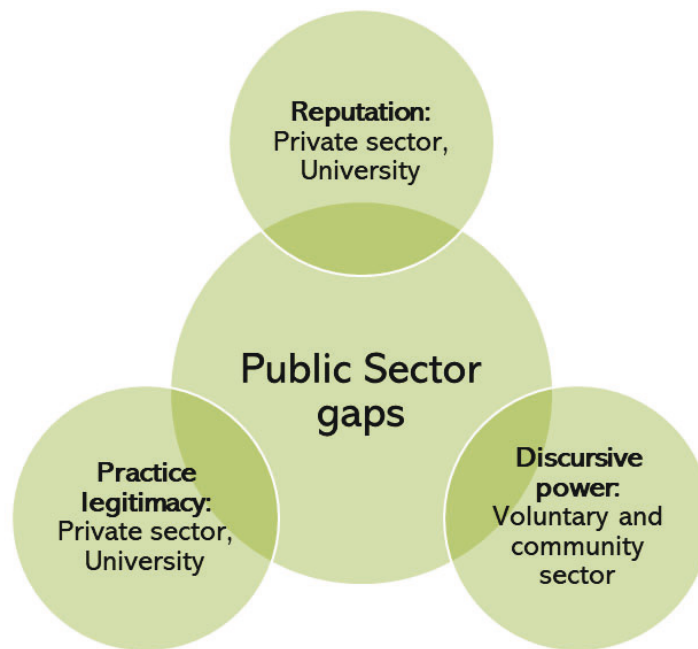
Figure 9.1. *Public sector gaps and the potential role of non-governmental 'partners'. Source: Author's thematic analysis.*

Findings in Section 9.3. indicate that in the absence of public sector leadership, industry stakeholders were mobilising for preserving their interests through a sectoral approach to branding Northamptonshire. Foremost, spatially embedded stakeholders were engaging in cross-promotional initiatives in the pursuit of reputational gains. They filled gaps relating to reputation and practice legitimacy. Further, they provided an adaptive governance structure through semi-formalised sectoral networks. Next, in Sections 9.4. and 9.5., analysis of the role of VCS and HEI in local and regional development networks clearly indicates a unique 'intermediary' position in PB networks, potentially brokering relationships and knowledge transfer between ISH and CSH. Thus, by filling the public sector gaps, these non-governmental stakeholders are able to create a favourable position for themselves on PB networks. Their

territorial embeddedness and relational networks gave them access as well as motivated them to mobilise for the preservation of their interests. Overall, the findings indicate the potential for structurally embedded ISH to take up 'complementary' roles in PB. Congruently, in future scenarios, participants saw ISH as playing a shared leadership function in PBG.

Regarding research objective 3, the lack of a joined-up approach to PB sheds light on the challenges in resource-constrained regional economies. The key observations regarding the engagement of non-governmental actors in PB were that they were motivated by fulfilling their institutional objectives and interests in terms of reputational and relational gains. They reported challenges in terms of constrained resources and institutional capacity to engage. Finally, and most importantly, stakeholders did not have the same level of access and capacity to contribute to PB because the structural embeddedness of the 'usual suspects' led to the formation of 'exclusive networks'. Overall, the implications of these findings on CSH participation seem to be negative. Nonetheless, the 'intermediary' linkages of VCS and HEI seem conducive to fostering a participatory ethos in PB. In the following Chapter, the explicit effects of ISH's perceptions of CSH roles, relationships and engagement are observed, alongside CSH's perceptions.

Chapter 10. Community Stakeholders' Participation

10.1. Introduction

This Chapter presents the findings on the assumed, ascribed and potential role of community stakeholders and their engagement in PB Northamptonshire from the viewpoint of ISH and CSH. These were captured in the final segment of the interviews and focus groups. ISH participants relayed their attitudes and experiences of community engagement. They discussed their expectations from CSH, current consultation mechanisms, the benefits and challenges of community engagement, and future engagement and representations in PB. The key findings on CSH's limited ambassadorial role, consultation in identity building and representation in PBG are discussed in Sections 10.2., 10.3. and 10.4. respectively.

In interviews and focus groups with CSH, participants discussed perceptions of their own role in PB. CSH's past experiences of engagement and relationships with ISH affected the potential for collaboration – these findings are presented in Section 10.3. Next, Section 10.4. captures their viewpoints on who should lead and who should be involved in the future scenario for PB Northamptonshire. All focus group participants (total 18) agreed that they were community stakeholders of brand Northamptonshire regardless of their current level of engagement in PB. Further, Section 10.5. links the activism of community groups and individuals with the concept of self-engagement in place branding. SE-CSH (total 5) relayed the motivations, goals, challenges encountered, and support needed when working with ISH and other CSH. These shaped their attitude towards collaboration and their role in place branding. Table 10.1. provides an overview of the key roles and themes from the data – which are discussed in this Chapter.

Table 10.1. Community Stakeholders' roles in PB Northamptonshire. Sources: Themes and codes from the data.

Roles	Themes and Codes
Ambassadors	Whose opinions matter • Communication oriented (official and WOM) • Target audience 'alignment'
Identity building	Whose opinions matter • Two-stage consultation • Mutual trust and legitimacy • Lack of recognition
Representation	Whose opinions matter and Whose job is it • Two-tier PBG structure • Advocacy role as network mediators • The usual people and status quo practices • Inclusiveness and legitimacy
Activism	Whose job is it • Action and communication-oriented • Projects and placemaking • Self-efficacy and networking • Interest and identity-driven motives • Institutional support mechanisms

The analysis of CSH roles reveals two recurring themes – *whose opinions matter* and *whose job is it* (discussed in Section 10.6.) in relation to the following research objectives:

2. To investigate the scope for multi-stakeholder place brand governance by analysing stakeholders' roles and relationships.

3. To identify the enablers and barriers to collaboration by analysing stakeholder engagement practices and motivations.

4. To recommend strategies for widening participation by conceptualising the motivations and mechanisms of self-engaged community stakeholders.

10.2. Ambassadors for Place Brand Communication

The most prominent expectation of ISH from community stakeholders in PB Northamptonshire was that they exhibit the role of place brand ambassadors. Two categories of ambassador groups with somewhat different roles and expectations emerged from the data (outlined in Table 10.2.).

Table 10.2. *Two types of ambassadorial roles of CSH in PB Northamptonshire. Source: Author's explanation of the themes and codes from the data.*

Characteristics	Niche or specialised groups	Resident or citizen networks
Description	Segmenting resident population based on target audience segments, such as students, businesses, new residents.	Expecting the general populace to mobilise their pride, social connections into positive associations for the place brand.
Resources and attributes	Success stories	Pride and sense of affinity
	Impartial, authentic voice	Social networks and connections
	Endorsement and credibility	Recommendation and trust
Communication channel	Official brand communication (testimonials), marketing insights.	Organic communication in the form of word-of-mouth or word-of-mouse.
ISH's engagement approach	Requires active engagement (in the future)	Passive engagement (expected to come organically from residents)
CSH traits or selection criteria	Enthusiasm and confidence to be in the public eye	
Potential role	These ambassadors can directly feed into (align) with ISH's target audience-based sub-brands. Ambassadors become 'face and voice' of brand messages lending credibility.	Harnessing community pride and identities as a development resource for identity building and addressing concerns. Credibility to brand message through primary communication (stakeholder behaviour) and tertiary communication (WOM).

From ISH perspective, the prime expectation from the general resident population was that they play the role of ambassador of the place brand. Owing to their potential to spread positive news about Northamptonshire, ISH and self-engaged CSH participants were in agreement that the general resident population should exhibit and vocalise their pride in the place through their word of mouth. The expectation was often described as "shout about the place". This role entailed "talking the place up" to their social connections such as family, friends, members of their community groups and the wider public. ISH felt that personal "invitations" from Northamptonshire residents would add authenticity to the brand and complement the official brand communication. However, ISH did not actively seek to engage CSH in PB through brand ambassador networks. This role was expected to be adopted organically.

"..you got to get your local community talking the place up, and if we get people enthusiastic about Northampton we've got 225,000 *ambassadors* who go on holiday to Spain, they meet people from Birmingham, who say, yeah, you got to come to Northampton, you gotta come and see this." ISH-G-05 (participant's emphasis)

".. identify people that have moved [here] and ask them why? Would they go back? [..] you could go anywhere within 100-mile radius, they all look the same. People would be reassured if they know people have moved up [here], and it's worked, and they've got jobs and that reassurance does work well." ISH-G-03

The quote above from ISH-G-03 captures the second category of ambassadors – 'niche or specialised groups'. This participant suggested the utilisation of new residents of Northamptonshire who have made the county their "adoptive home". Their success stories can be used to promote the place brand. Further, new residents could bring a fresh perspective about the place, and their reasons for choosing Northamptonshire as their adoptive home could be the basis for creating brand communication. This approach was perceived to add credibility to the place brand as the stories would be "real" or authentic and relatable to the 'new and potential residents'. This strategy was felt to be appropriate for attracting different types of target audiences, such as businesses and students. For example, rural ambassadors were recruited from a population of young entrepreneurs in the villages "To attract youth and the younger workforce back into rural areas" (SEMLEP, 2016). It is noteworthy that while the ambassador role of the general population was expected to emerge organically without active engagement, ISH participants indicated a willingness to engage these 'niche groups' actively and represent their "face and name" in official place brand communication.

"They have to be so enthusiastic to want to put their face and their name to that [..] you'd have to be so confident about it, and quite happy to be in the public eye. And then the danger is, you use some stock photos and have quotes from people, but then it's just not seen as real". ISH-G-03

The essential criteria for mobilising residents and groups to be the name and face of the brand was that they exhibit enthusiasm and passion for the place and confidence in their opinions. ISH (B, G) acknowledged and identified some passionate community groups and individuals at the town level who contributed through activism and placemaking. However, the general

public, especially in towns, were felt to be "not as proud as they should be". Participants pointed out that the cynicism among certain sects of the resident population concerning the decline in the town centres and council matters had led to a "negative vibe". The issue of negativity was more prevalent in towns than the rural counterparts, especially in the county town of Northampton, and among long-time residents (dubbed below as "locals") and older generations in the towns compared to new residents. Participants indicated the existence of the 'hometown effect' among the "locals" since they tended to be overly critical of the changes in their environment, especially concerning planning and development. Thus, from ISH perspective, the general resident population did not fulfil their expected organic ambassadorial role, as evidenced in the following quotes. In comparison, participants across stakeholder groups felt that new residents were more optimistic about the place; thus, they were favoured for active engagement in PB.

> "We do have also a culture of some negative people as well. And they tend to be people that have actually been born here and not experienced any other towns necessarily. So it's quite interesting. A lot of my friends that have actually been born somewhere else and moved here, we see what a great, magnificent place it is. Whereas locals don't always tend to have the enthusiasm." ISH-G-02

> "..the mentality of the community [is] just so negative, that even if actually as part of good that comes out of XYZ, just people moaning on Facebook, it's been quite energy zapping over the last few years." ISH-B-09

The key criticism from ISH's perspective was that the local population lacked awareness of the broader picture in treating the decline of the town economies as a problem unique to their towns. ISH-G often pointed to the lack of awareness among the public about the role of the Council and unrealistic expectations. These participants admitted to the failures and weaknesses in local government at the town and county level. However, they felt that the excessive negativity and cynicism by the public had further weakened the position and role of the Council.

> ".. as a result of people's increasing blame on councils for say town centre degeneration and also some of the things of this Council did such as the loans to the Football Club, which damaged our reputation, very significantly. That cynicism has swung so far to

almost undermine functionality of the Council." ISH-G-05

The two categories of CSH ambassadorial role that emerged in this Section have been previously mentioned by Andersson and Ekman (2009), who studied formal, ISH-managed ambassador networks in PB. They found the potential of ambassador networks to extend beyond one-way communication, to be utilised as a 'development resource'. The suggested means to achieve this was mobilising local pride and boosting the self-confidence of the local population and utilising them as a source of expertise, knowledge and creativity. However, in this study, ISH's willingness to engage the general resident population to exhibit pro-brand behaviour were low. Long-term residents' voices and concerns (dubbed as 'hometown effect') contributed to 'negative parochialism' in the towns. In comparison, due to the 'adoptive home' attitude of new residents, there was a greater willingness to utilise their views and narratives as a development resource for the brand. The recurring distinction made between the new residents and long-time residents is a manifestation of the ISH (notably, the public sector) thinking of *'whose opinions matter'* and are considered desirable in PB. Further, in terms of stakeholder management, the favouritism towards niche or segmented groups can be attributed to the ease of identification and engagement of homogenous groups and 'alignment' of the segmented resident population with target audience needs or sub-brands (contributes to the visualisation in Section 10.6.). CSH participants had diverse reactions in response to the claims and expectations of ISH, ranging from activism to apathy, which is discussed in detail in the following sections.

10.3.Consultation on Place Brand Identity

A potential contribution from community stakeholders in PB Northamptonshire could be towards 'identity building'. While CSH involvement in the brand-building process was not being practised at the time this research was conducted, ISH and CSH accounts indicated a willingness to engage in some form of community consultation in the future. The forms of consultation that were mentioned were rooted in the knowledge domains of market research and urban planning and policymaking. ISH did not have a clear community engagement strategy and mechanisms for PB. However, they pointed to two specific stages at which CSH inputs could be sought – brainstorming and finalising (illustrated in Figure 10.1.).

Brainstorming	Finalising / Pre-launch
• Generating ideas • Creative interpretation by experts • Internal vs external target audience needs • PB meaning and whose opinions matter • Marketing dominant logic	• Consultation on tangible outputs • Securing buy-in • Mutual trust and recognition • Democratic and practice legitimacy • Intertwining of marketing and public policy and planning

Figure 10.1. Codes from the data pertaining to the stages of CSH consultation in PB. Source: Author.

10.3.1. Brainstorming

ISH exhibited a favourable attitude towards engaging the resident population in consultation at the beginning of the brand-building process. At the brainstorming stage, ISH were concerned with capturing CSH's vision for the place, its strengths and (primarily geographic and historic) features that evoked a sense of pride and affinity. Some participants viewed the 'sense of community feel' as a legitimate identity facet and strength of brand Northamptonshire. Thus, their view was that community narratives and stories could be the basis of creating branded content to add authenticity. These participants (ISH-G, U) tended to favour the public consultation approaches used in policymaking, such as public polling, focus groups and random selection. Further, some of these participants felt that it was the 'right' of the CSH to contribute and shape PB (visualised in Section 10.6. on whose opinions matter). This view relates to 'residents as citizens' wherein consultation for PB is considered a part of their democratic right (Braun et al., 2013).

> ".. involving local communities is always a good thing as part of the deliberative democracy process and getting them to buy-in to that branding because it helps promote and communicate that [place brand] as well." ISH-V-16

".. [CSH] would come up with some interesting creative ideas. And I suppose would bring to the surface some of those hidden or overlooked forms of culture and heritage, more diverse cultures and more diverse heritages." ISH-U-21

The aim of engagement at the brainstorming stage was gathering 'diverse views and perspectives' about the county before honing down on the key traits. In contrast to the ambassadorial role discussed in Section 10.2., this role shows the potential for the resident population to get involved as a development resource in PB. However, in line with the marketing dominant logic, in the process of brand building, the CSH role was limited to generating ideas. The next steps of brand building were ascribed to marketing professionals and experts, charged with transforming these opinions into insights and brand communication material. ISH participants exhibited low confidence in CSH's ability to be creative since they were perceived as offering their 'opinions' rather than 'expertise'. Most ISH believed that while the CSH could offer "initial input", they should not be allowed to "design the brand". The following quotes shed further light on this sentiment:

".. you're not asking them [CSH] to create the logo, the branding, you're asking to get their feedback on what's great about Northamptonshire [..] so that feeds into the creative process." ISH-V-16

".. if you involve too many people in the wrong way, you won't be able to make any progress at all. It's the difference between being professional, being a marketer who believes they can sell an idea versus somebody having an opinion based on nothing other than it's my opinion." ISH-B-10

Participants' interpretation of the meaning of place branding' directly shaped their view on CSH's abilities to contribute to PB. As indicated above, the main argument participants made to restrict CSH role in identity-building was their lack of expertise in PB. Instead of viewing local knowledge about the place as a development resource and 'expertise in place', it was considered a matter of opinion, whereas 'expertise in marketing and branding' were sought after traits for engagement in PB. Further, through this lens, CSH were viewed as place 'consumers' and 'target market' for the place product (similar to 'niche groups' discussed in Section 10.2.). In congruence with extant literature, it seems that CSH opinions are the least valued in comparison with other internal (ISH) and external stakeholder groups in PB. This

finding adds to the discussion of 'whose opinions matter' (visualised in Section 10.6.), evidenced in the following quote:

> "The residents probably are the major target market. They're important, and you need their feedback. But really, the people you want to be talking to would be 17-year-old in school thinking about coming to Northampton [..] Or businesspeople who maybe are in London, looking at escalating rates and rents and shortage of space." ISH-B-10

Unsurprisingly, CSH were aware of this perception and criticised the PB efforts in the county, such as *Britain's Best Surprise*, for primarily targeting high (economic) value-generating customers, such as international visitor, whereas the needs of CSH were not under consideration. Some participants viewed this external focus, especially in terms of promoting the art and culture offering, as a missed opportunity for engaging and growing internal audiences, which could create a more sustainable environment for the arts and culture industry in the county.

> "I'm not the target audience, I'm not going to go to Churches shoes and spend 400 pounds on a pair of shoes. [..] The actual [BBS] campaign was more about external market. Maybe these newer campaigns will cover both external and internal county market because there's a lot of money to be made from their own residents. And we could easily just go over the border and go somewhere else." ISH-V-18

> ".. we are good at the stately homes, bed and breakfast, that type of hospitality. But not so good thinking about the people here that need to shop and spend leisure time as well." ISH-B-11

In response, ISH re-emphasised the difficulty of reconciling internal and external target audience needs (discussed earlier in Section 8.5.2.) under a 'single' or 'one size fit all' place brand. One (ISH-G) participant jokingly suggested creating multiple, separate place brands that speak to the different needs of internal and external audiences. Thus, indicating a dichotomous understanding of internal versus external stakeholders needs from PB.

10.3.2.　Finalising or Pre-launch

The second point at which participants indicated CSH consultation would be beneficial was the finalising stage (or pre-launch). One participant described this stage as "before you launch, but it's after you've already decided what it should look like" (ISH-B-10). From ISH perspective, the primary motivator for consulting with CSH at this stage was securing their buy-in and preventing public backlash and criticism in the media. Further, at this stage, it would be possible to consult on the tangible outputs from the brand-building process, such as the logo, creative campaign collaterals and, to a lesser extent, concrete strategy and development plans. It was felt that these tangible elements of the brand would aid ISH and marketers in explaining and visualising the brand concept, which would help secure buy-in from stakeholders. However, the following quotes about the same campaign (*Love Northamptonshire*) indicate that engagement at this late stage was perceived differently by the consultant and the consulted:

> "The Love Northamptonshire creative explained what I'd explained in a way that people could look at it, and I can say, Now, I'm going to demonstrate what all of that meant. It looks like this and we can do this for big business, we can do this for small business." ISH-B-10

> ".. when the [group] said we don't like it very much, we were told that that this is what we've chosen, it is done. I think by the time we were consulted, most of the artwork had been done, the sort of promotional work had been done. So it was probably too expensive to pull back. But then I didn't see the point of it." ISH-B-12

The above accounts highlight from the consultant's perspective the significance of tangible elements as 'talking points' and 'demonstrations' for consultation (as discussed in Section 8.5.1.). However, among the 'consulted' stakeholders, the feeling was that consultation at this late stage is a means to legitimising the views and initiatives of ISH. Because of the aims and outcomes of the consultation, these stakeholders felt that while their opinion was being sought, the intent to act on it was perceived to be disingenuous. The following comment from a focus group participant received emphatic agreement and laughter: "It's more of a, didn't we do well than how could we do this better?" (CSH-F1-06). One voluntary sector participant advised, "if you're going to ask people something, you have to be willing to change what you do because of that" (ISH-V-17). These perceptions not only pose a challenge to community engagement

for PB but also highlights a critical issue of public cynicism and mistrust in participatory governance processes (discussed in Section 10.2.). CSH criticised the lack of meaningful consultation on wider policy and planning decisions and lack of consideration for community needs and opinions, leading to a perception of weak 'democratic legitimacy' of branding (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013).

> "..when I was at the Britain's Best Surprise meeting and we spoke about marketing. And they said we can get a poster up on some screens. I was like that is not developing your audience that is shouting at them about something they haven't even been consulted on. Like, there is this real imbalance where actually, I think the top are thinking, Oh we're reaching out all the time, and no one's engaging. But if you're just shouting into the void no one's going to engage with that." SE-CSH-03

Illustrating the lack of a 'mutual trust', some participants spoke of the strained relationship between the 'structures of power' and the 'layman' leading to the feeling of disconnect between "them" (on the top) and "us" (at the bottom). The lack of consideration for CSH opinions and views on wider issues relating to the place led to apathy to authority on the part of some CSH. Further, trust in ISH to provide effective leadership and have a "cohesive plan" for PB Northamptonshire was hampered by weak public sector leadership and resilience of economic governance structures (discussed in Sections 9.2. and 9.3.). This led to a perception of a weak 'practice' legitimacy of ISH, especially the public sector (Martin and Capelli, 2017).

> ".. it's just frustrating because they don't seem to have a cohesive plan. So somebody that's coming up from the grassroots looking up and going, you haven't got a plan. Do I trust you? That's why I didn't think [community] stakeholders will be involved. They need to build that trust if they're going to run the branding and we're going to be expected to feed into it." CSH-F2-10

Further, the feeling of being overlooked led to the lack of pride and confidence as a community. ISH-V noted that the communities and volunteers they engaged with often did not think themselves to be an expert in anything, attributing it to low self-esteem in post-industrial communities, which was one of the challenges facing community engagement. Findings in Section 8.4.2. linked the loss of pride and confidence to the feeling of being neglected or overlooked. Thus, it seems that it is not in themselves that CSH developed a lack of confidence

and self-esteem; rather, it was conditioned by the lack of recognition and development as a community.

> ".. it's not even just about the income actually, that unemployment brings a whole lack of self-confidence with it and a really low self-esteem as a place, like individually and as a community. There's this kind of big thing in Corby and other places where a lot of these people just go, well, that's not something for me." ISH-V-17

> "The local people sometimes feel that Northampton gets missed out, Corby gets the money, someone else gets some money, but the town. You [referring to CSH-F1-06] said earlier didn't you, about budgets and that's what we're known for, it's like the town in debt thing [..] that's where sometimes you feel as a community you don't have the same say." CSH-F1-07

The issues concerning CSH role in 'identity building' reveal the underutilisation of the CSH as a development resource, whereby their views, opinions and expertise are utilised for setting the vision and strategy for PB, and community pride is mobilised into self-confidence to engage (Andersson and Ekman, 2009). The issue highlighted here is a 'lack of mutual trust and legitimacy' among ISH and CSH, which posed a significant barrier to community engagement and widening participation in PB. Adding to the work of Eshuis and Edwards (2013), this research observed the interplay between the (democratic and practice) legitimacy of place marketing and branding and governance of wider policy and planning developments. Another interesting finding was the identification of two key stages at which community engagement for brand building was conceived. This two-point focus contrasts with the notion of 'participatory' place branding, which stresses planning for CSH participation at every stage of the process (Braun et al., 2013). Moreover, it is unclear what CSH engagement throughout the PB process would look like. The discussion on CSH's potential role as representatives in PBG provides some insights.

10.4. Representation in Place Brand Governance

Another potential contribution of CSH in PB Northamptonshire would be to represent community interests in place brand governance and decision making. Similar to the role of identity building, there was no clear structure and strategy for this type of engagement. As

evidenced in the following quote, the key issue relating to community representation in PB that stakeholders were grappling with was the 'number and heterogeneity' of opinions and interests (noted by both ISH and CSH). ISH participants commented:

> ".. what I struggled to see is how one person could represent so many different community groups." ISH-B-13

> "It's about finding a forum which has all of those groups and being able to get to as many of them as you can, in one shot, rather than trying to get around them all individually, because it's very fragmented." ISH-B-10

The mechanisms suggested by ISH and CSH were based on the current practices of (primarily) the public sector and (to a lesser extent of) the voluntary sector. In Northampton, ISH-G participants often mentioned the active cultural and ethnic groups and social-cause-based forums as the first port of call for engaging communities. The Chairs or Managers of these groups and forums were seen as representatives of their community. In turn, participants suggested "inviting" CSH who were involved in multiple groups as 'community leaders' in PBG.

CSH representation on the main committee was evidenced only on the *Northampton Forward Board*. This practice could be attributed to: the funding requirements, the leading institution in the partnership (local council) and the aims and outcomes of the partnership. The aim was to secure funding to revitalise the town centre through planning and development activities. Due to the political sensitivity around these regeneration activities, as they impact the physical landscape and the socio-economic fabric of the place, a community representative was appointed on the main board. Proof of engagement with wider stakeholder groups, including communities, was a requirement for securing the Future High Street Fund (GOV.UK, 2018a). Further, there were plans for engaging pertinent community representatives in thematic or topical decision making via sub-groups.

> ".. the more people that sit around the table, the more difficult things get to decide. And so with things like Northampton Forward, what will happen is there will be a number of sub-groups that look at specific elements. So things like town planning or art in the public domain, or community usage or communication. So there will be lots of sub-

groups, that is where the value of the community representative comes into specific topics that then feed into a main board." SE-CSH-01

A similar approach to community consultation and engagement was recorded in Northamptonshire's Growth Governance Arrangements, wherein a VCS representative role was built into the Main Board, and specific interest groups were engaged in Thematic Strategic Boards (NEP, 2014). One of the themes concerning Housing Development had a particular focus on community engagement and consultation. The explanation provided in the plan resonates with the Northampton Forward approach:

".. building of new houses can also be a sensitive issue with concerns being expressed by communities about the impact of new developments on their own local services. It is therefore important that all of those involved in the housing agenda have a shared understanding of the economic benefits that housing delivery can bring." (NEP, 2014, p. 81).

The governance of '*Nenescape*' is an exemplar for wide stakeholder engagement within the two-tier structure. This VCS and public sector-led partnership initiative was governed by two top-tier committees: the Partnership Board; and the Delivery Steering Group (Nenescape.org, 2017). The Partnership Board comprised of: a competent authority (UON) with the accountability and grant dissemination function; and strategic partners from the public, private and voluntary sector and other HEIs who provided expertise in domains of biodiversity, history, community engagement etc. The second tier, Delivery Steering Group, provided oversight for the thematic projects and had the function of wider stakeholder engagement through the projects. CSH and volunteers were primarily engaged at the project delivery (operational) level. CSH representation in the decision making of the Steering Group was through advisory panels and ad-hoc invitations to meetings. A member involved in the project confirmed that community and volunteers' representation was ad-hoc rather than built into the formal governance structure.

The two-tier or two-committee governance structure prevalent in various partnership schemes and projects in the county was the basis for participants' (ISH-B, V) conception of CSH's potential role in PBG on the basis that it was "already working well, [to] provide opportunity for wider stakeholder engagement, increase private, public and voluntary and community

sector joint working" (NEP, 2014). Figure 10.2. illustrates participants' suggestions regarding the two-tier PBG structure mapped onto the 'roof and pillars' of the Brand Architecture model suggested by Ikuta et al. (2007) (in section 3.4.3.). The potential for CSH roles and challenges affecting their participation are discussed in the following sections.
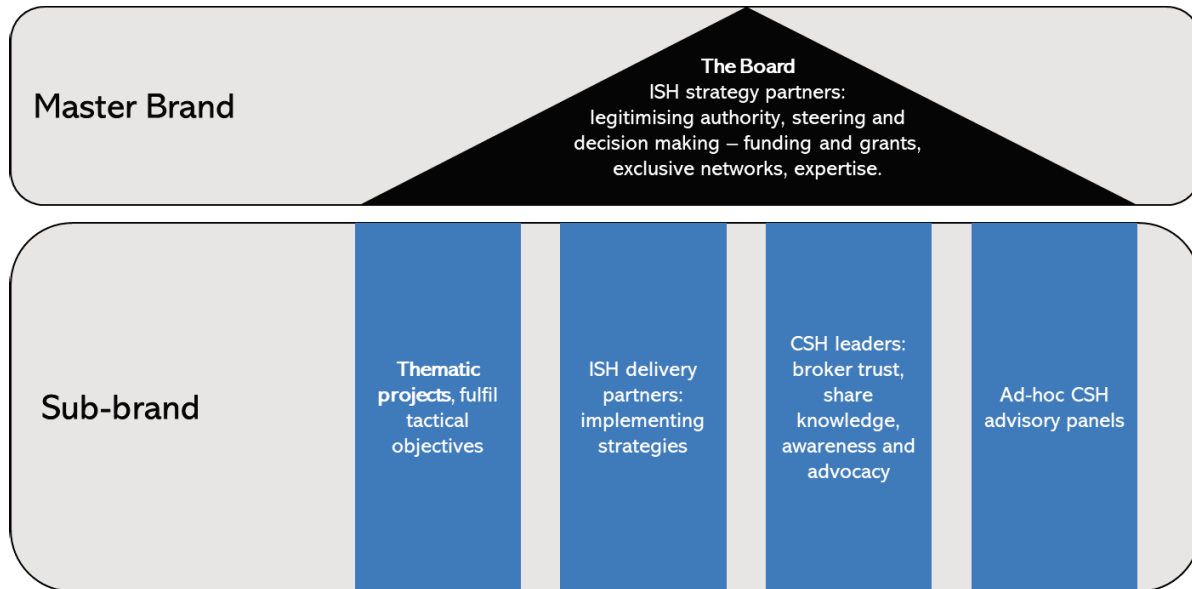
Figure 10.2. Two-tier PBG structure suggested by participants mapped onto the master and sub-brand levels of the Brand Architecture model. Source: Author.

10.4.1. Advocacy in Interest-based Communities

Primarily, the involvement of CSH representatives and leaders was envisaged at the second-tier, sub-brand level for the delivery of thematic projects that fulfil the tactical objectives and measures. Following the common public-sector practice, CSH representatives on the sub-group were ascribed the role of advocacy and spreading awareness within their community. For example, past public sector projects have included local history societies as a working group to develop the *Northamptonshire Heritage Strategy* (NCC, 2016). This is not surprising since heritage in the county is primarily supported by the community and volunteer groups, and societies. Hence, they were considered a key stakeholder group. This approach was felt to be bottom-up, whereby organisations and groups embedded within the communities and trusted by them were chosen as their representative.

> ".. we normally have a main representative to represent the organisation or the community group, and they would stand on a steering group or a panel and then it'd be their job to attend. They get the information, go back to, deliver it to their community." ISH-G-02

Further, an alignment between the 'theme' of the sub-brand and CSH's interests and advocacy position could influence the working and decision making in the tier-two governance model. Most CSH participants in the study were willing to engage with ISH at the sub-brand level. Participants in the focus group (1) saw their potential contribution in PB as 'network mediators'. They felt that they could represent their professional, personal and interest-based communities in PB networks. The benefit to ISH would be a more extensive exposure and reach for their campaign and the ability to summon ad-hoc 'thematic' advisory panels. While there are similar themes between the 'network mediator' and niche or specialised 'ambassador' (discussed in 10.2.), the role discussed here indicates the potential for CSH contribution beyond WOM communication. In playing the role of network mediators, CSH representatives could enable the inclusion of community needs and interests in PBG. One focus group participant who had the experience of working with the local Council explained the rationale and benefit of their involvement as:

> "I have a bit of taste from both sides being the resident and working with the Council. So I think my place in it can be like a mediator to explain to [the] Council what people really want and how they really feel. And at the same time to understand how Council see things, their way to solve a problem. So it's kind of to get that balance in a way." CSH-F1-09

Beyond the role of CSH representative, this participant hints at their potential role as an 'intermediary' between CSH and ISH who understands both perspectives and can enable communication and collaborative working. In this way, CSH network mediators would function as 'brand advocates in their community' and advocate for their communities' needs and interests. This potential role of leaders and network mediators of community groups has a resemblance with VCS's representation and advocacy function (Section 9.4.3.). However, CSH leaders were not employees of an organisation and were working voluntarily for the betterment of their communities. This has implications for their legitimacy in PB networks.

10.4.2. Widening Participation

Similar to the identity-building role, participants argued that CSH's role in PBG should remain advisory at best. ISH participants believed that strategic leadership and decision-making authority needs to be focused at the top-tier (master brand level). Representation on The Board was determined by stakeholders' legitimising authority to influence and mobilise resources, funding and grants, and leverage their social networks and expertise. Exclusive networks or 'vital coalitions' were favoured for regional level governance. Participants argued that "design by committee," i.e., consensus decision-making, would dilute the place brand vision and message. This industry stakeholder expands:

> ".. the way of the day is try and have a small group of reasonably professional people who understand where they're trying to get it [the place brand] as well formed as they can. And then you have forums which are managed and you're asking people for their opinion, but you're not necessarily going to act on it. You want to know what they say, you want to understand the level of feeling, but you don't necessarily want to be distracted from what you've already agreed to do." ISH-B-10

While CSH acknowledged the need for a vital coalition of influential stakeholders, they criticised the 'usual suspects' who cropped up on every Board and Committee and created 'exclusive networks'. From CSH perspective, 'the usual suspects' had a stronghold on the identity narrative of the region, and they dominated the social representations of Northamptonshire in PB communication. Furthermore, some of these actors were criticised for fostering 'dated' and 'mainstream' thinking and posing a barrier to new ideas and perspectives in PB. These comments were directed specifically at the county's heritage tourism promotions as participants emphasised that certain forms of heritage were being overlooked (discussed in Section 8.2.). The core groups were perceived to be representing a dominant representation of class, gender and ethnicity that would appeal to mainstream audiences or 'people like them'.

> ".. they (ISH-G) don't understand how people feel here, and what they see, what they're proud of, and what they identify with. And they are all white, middle aged, middle class, on the whole. And that's not representative of Northampton at all. And most of them empower men. And again, that's not representative. So for them (councils) to come up

with ideas, or even to lead a marketing agency or an external body. It doesn't feel genuine to me, it doesn't feel like they're the right people to ask." SE-CSH-01

In response, some participants argued for 'diverse and alternative' perspectives to be represented in PB narratives. VCS and community representatives serving different ethnic, social and interest groups were seen to be in touch with the challenges facing these communities. Their potential participation at the PBG level was seen as a way of breaking the stronghold of the 'usual suspects' over the social representations in PB. One SE-CSH claimed that the main benefit or value-add of their representation on PBG would be their 'impartial view' (in contrast with the vested economic interests of ISH).

While SE-CSH tended to possess the confidence and self-efficacy owing to their community leadership positions (elaborated in Section 10.5.3.), a challenge from their perspective in taking up the representation role was the lack of legitimacy for their opinions. As this participant explains, in comparison with senior managers and 'head honchos' representing ISH, the lack of legitimacy of the CSH 'representative or leadership' weakened their position within the PBG network.

> ".. Because I'm not middle aged, you know, in a position of power. And so that can be very difficult when I'm sitting there, sort of putting views forward that I know to be right and valid. But obviously, because I've got nothing behind me to legitimise my position, I do feel that I'm not necessarily taken as seriously as some of the other people around the table." SE-CSH-01

These arguments shed light on the critical issue of balancing the 'inclusiveness' and 'legitimacy' of the PB process and outcomes. Some VCS and SE-CSH participants reflected on the 'privileged' position of a particular stratum of the population to engage in such forms of identity creation and the socio-economic conditions of hard to reach or deprived communities as a challenge for engagement.

> "It's quite [a] privileged place to be [in] if you have the *time* to go to these places, and you have the money to actually physically get there. I think a lot of people don't have time. If you want to go to any of these meetings, or whatever. There's a lot of barriers,

to actually engage with what's going on, it's not as easy as just turning up and listening." SE-CSH-03 (participant's emphasis)

This discussion moves beyond the advisory and consultative role of CSH in the previous section to envision their role in decision-making and PBG. In the current scenario, unequal power and access in the process implicated CSH's ascribed role and legitimate participation in PBG. Since those who shape PB identity stand to benefit from the outcomes, a more inclusive rather than exclusive process is suggested. Thus, the key argument in favour of inclusive place branding is to enhance the legitimacy of place branding. One way in which this can be achieved is by giving CSH leaders representation on sub-brand teams. CSH leaders can leverage their local knowledge, trust and leadership within the communities, which would lend them an 'alternative source of power' to speak on behalf of the issues in the public sphere (Purdy, 2012). These findings contribute to both the themes of *whose opinions matter* and *whose job is it*. The following section examines the self-assumed, active role of CSH in shaping these issues and implicating their potential role in PB.

10.5. Activism

Regarding PB, two types of 'self-engagement' from CSH have been observed: they may act as place brand 'ambassadors' through their volunteering and WOM; or they may launch counter campaigns or boycott ISH's formal communications (as discussed in the literature review, Section 4.4.3.). "Activism" as observed in this study and the role of "ambassadors" (discussed in Section 10.2.) can be considered 'two sides of the same coin'. Both roles required CSH to exhibit passion, enthusiasm and confidence, utilise and build on their social networks, and foster a spirit of positivity and pride in the area. The distinguishing feature of activism was that that CSH saw themselves as 'actors of change' rather than a mouthpiece or amplifier for ISH's campaigns.

In response to the 'negativity' in the socio-political environment, some community stakeholders exhibited "activism". CSH were intrinsically motivated to change the negative narrative about the town and county rather than responding to ISH's expectations of ambassadorial behaviour. While this role was not directly induced and influenced by ISH's engagement strategies, it was reactionary to ISH's deficiencies and the socio-economic-politico conditions prevalent in the county. These self-engaged CSH participants' accounts

indicate that the negative environment in the county inspired and provided a stimulus for activism.

> "..with the county council going to collapse, it went into even more negative drive. Quite a few people have come out and gone, No, we're not going to be negative actually, we're not going to. We actually think this is a brilliant place, and we're going to talk it up and we're going to start shouting out." ISH-B-09

> "The catalyst was me being fed up of hearing a lot of negativity. [..] And just talking to different people and finding some likeminded people as well. And thinking, well, you can carry on being negative, or we can start to do something about it. And I think one of the things that I have found over the last six months now doing things for [the project], and that is, people want to see the change." SE-CSH-04

These acts of self-engagement are wider than PB, as SE-CSH are motivated to affect the realm of public, civic and community life. Nonetheless, activism affected the key aspects that constitute the formation of a 'place brand'. Thus, the motivations and mechanisms for self-engagement (Sections 10.5.1. and 10.5.2.) and enablers and barriers to integrating SE-CSH in PB (Sections 10.5.3. and 10.5.4.) are discussed in further detail.

10.5.1. Preserving Residential Interests

Primarily, CSH were motivated to preserve their residential interests by improving or maintaining the quality-of-life attributes. Their activism was enacted through placemaking and regeneration activities such as mural painting, shoe planting, volunteering, and lobbying to preserve the heritage and natural environment. The 'bottom-up placemaking' activities of community groups maintaining and enhancing public places and green spaces enhanced the 'look and feel' of the place. They were praised by ISH, who noted that active community groups (such as Friends of parks) made a significant contribution to brand Northampton and Northamptonshire. Some participants (ISH-G and B) cited that community groups in Northampton town not only created a better-looking town, but also contributed to enhancing 'local pride' in the Boot and Shoe heritage. ISH stressed that these active CSH groups added 'credibility' to the brand experience:

"The [community] groups are a part of the product development and the product improvements. So the Buddies of Beckets they have their own logo and all that kind of thing. But actually, their part is that the brand of Northampton has some credibility. So if I see a brand of Northampton and I come and visit, the physical evidence that I get is when I see a beautiful park isn't it really?" ISH-G-05

Further, these participants ascribed CSH the role of lobbying the public sector to maintain public spaces such as urban parks, heritage attractions, monuments and leisure facilities in the public interest. As large parts of the heritage sector such as museums, historic houses and visitor attraction sites were supported by volunteers, it was described as being "community driven" (CSH, ISH-U). Further, these activities were considered crucial for the maintenance of the heritage assets and enhancing the environment for tourism. Thus, the volunteers were seen as ambassadors of the heritage of the county through their word of mouth as well as contributing to visitors' 'brand experience'.

".. towns in Northamptonshire and villages in Northamptonshire have a strong community feel, quite common active groups that have a kind of pride in their locality. Groups like the Umbrella Fair, which you know, have a strong kind of community focus, interesting art scene, that kind of stuff. And but a lot of it's very kind of bottom up." ISH-U-19

"Local communities need to be encouraged to promote and tell the stories of their local heritage. As well as developing a sense of community these stories are a key attraction for visitors in making a place seem alive and inviting." (NCC, 2016)

These activities shed light on the assets and regional features valued by communities who mobilised for their preservation. For instance, rural residents were mobilising to preserve their villages' idyllic look and feel, history and character by developing Master Plans (indicated in ISH-V accounts in Section 9.4.2.). Further, the activism of urban communities brought to fore the urban assets and heritages that are usually silenced in the dominant discourse of PB Northamptonshire as a rural, idyllic destination.

All focus group participants agreed that, in principle, they are community stakeholders of brand Northamptonshire. Regardless of their current level of engagement in PB, as part of the resident

community, they felt partly responsible for contributing to a positive narrative for Northamptonshire. Thus, they had a role to play in PB owing to their residential status. From their perspective, they were filling a gap in public sector services through their activism to preserve or maintain the quality of life in the place.

10.5.2. Need for Positive Social Identity

In addition to residential interests, the negative narrative about the county created the need for a positive social identity. SE-CSH participants interviewed in the study described themselves as 'community activist', 'promoter' and 'community liaison officer'. The commonality between them was that they launched grassroots, community 'projects' to counter the negative narrative about the place with a positive one. The term 'project' is used to describe their work as it indicates a temporary, focused and usually informal (not legally constituted) initiative. They described their objectives as 'celebrating what's good about the place', 'changing perceptions' and 'spreading positivity'. The tangible manifestations of their activism were: artefacts and performances (film, theatre, wall art), placemaking (shoe planters), community magazine, community café (to stimulate conversations on the future of the town) and blogs. The objectives and outputs of the projects closely reflected the expertise and skills of the project initiators and their motive to preserve residential interests as well as express their social identity.

Participants in the study were cognisant of the lack of recognition of the town and county, which they associated with their own identity and esteem (discussed in Section 10.3.2.). SE-CSH participants in this study saw themselves as 'actors of change' as they launched community projects to change the negative perception about the town and county. They wanted to create recognition and distinctiveness for themselves and their projects in the community, in line with social identity theory (Sofield et al., 2017; Rowley and Moldoveanu, 2003). CSH amplified the narratives that resonated with their self-concept and social identity (discussed in Section 8.3.2.). For instance, the initiator of an urban gardening project described themselves as a 'town person' and used the term 'activism' to describe their role. This indeed was the inspiration behind the title of this Section. As a commitment to their role, the initiator first utilised their own private space for "beautifying" the neighbourhood. Following the recognition of this initiative, they 'claimed their right to the place' by utilising public spaces and parks for their activism.

Due to the projects being an expression of their social identity, their sense of ownership over their project and the need for recognition and differentiation were high. One participant adopted the self-description of a "one-man-band" and emphasised that they were promoting the county for themselves, and they did not owe it to anybody else (SE-CSH-05). On the other hand, a participant emphasised the participatory ethos of their project and preference for flattened hierarchies and ownership, stating:

".. it is not my project, it is our project, the town's project." SE-CSH-04

Conversely, a lack of ownership and responsibility towards ISH's place branding initiatives and campaigns prompted a passive attitude towards engagement. For example, the participants' dissonance with the BBS campaign was not enough to mobilise them to counter the branding campaign (Section 8.4.4.) since CSH had not been involved in the co-creation of the brand in the first place. Participants expressed different levels of willingness to engage and co-create with future initiatives, ranging from apathetic to interested/informed to seeking active incorporation in PB.

Regardless of their primary and explicit goal, these groups actively contributed to the spatial imagery and experience of the area. Through their activism, they were not only affecting placemaking but also influencing the narrative about their place. Their efforts were salient in strengthening community cohesion, a stronger 'sense of place' and community pride, so much so that 'community feel' was noted as a legitimate identity facet in the towns and villages (Section 8.3.1.). Thus, the findings indicate that community activism (evidenced through grassroots placemaking and community projects) can contribute to PB by shaping the brand experience and narratives. However, utilising the activism of the SE-CSH for PB is faced with more barriers than enablers in the case context (as illustrated in Figure 10.3.).
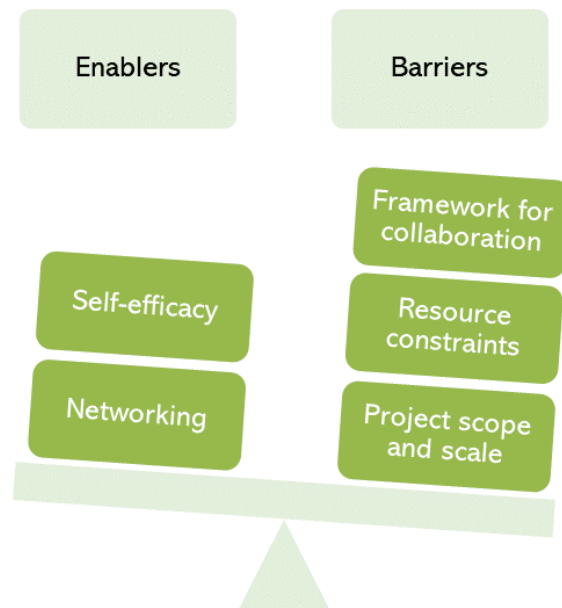
Figure 10.3. Enablers and barriers for CSH participation in PB. Source: Author.

10.5.3.   Self-Efficacy and Networking

A common trait across SE-CSH was a conviction that their beliefs and opinions matter. These participants spoke about their 'confidence' and 'efficacy'. Their self-engagement led to heightened confidence and efficacy as they became more familiar and knowledgeable about the place, its stakeholders, and processes. While none of the CSH felt they were experts in PB, they mentioned some experience of working in marketing or community engagement or business development. Further, they attributed their self-efficacy to their past professional experiences of working with ISH. Participants explicitly indicated that their self-engagement led to greater knowledge *("I know more"),* skills and abilities ("*I am able to effect change"*) and overall perception of positive change ("*more people are caring").* All these aspects strengthened their self-efficacy (*my opinion is valid*) and enabled them to carry out activism. Thus, 'self-efficacy' emerged as an enabler to mobilise motives into 'activism'; further, positive activism strengthened their confidence.

> ".. actually at first it [community engagement] was a bit scary because I thought, I'm not qualified to do this, I don't know anything. So I can just listen and learn, and from doing that after about four or five times, I started to notice the overlaps in what people were saying and felt that I could contribute to that dialogue a little bit more confidently." SE-CSH-02

"I think that now, I'm in a position where I feel able to speak out and to be one of the people who can affect change, a positive change for the town. Some of this is part about efficacy. It's really easy when you're talking about a big conurbation to think that the little people don't make any difference. But actually, individuals can make a difference. It does require a little bit of effort and bravery and being able to stand up for having your own opinion about things." ISH-U-20

In the same vein, participants reported that 'networking' with other SE-CSH led to enhanced confidence and engagement. Commonly cited sites of networking among CSH were through social media platforms, community-led events and meetings. Most participants noted the benefits of networking with "likeminded" people who share the same concerns, the ethos of bottom-up activism and promoting a positive narrative about the place. Networking provided validation and means of legitimising CSH actions and strengthening their belief in their activism. While the pattern of 'the usual people' engaging in CSH networks was evidenced, from SE-CSH perspective, these networks were inspiring and empowering. Thus, its effects on widening CSH engagement and changing attitudes were considered positive.

".. my experience is when people are doing sort of similar things, but from a different angle, it's actually hugely validating, and also inspiring and makes you kind of go, actually, yeah, there is genuine value in doing what we are doing." SE-CSH-02

".. it's just about seeing stuff happening, even if it is the same people that keep doing stuff. It's that consistency and inspiring people because you know, I started the [project] and you know, [name of another SE-CSH] has mentioned that it's been an inspiration to [them]. And hopefully [their] work will then be an inspiration to somebody else and then it kind of grows that way." SE-CSH-01

Another example of this was the community cafes that brought together people from different walks of life to discuss the challenges and solutions for revitalising their town centre. For the project initiator, the discussion and 'togetherness' itself was a desirable outcome of the project. It indicated that the town residents wanted to see a change and transformation in their place. Thus, the group provided validation and affirmation for participants' attachment with the town.

10.5.4. Institutional Recognition and Support Mechanisms

A key theme that emerged from the focus group discussions among CSH was the 'accountability and responsibility' of PB. They put forth the question '*whose job is it?*'. While most CSH exhibited a strong sense of ownership and right to the place as taxpayers, citizens and residents (as evidenced in Sections 10.5.1. and 10.5.2.). On the matter of responsibility, they had varying opinions:

> ".. actually, it's not all our responsibilities to make the county great. The Council gets funded to do that. It's their responsibility to do that and they haven't done it well and just saying, Oh, it's great that people are coming together to try and make it better. Yes, of course, we are. At the end of the day, that's not our responsibility. We're not getting paid to do that. That isn't our job." SE-CSH-03

> ".. we've got a responsibility as stakeholders and as people in this town, to speak truth to that power and to actually try and hold people accountable and ask those questions." CSH-F1-06

Some of the participants exhibited traits of political activism as they demanded accountability from the structures and individuals in power to take charge of PB. Some others who had the experience of working with the public sector exhibited empathy and understanding of the financial and political landscape; in relation, they perceived their projects of activism as filling a much-needed gap in fostering a sense of pride and positivity in the town and county. Both groups expressed that community-led projects alone were not sufficient to change perceptions about the county. They ascribed ISH (particularly the public sector) to further support community projects and engagement in PB.

Participants (ISH-V, SE-CSH) who were engaging in their local communities often stated that a challenge with community-led branding was mobilising people's passion and enthusiasm for the place into action (initiation) and action into 'sustainable projects' (expansion) that could further contribute to PB. Thus, the findings suggest that ISH intervention would be welcome at two key points in community project development - at the stage of initiation and expansion (illustrated in Figure 10.4.).

Initiation	Expansion
• 'Brand identification' • CSH's social representations • Forums for engagement • Project alignment or orientation with PB/sub-brands	• Framework for collaborative working • Enhancing legacy and sustainability • Project scope and scale

Figure 10.4. Two stages of CSH project development requiring ISH recognition and support. Source: Author.

10.5.4.1.Initiation – Brand Identification

Foremost, engagement with ISH's PB requires a sense of 'brand identification' for CSH. 'Brand identification' (Insch and Stuart, 2015) or 'identity fit' (Zenker et al., 2017) among residents is described as the extent to which the social representations of the PB reflects the experience of the community (Aitken and Campelo, 2011). At the initiation stage, CSH participants in focus groups expressed their willingness to be engaged and contribute to PB. However, they found it challenging to identify the "right forum" for engagement. The questions regarding engagement that CSH asked out loud during the focus groups were "Where to start? Who to speak to? Where to contribute to make that change?". The term 'forum' was used to capture the ambiguity around the 'where' and 'who' of engagement. It refers to civic and social infrastructure, such as physical and online community hubs, meeting space, and mediating networks or groups through whom engagement would occur. This participant lament reveals that in some cases, they struggled to find a 'fit' between 'self' (interest and identity) and the forums:

"I keep seeing stuff, increasingly [I] see stuff on Instagram. I know Northants Hour, and there's the Soup thing. And so there's all these little things that I could be thinking, how do I fit in, how do I access that, is that the appropriate place to be involved in the community and have my say?" CSH-F1-07

It seems that CSH looked for a topical match between their interests, resources and skills, and the forum for engagement. Another focus group participant reasoned that CSH were likely to engage with forums, topical domains and even spatial units if they were passionate about them (evidenced in Section 8.3.2. *interest-based communities*). However, in the current scenario, the support from ISH at the initiation stage was low. While CSH were cognisant that there were multiple forums in operation, the lack of recognition and support from ISH led them to the following criticism:

> "A lot of people in Northamptonshire, who are passionate about Northamptonshire. And they'll get to a point where there's that emotional labour that goes into projects in this county. And the institutions don't care. Because it's not their work [..] most people are doing the work, they won't get the support when they should by the institutions." CSH-F2-13

This issue is likely to be more salient among SE-CSH who have grown their project to express their identity. They are unlikely to share the ownership and subsume their project under ISH's place brand unless it resonates with their own project aims and identity. Thus, 'brand identification' between their CSH's social identity and projects and ISH's PB is paramount for their engagement.

10.5.4.2.Expansion – Legacy and Sustainability

While CSH's contribution to the brand experience was praised and welcomed, ISH maintained a strategic distance from the activism and lobbying of the community groups. At the time of the study, an active and concerted effort to community engagement was lacking for tourism promotion and PB in the county. These active groups were expected to emerge and sustain themselves organically. Due to resource constraints, lack of democratic legitimacy and mission drift, community engagement was put off for a future time, stated one BBS representative. The only support that was being offered was through social media endorsements (sharing positive news). ISH accounts indicate that 'efficiency' of engagement was prioritised rather than effectiveness.

> "So the way that somebody might find out about what we're doing would be, if somebody who lives in a village and as a keen photographer has taken a beautiful sunset

photo and I see it and share it and follow them. They'll follow me back and then we'll start to get to know what each other's doing. [..] That's the one place where we can support community groups." ISH-B-13

Participants recounted that while there was a desire to support CSH projects, ISH did not know how to adapt to working with SE-CSH and voluntary groups. The lack of precedence for collaborative working between ISH and CSH meant that neither group had a clear picture of the expectations and perspectives of the other, and most importantly, how to support each other. These lamentations indicate the lack of structure and mechanisms for incorporating community projects into the place brand strategy.

"Part of the difficulty has actually been communicating what will be supportive, what isn't supportive and who we are, as freelancers, obviously, we don't get paid until we get funding to do the project or to be in the project. [..] But having that perspective is really hard for an organisation, which is obviously got their own fundraising targets and their own pressures. But actually, it's a completely different world." SE-CSH-03

The voluntary nature of the projects seemed to hamper their sustainability and expansion. While ISH recognised the passion of individuals towards the county and the community, they felt it was difficult to sustain this voluntarily. ISH, who were supporting community projects, noted that the challenge in scaling up the scope of delivery and implementation of the projects. The lack of expertise and professional capacity to deliver large scale projects were noted:

".. [an ISH] was trying to get us to do a bigger initiative, some sort of living wall. So extending our [project] to do something really big in the Drapery. But the problem with that is, we're not experts in installation. [..] So even though potentially the will is there, anytime you're dealing with volunteer community organisations you can't guarantee they'll deliver because they don't have to." ISH-U-20

Most SE-CSH projects were reliant on public funding schemes and grants from the VCS due to the voluntary nature of their projects. While they were aware of the precarious nature of the funding for voluntary projects, few considered enterprising their projects. SE-CSH did not seem to be motivated by economic gains. However, they were concerned with creating a "legacy" for their work.

> ".. hopefully [the project] will be a longer-term legacy in terms of making things better for us, and hopefully the people that live here as well, having more access to different types of art and culture." SE-CSH-02

A final challenge for incorporating CSH projects into PB was relating to the scale of operation. Most SE-CSH participants in this study exhibited a sense of affinity and activism at the local, town or village level. The spatial focus of community projects was perceived to be incompatible with the county level branding agenda (as evidenced in Section 8.2.3). From a tourism perspective, high value or high culture assets were highlighted to appeal to national and international audiences. CSH in focus groups (1 and 3) echoed the sentiment that the county branding needs to be done "properly" with a bigger vision and budget. In focus group (2), after brainstorming ideas for community-led PB, one participant stated:

> "I'm listening to sort of lots of little people saying lots of little things. But that just ends up with a cacophony of voices, doesn't it? And nothing gets heard. You got to break through that." CSH-F2-14

The findings in this final Section pertaining to the role of CSH in PB indicate a link between 'citizen activism' and 'self-engagement'. Self-engaged CSH showed similarity to the notion of 'publics' who actively seek a resolution and engage in discourse and actions affecting many aspects of public life (Hudak, 2015). Further, SE-CSH in PB: (i) shape the narrative about the place to garner recognition, foster positivity, sense of community pride and (ii) shape the quality of life in the place in terms of the amenities, look and feel of the place, all of which impact the 'brand experience'. Further, their projects showed potential for becoming long-term assets for PB. However, utilising the activism of the SE-CSH for PB is faced with more barriers than enablers. Ultimately, such linkages are dependent upon ISH's interventions in the form of structural support mechanisms.

10.6. Summary

Concerning research objective 2, the main finding was that ISH expected CSH to take up a communication-oriented 'ambassadorial' function and partake in 'consultation for identity building' to legitimise their PB initiatives. While both roles had the potential for CSH to be utilised as a development resource, strained stakeholder relationships hampered 'mutual trust

and legitimacy' for engagement. A recurring theme in the Chapter was 'whose opinions matter?' (illustrated in Figure 10.5.). It is found that 'legitimacy' granted by one stakeholder group (ISH) to the other (CSH) in terms of the 'right', 'trust' and 'expertise' influenced their role in the PB process. The 'internal versus external audiences' undercurrents suggest a market-oriented approach favouring economic interests. For instance, CSH, who showed the most 'alignment' with target audience groups, were favoured for taking up ambassadorial and identity building roles (Section 10.2. and 10.3.). These findings expand on the previously discussed theme of 'interpretation of place branding' on the vision and outcomes (in Chapter 8).

Figure 10.5. Synthesis of the recurring theme, 'whose opinions matter?' Source: Author's thematic analysis.

Regarding research objective 3, the main finding was that unsurprisingly, not all CSH showed the same level of willingness to engage in PB. Disenfranchised CSH exhibited apathy towards consultation mechanisms of the public sector (Sections 10.2. and 10.3.). Informed and interested publics demanded their 'right' to be engaged as residents and citizens of the place but ascribed the 'responsibility and accountability' of PB with ISH (Sections 10.3. and 10.5.). Community leaders showed the most potential for active engagement in PBG (Section 10.4. and 10.5.). The latter role was further explored concerning research objective 4. CSH's assumed 'activism' through group action and individual projects positively contributed to place

narratives and experiences. Further, alignment of their interests and identity-based engagement with ISH's initiatives showed potential for enhancing the credibility and authenticity of PB. However, even these stakeholders emphasised the significance of ISH's role in building legitimacy, capacity and support mechanisms for collaboration. These findings extend our understanding of the theme, 'whose job is it' (previously discussed in Section 9.6.) and shed light on the expected role of ISH in widening participation.

Further, these findings support the main argument that ascribing a more active role to CSH and creating opportunities for community engagement is critical for enhancing the 'inclusiveness' and 'legitimacy' of PB. The next Chapter discusses the key principles and mechanisms for modelling the *Conceptual Framework for Multi-Stakeholder PBG*. The practical and policy implications for widening participation in a resource-constrained region are discussed.

Chapter 11. Discussion

The study aim was to develop a framework for multi-stakeholder PBG in a regional, resource-constrained context by analysing the social representations and stakeholder participation in PB Northamptonshire. The findings (in Chapter 8) indicate that dominant social representations of PB were detrimental to a participatory approach. These dominant narratives were maintained on the grounds of 'distinctiveness' of identity narratives for promoting the county. However, the claim to distinctiveness was challenged by (urban) stakeholders whose identities were overlooked. They argued for a more authentic and diverse social representation of Northamptonshire. These discussions reveal a critical condition and issue for PB practice – balancing internal stakeholders' needs for 'distinctiveness and representativeness'.

The potential for multi-stakeholder collaboration in PB was observed in Northamptonshire. However, the resource constraints created a paradox for such collaborations. On the one hand, the dire socio-economic-political conditions created a stimulus and urgency for non-governmental stakeholders (such as the private and voluntary sector, university and communities) to 'contribute to the positive narrative about their place' (evidenced in Chapters 9 and 10). These stakeholders mobilised to advance and protect their organisational, sectoral or residential interests, leading to strong anchor institutions in regional networks, sectoral branding and local level citizen activism. Interviews and discussions with stakeholders indicated that it is not a lack of willingness but the lack of resources and capacity (of individual and smaller stakeholder groups) which challenged a joined-up approach.

On the other hand, stakeholder engagement seems critical to PB Northamptonshire because fragmentation and a lack of integrated strategy hampered the ability to gain 'recognition' for the place and community needs. PB is considered to be a solution for orchestrating a joined-up strategy. However, while public cynicism and mistrust in leadership persist, consultation on branding will be seen as a 'lipstick approach' to make residents feel important in the process (Colomb and Kalandides, 2010). While PB in 'resource-constrained economies' faces challenges of weak leadership, short-termism and market orientation (Slocum and Everett, 2014), its success depends upon collaboration and stakeholder engagement.

Beyond sharing resources and vision setting, the study found that stakeholders can make a vital contribution throughout the PB process by adopting and ascribing complementary roles to

achieve legitimacy and inclusiveness. In the specific case context, different ISH groups were ascribed different forms of legitimacy for participation in PB: democratic legitimacy (of public institutions), practice legitimacy on matters of marketing, branding and creativity (private sector and university) and discursive legitimacy on community needs and engagement (voluntary sector and university) (summarised in Figure 10.5.). This conceptualisation of ISH roles, in addition to the governance structure provided by the Region Brand Architecture, can potentially address the challenge relating to stakeholder roles and responsibilities, shedding light on the theme 'whose job is it?' (from Section 9.6.).

A challenge for CSH's active role in PB is related to their lack of legitimacy to represent wider interests. It has been argued that the inclusion of community needs and feelings to the process adds democratic legitimacy to PB (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013). Nevertheless, the perception of a lack of expert knowledge (practice legitimacy) in marketing and branding limited their role to non-binding consultation on identity building at the beginning and the end of the process. These discussions expand on the theme of 'whose opinions matter?' (from Section 10.6.).

The *Conceptual Framework* is developed in response to the critical issues and conditions discussed above. It offers the 'building blocks' for region branding in peripheral, resource-constrained contexts (illustrated in *Figure 11.1.*). Thus, it is visualised as the 'roof and pillars' and reinforcing 'bricks'. While the 'roof and pillars' structure resembles the 'Brand Relationships' illustration of the theoretical framework (Figure 5.2., p. 72), the pillars are reconceptualised to represent the guiding 'principles' for collaborative PBG. In the conceptualisation of the pillars, the current study is guided by Pike et al.'s (2007) argument: "locally and regionally determined models of development should not be developed independently of more foundational and universal principles and values such as democracy, equity, internationalism, justice and solidarity" (p. 1254). Thus, the pillars represent the fundamental principles guiding a stakeholder-led strategy to region branding. They are: *Recognition* (Section 11.1.), *Integrated Sustainable Development* (Section 11.2.), *Inter-Regional Connections* (Section 11.3.) and *Multiplicity* (Section 11.4.).
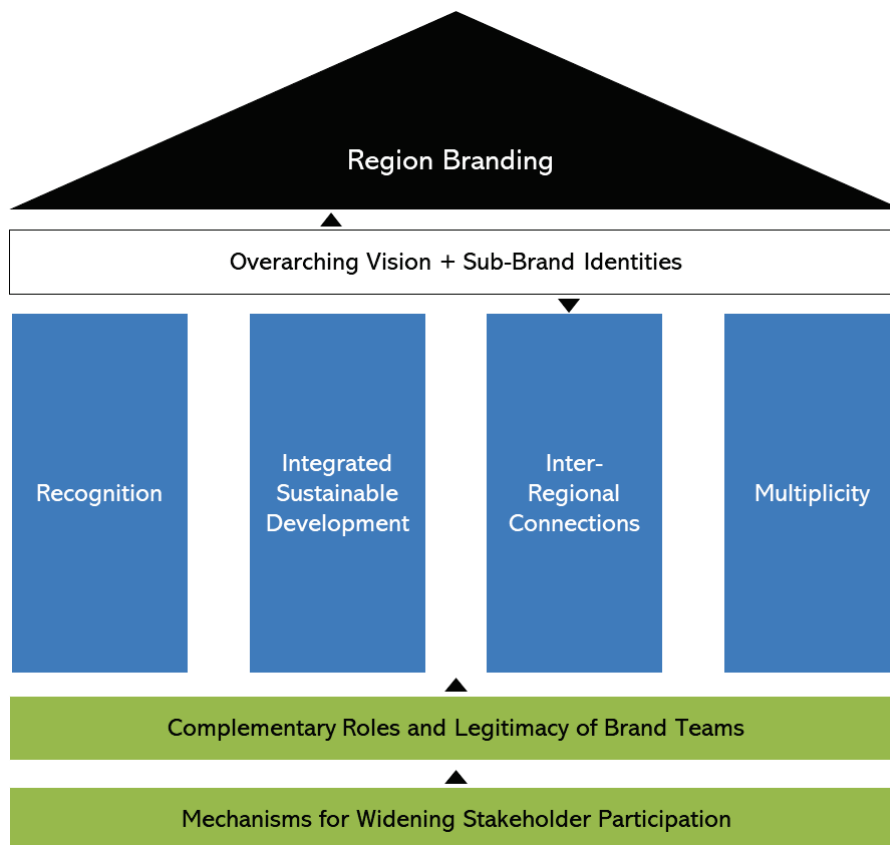
Figure 11.1. *Conceptual Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Place Brand Governance. Source: Author.*

The principles address the fundamental concerns regarding the *aim, object, subject, process* and *outcomes* of place branding. Principle 1, 'Recognition', is reconceptualised as the aim of place branding. Principle 2 emphasises that to be perceived as effective, the subject of PB should extend beyond the remit of tourism activities to encompass in an 'integrated' strategy the goals of 'sustainable development'. Principle 3 urges that the object of place branding activities is not limited to urban or rural entities and should extend to exploring potential 'inter-regional connections' between towns, city-regions and urban-rural entities. Principle 4 urges stakeholders to embrace the 'multiplicity' inherent in the PB process. The final principle is directly related to the strategic management of complex brand associations and stakeholder interests, identities and relationships. The horizontal 'bricks' represent the 'recommendations' for the implementation through a brand architecture approach. It is argued that adopting these principles has implications for the outcome of PB in terms of social presentations and participation.

In Section 5.3.1., it was established that the sub-brand and the master brand could have different types of 'brand relationships' in which either the sub-brand or the master brand dominates through an integrated, ripple, extensions or organic approach. Section 5.3.2. established that 'stakeholder relationships' affect brand management. The brand could be: ISH-led; or in collaboration between ISH and CSH; or ISH could engage CSH (top-down); or finally, CSH could self-engage with the PB. Based on the case study findings, the prime recommendation is that the brand architecture approach can address the critical issues concerning the management of complex region brand identities and multi-stakeholder governance. Section 11.4.1. addresses the need for 'distinctiveness and representativeness of regional identities by negotiating an 'overarching vision and sub-brand identities'. Next, Section 11.4.2. addresses the 'inclusiveness and legitimacy' of brand teams by examining two multi-stakeholder governance models. In the final Section (11.4.3.), enablers and barriers and motivations and mechanisms for CSH engagement are discussed to suggest the mechanisms for 'widening stakeholder participation'.

The case study provides an in-depth understanding of the conditions and issues implicating participatory PB while demonstrating the necessity of such participation, leading to profound insights for policy and practice and theoretical contribution to PB – situated in the broader identity-development-policy discourse. The key principles and recommendations for stakeholder collaboration for region branding are discussed below.

11.1. Recognition

Throughout Chapters 8 and 10, 'recognition' emerged as a key theme from stakeholders' narratives of feeling neglected in the identity development of Northamptonshire. In PB literature, recognition is synonymised with reputation, referring to the visibility and image of the place among external target audiences (Anholt, 2006). Further, the findings indicate that the image of the place at the regional (sectoral networks and LEP) and national level (media and public) affected the internal stakeholders' need for recognition and pride in place (Section 8.3.3. and 8.4.2.).

The feeling of neglect and being 'left behind' is acute in regions that have experienced disinvestments, such as rural, peripheral destinations and market town economies (EY, 2020b; EY, 2020a). In the case study, the feeling of neglect and marginalised position of stakeholders

were vocalised as 'missed opportunities' (Section 8.4.2.) and 'hidden secret' (Section 8.4.3.). They were attributed to the socio-economic development in the county and a lack of cohesive regional identity leading to a parochial approach to PB. Top-down planning impositions and tokenistic consultation on 'identity building' led to disenfranchised communities (Section 10.3.). Consequently, public apathy to authority and consultation processes weakened the uptake of the ascribed 'ambassadorial' role among the general resident population (Section 10.2.). The theme 'whose opinions matter' revealed that desirable groups are engaged as ambassadors and consulted in identity-building exercises (Section 10.6.). The benefits of place branding strategy for attracting investment and enhancing the overall economic, social and cultural prosperity of the place are known (Cleave et al., 2017). The present study argues that for overlooked communities, a participatory ethos can enable the representation of their views and concerns in shaping the place vision and narrative. Thus, the study adds that achieving recognition through PB should also be concerned with community needs in regional development policy.

Recognition is also crucial to the 'positive social identification' of CSH (Section 10.5.2.). Among self-engaged CSH, a common trait was that they possessed high self-esteem and self-efficacy as they held leadership positions within their communities (Section 10.5.3.). Thus, self-efficacy was a critical factor in mobilising place attachment to active citizenship behaviour (de Azevedo *et al.*, 2013; Zhang and Zhu, 2014). However, for the incorporation of SE-CSH in PB, a more proactive effort is needed from ISH. A fundamental expectation from ISH was they confer 'recognition' and provide 'support mechanisms' for collaboration (Section 10.5.4.). The effect would be strengthening the positive social identification of SE-CSH with the place and brand ownership. In this context, recognition means empowering community voices by giving them the means to influence PBG and decision making; and providing mechanisms for self-assessing the impact of their engagement and contribution (Hereźniak, 2017). The latter was found to reinforce confidence and engagement by granting legitimacy to their efforts (Section 10.5.3.).

The principle of 'recognition' guides the overall approach to PBG, including stakeholder management. Widening CSH participation foremost requires acknowledging the value of CSH opinions (discussed under, whose opinions matter, in Section 10.6.). In practice, the adoption of this principle means enabling a culture of consultation and listening to stakeholders (Ntounis and Kavaratzis, 2017) to remedy the feeling of neglect. The participatory ethos of 'respect' is

crucial for ISH to take CSH opinions into consideration above a first glance, understand their concerns to drive satisfaction with the process (Zenker and Seigis, 2012). The present study provides additional evidence concerning 'recognition' as a goal for place branding. The thesis posits that place branding should have the intertwined objectives of garnering recognition for the place through the recognition of community needs. By emphasising economic and societal concerns, the dual objectives of 'recognition' contribute to the sustainable development of places (Karavatzis et al., 2019; Jamal and Camargo, 2017; Jernsand, 2016; Pike et al., 2007) – discussed in further detail in the following sections.

11.2. Integrated Sustainable Development

PB literature and practice remain heavily focused on applying marketing understanding to tourism promotion and destination management (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). This was also the case in Northamptonshire, where PB was viewed as a marketing communications tool for the visitor economy to pursue sectoral branding rather than as part of a more comprehensive economic development strategy. This interpretation of the meaning and goals of PB informed the practice of ISH in the case context (Section 8.5.2.).

The social representation of Northamptonshire in *Britain's Best Surprise* campaign reflected that the core objective was to enhance outcomes for tourists (the primary target audience) and tourism businesses (primary internal stakeholders) rather than for the residents. ISH maintained that since they were only promoting the place rather than affecting planning and policy, community engagement was not pertinent to their project (Section 10.4.). Some ISH participants perceived a dichotomy of internal-external stakeholder interests and needs (an aspect of whose opinions matter in Section 10.6.). This was evident in the comment about creating two separate brands for the two types of stakeholders (Section 8.5.2. and 10.3.1.). Noting the challenges of reconciling of internal versus external audience needs, the social representations in PB were dominated by tourism stakeholders, who emphasised promoting a competitive identity to appeal to potential visitors, paying little attention to the broader economic and social factors (Moscardo, 2011).

Participants were critical of the external target audience focus of PB in the county as they felt that identities and concerns of diverse communities had not been considered. They argued that due to the myopic application of PB to promote attractions, great houses and hotels in the

county, as well as the absence of an integrated strategy to promote the county on a large platform and scale, the county remains a 'hidden secret' (Section 8.4.4.). Thus, it is suggested that for Northamptonshire, the next step in PB development is 'cross-sectoral branding' where tourism is combined with other economic activities (Therkelsen and Halkier, 2008). For example, findings in Section 8.2.3. showed the potential to utilise *Northampton Social Enterprise Place* to create an attractive and supportive environment for business start-ups in the town and, eventually, the wider county. However, an integrated approach to region branding was not realised by the established ISH networks.

In response, the principle of integrated sustainable development suggests the adoption of the 'roof and pillar' structure to organise the goals of regional and sectoral development and branding. The region brand is conceptualised as a 'roof' that aligns the 'pillars' of (sectoral) development in an integrated strategy, and conversely, each of the pillars adds strength to the region brand (Ikuta et al., 2007). In Northamptonshire, a practical challenge is the lack of an independent economic development agency for managing region branding. While efforts to formalise PBG are underway, the need for internal stakeholder collaboration and partnerships for region branding is paramount.

However, collaboration and coordination among internal stakeholder groups was hampered by the competition among governmental and sectoral stakeholders and their market-oriented approach (Section 9.2. and 9.3.). The resource constraints implicated institutional resilience, which made it challenging yet necessary to focus on a long-term strategy. Private sector stakeholders favoured quick wins versus long term solutions for development due to a lack of resilience in the governance structure (Section 9.3.3). In contrast, VCS and CSH showed greater resilience in adapting and responding to civic and economic challenges in the face of politico-economic constraints. This thesis argues that it is unfruitful to debate on internal versus external stakeholder needs since the very exercise of identity construction requires a constant dialogue between the internal and the external (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). The principle of 'recognition' can be the basis of a more pragmatic approach to PB that views internal and external stakeholder needs on a continuum rather than as a dichotomy (conceptualised in Figure 2.1 in Section 2.3.).

It has been argued that 'inclusiveness' is a value in itself since it fosters broad participation and economic development (Svensson and Östhol, 2001). Many authors have called for an

inclusive, socially responsible approach to orchestrating PB (Karavatzis et al., 2019; Hereźniak, 2017; Jernsand, 2016; Rebelo et al., 2020). The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) provide a good framework for an integrated approach to PB since it seeks to balance economic efficiency, growth and social equity (Therkelsen et al., 2021). For example, pursuing the UN SDG 11 to 'Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable' includes investment in public transport, creating green public spaces, and improving urban planning and management in participatory and inclusive ways.

While the focus of SDGs implementation is mainly on cities and urban sprawls, it is argued that sustainable development policies and their communication can improve the outcomes for communities and the image of regions as well (see *Notions of Stakeholder Engagement* in Section 4.2.). For example, in Northamptonshire, sustainable development measures in education, income and employment can help address the high levels of deprivation. Further, communication of the measures and their impact can form part of the strategy to redefine the post-industrial market towns. The following section advances the integrated approach to region branding by connecting urban, rural and inter-regional perspectives.

11.3. Inter-Regional Connections

In geo-spatial terms, PB literature in the nascent stages of the field's development focused on well-known (mega)cities and nations. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on the branding of peripheral towns and rural regions. Thus, addressing a limitation of past studies on region branding that tackle urban towns and rural regions as separate entities. The contribution of the current study is significant since the Northamptonshire case study reveals the interplay of urban and rural identity narratives in PB construction. Furthermore, it provides insight into why past researchers and practitioners may have been deterred from tackling urban and rural geographies in one cohesive regional brand.

The findings in Chapter 8 indicated the discrepancies in urban-rural identity-development in terms of: (i) history and heritage, (ii) landscape and architecture, (iii) income and people, (iv) high and low culture and (v) transportation and network. Despite the challenge of reconciling the disparate identities in a cohesive brand storyline, both urban and rural stakeholders noted that a social representation of Northampton and Northamptonshire should not be mutually exclusive. They primarily attributed this to urban-rural economic interdependencies. For the

peripheral town and region, both the assets and resources of urban and rural were needed to widen the product portfolio and create a critical mass for promotions. This is because they face the challenge of garnering recognition since rural towns and regions are "too small or too insignificant to have been heard of by any target group" (Rauhut Kompaniets and Rauhut, 2016, p. 25). From a regional development perspective, the urban-rural connections have been widely studied in terms of transportation, regional supply chains (production-consumption), migration and employment, conservation and planning (Gentry et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2007; Rego et al., 2017). Rural-urban linkages are significant for poverty alleviation and sustainable rural development and urbanisation (Mylott, 2009). These studies observe and argue for a shift from urban-rural dichotomy to urban-rural connections by linking urban and rural policy. From a regional branding perspective, it is argued that a cooperative approach to local and regional development can help ensure competitiveness and relevance (Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015).

While the study focus is Northamptonshire, it is acknowledged that these interdependencies and connections can extend beyond the bounded county-region to encompass and reflect broader institutional and economic relations. For instance, the county and its towns emphasise their location and connectivity as a key strength for driving growth and investment in the region. Beyond spatial proximity, connections can be fostered at a national, supra-national and international scale where alignment of brand agendas exist (Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015); they can also be strategically created. For example, at the national level, Northampton's Social Enterprise brand could align with other UK places that also hold this title. At the international level, progress towards UN SDGs can help situate Northamptonshire as part of an international network of cities and regions pursuing a global agenda. Thus, a recommendation for institutional policymakers and practitioners to drive development and recognition is to shift from its sectoral past to embrace a more integrated approach that fosters urban-rural and inter-regional interrelationships based on brand alignment.

There is a clear economic and sustainable development rationale for 'connected places'. A further challenge for PB practice is managing the brands and stakeholders that operate in these complex inter-regional networks. To address this dual challenge of brand and stakeholder management, the application of brand architecture strategies is discussed in the next Section.

11.4. Multiplicity

PB practice is rife with examples of sub-branding based on local authority brands (Lucarelli and Giovanardi, 2016; Giovanardi, 2015; Taecharungroj, 2018; Therkelsen and Gram, 2010) or sectoral brands (Pasquinelli, 2015; Zenker and Beckmann, 2013). These approaches have been adopted for PB Northamptonshire with limited success. For instance, *Love Northamptonshire* adopted a 'Branded House' approach by developing toponyms and logos for each of the local councils to look unified under the umbrella county council brand (Section 8.5.1.) and adopted an asset-based approach in the form of industry endorsements (9.3.1.). However, the sub-brands did not fulfil the need for autonomy and differentiation of stakeholders. Each council wanted to emphasise their assets; an overarching vision that sub-brands could get behind was missing (Section 9.2.1.). More recently, *Northamptonshire Surprise* adopted a sector-led 'House of Brands' approach for tourism promotions. The sub-brands (campaigns) were challenged due to the lack of broader and diverse representations. Distinctiveness was also not achieved due to the status quo approach (Section 8.5.1). Thus, the final pillar of the framework directly responds to the challenge of achieving 'distinctiveness and representativeness' in place branding (Section 11.4.1.).

The primary link between brand architecture and PB theory (and practice) has been managing the various images and associations of a place (Dinnie, 2018; Zenker and Braun, 2017; Ikuta et al., 2007). The conceptual framework adopts the brand architecture structure for application beyond image management. The two key challenges for multi-stakeholder PBG addressed are: managing the 'inclusiveness and legitimacy' of PB (Section 11.4.2.) and 'widening participation' (11.4.3.). The questions posed by study participants, *whose job is it* (Section 9.6.) and *whose opinions matter* (Section 10.6.), capture the lack of clarity regarding stakeholder roles, responsibilities and governance structures in PB. The conceptualisation of 'brand teams' within the place brand architecture model is conceived as one solution to the challenge of stakeholder multiplicity. The final issue of 'widening participation' in resource-constrained regions continues to pay attention to the themes of inclusiveness and legitimacy. Examining the enablers/barriers and stakeholder relationships, recommendations are provided for engaging different types of CSH. The main contribution is that it addresses the issues of representations and participation under the same framework by explicating principles and mechanisms of participatory governance.

11.4.1. Overarching Vision and Sub-Brand Identities

It is established that PB is a means for creating distinction for places. Extant literature suggests that the notions of uniqueness and distinction are intrinsically linked with 'brand identity', i.e., 'how we want to be perceived' (Hankinson, 2015). The findings support that identity construction requires a constant dialogue between the internal and the external (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). Thus, the current study suggests that identity-based sub-brands should form along the PM-PB continuum (illustrated in Figure 2.1., Section 2.3.). Foremost, they should cater to internal stakeholders' need for positive social identification through differentiation and recognition. Next, assessing external stakeholders' positive perception of the place, recognition (awareness) and uniqueness can feed into sub-brand creation. This internal to external approach may be particularly pertinent in the nascent stages of developing a peripheral region brand, wherein weak image or reputation poses a challenge to assessing (not yet established) external perceptions of uniqueness.

In such a setting, 'brand identification' of stakeholders with the sub-brand pillars is crucial for their engagement and buy-in. It can provide a critical symbolic link between residents and their place (Kemp et al., 2012; Martin and Capelli, 2017; Manyiwa et al., 2018). In Sections 8.3.2. and 10.5.2., the findings indicated that active CSH amplified the narratives that resonated with their self-concept and social identity. This occurred when their interest and self-concept aligned with the place features and identity. In Northamptonshire, multiple identity narratives emerged along the urban-rural dimension. The different stakeholders of each narrative wanted to retain the distinctiveness and pride associated with their identity and argued for their identity not to be marginalised in place brand representation of the county. Thus, *bottom-up sub-branding* can bridge the gap between 'place attachment' (Zhang and Xu, 2019; Sofield et al., 2017; de Azevedo et al., 2013) and 'brand identification' (Insch and Stuart, 2015; Zenker et al., 2017).

Adopting this model, sub-brands will represent internal stakeholders 'segments' or 'communities' of disparate identities and needs. Each sub-brand can be (semi)autonomously managed through a partnership between diverse stakeholder groups that share the same vision and identity. The sub-branding approach can fulfil the criteria for balancing distinctiveness and representativeness by adhering to the following principle. Each sub-brand that is created needs to be sufficiently distinctive to fulfil stakeholders need for differentiation. A holistic view of the sub-brands should represent diverse rather than dominant identities. The practical

implication is that the assets and narratives valued by communities can become the basis for creating legitimate identity facets (sub-brands) of region branding. For instance, in Northamptonshire, sub-brands conceived based on the urban and rural facets can achieve diverse social representations and support the need for differentiation of stakeholder groups. The illustrative example (in Figure 11.2.) addresses the multiplicity of urban and rural identities and interests within the county-region under a 'cohesive brand' and overarching storyline.
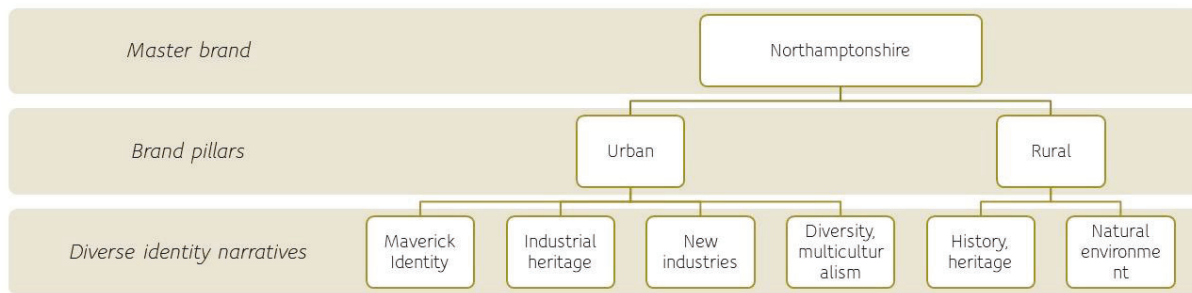
Figure 11.2. *Application of brand architecture model to manage the urban-rural identities of Northamptonshire. Source: Author.*

The next challenge is the unification of stakeholders in support of a shared vision and narrative for the region brand. This is a crucial step towards an integrated approach between the sub-brands (suggested in Section 11.2.). In Northamptonshire, parochialism and interest-based engagement was noted among ISH (Sections 9.2.1. and 9.3.1.). Sub-brand committees or 'brand teams' are generally given the role of translating identity into experience touchpoints (top-down) (Botschen et al., 2017). The main challenge in this regard was the assets-based approach prevalent in county branding. Asset owners prioritised the territorial, economic and functional features (location, industries), which led to a dichotomous view ('old vs new industries' and 'rural vs industrial heritage') of the overarching narratives of the county. For instance, when discussing the identity development of the county, stakeholders were concerned about the visual imagery (logo and brand colours, font) representing elements of the urban or rural landscape and icons. This led to a dissonant mental image, the dominance of one identity over the other and a lack of clarity of purpose. Thus, this thesis argues for a bottom-up conceptualisation of identity and governance processes whereby brand teams shape the overarching vision and values.

A 'value-based approach' to vision shaping can allow stakeholders to articulate and utilise shared ideological associations of the place, such as sustainability, entrepreneurship and

independence, in the brand identity development (Hankinson, 2015). These associations can be drawn from the brand's personality, which will enable stakeholders to relate to it (Hankinson, 2004). Adopting this view, even symbolic ideas relating to urban-rural identities such as 'maverick Northampton' and 'genteel spires and squires' can stimulate the articulation of PB vision and values. In support of this argument, the study found that brand teams not only shape social representations in PB in terms of output, legitimising dominant regional identities; they also influence the level to which participatory value and ethos are upheld and informs the process of PBG and access to stakeholders. Thus, articulating the vision in terms of 'shared values' can enable the 'brand orientation' of sub-brand teams with the region branding narrative.

The next critical challenge for multi-stakeholder teams is managing the 'inclusiveness and legitimacy' of PB. This issue is discussed in the following section, and a model for stakeholder collaboration utilising 'sub-brand teams' is suggested.

11.4.2. Complementary Roles and Legitimacy of Brand Teams

The value of 'inclusiveness' is at the core of participatory PB. However, achieving this ideal while maintaining the distinctiveness of place brands is a challenge for mature destinations and all the more challenging for peripheral regions. This was the main argument of the elite actors who governed place brand decision making in Northamptonshire. These elite stakeholders, as evidenced widely in the literature, primarily represent governmental and industry interests (dubbed as the traditional PPP model).

The traditional Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model: In the context of resource-constrained destination management, the interdependencies and partnerships between public and private stakeholders have been widely evidenced (Haven-Tang and Sedgley, 2014; Slocum and Everett, 2014; Yüksel et al., 2005). In the current study, examining stakeholder capacity and expertise, it was observed that the private sector filled the gap in the public sector's weak practice legitimacy due to the perception of their commercial and creative abilities, drawing power from organisational resources and reputational value. Further, due to their structural embeddedness in regional networks, they engaged public actors in 'behind the scenes negotiation' for securing the backing of statutory, legal authorities and democratic institutions for legitimising their PB initiatives (Horlings, 2012; Ward, 2000). Thus, public-private partners

in brand teams fulfilled a complementary leadership function by responding to each other's gaps and deficiencies. However, this PPP model seemed to negatively impact CSH's role in PB in the case context. CSH were ascribed roles as 'ambassadors' organically orchestrating WOM (Section 10.2.) and as non-binding consultants for 'identity building' (Section 10.3.). Evidently, the residents' role was relegated to 'customers' or 'consumers' of PB communication rather than 'partners' in PBG.

The extended Public-Private-Voluntary (PPV) model: Notably, the socio-economic-political conditions widened the scope for other institutional stakeholders to take the lead in telling a positive story and defining the brand identity for Northamptonshire. For local governments, universities, private and voluntary sectors are natural partners as they are independent in technical areas and serve their host communities' social and economic needs (Sarabia-Sanchez and Cerda-Bertomeu, 2018). As the only knowledge institution in a peripheral region, the University was well placed to play the role of 'knowledge partner' in Northamptonshire PB, over and above the knowledge transfer role traditionally associated with universities in regional development (Bisani et al., 2021). The university had gained 'practice legitimacy' by providing evidence-based insights in multiple disciplinary areas (Section 9.5.1. and 9.5.2.). Further, the university emphasised its embeddedness and social impact activities to show a commitment to the region and its regional partners, strengthening the university's leadership position in regional networks (Bisani et al., 2021; Lebeau and Cochrane, 2015). Additionally, the prominence of the VCS in filling the public and private sector gaps in terms of providing essential services and as a vital stakeholder of the cultural and heritage environment led to their representations in regional forums. However, their social networks in the communities they served and the community engagement methodologies at their disposal were utilised to a much lesser extent to create legitimacy for PB (Sections 9.4.2. and 9.4.3.).

These findings regarding the assumed and ascribed roles of ISH in PB networks sheds light on ISH's legitimacy. It is suggested that each ISH group could occupy a complementary 'partner' role in brand teams due to the complementary nature of the legitimacy they can create in PB. Further, each stakeholder group exhibited the need for distinction (autonomy), fulfilment of own interest, networking for validation (critical mass) and resource and capacity sharing. For ISH in peripheral regions, their 'structural embeddedness' in economic development policy and governance networks served as a motivator and enabler for participation. For instance, due to the lack of an institutionalised PBG entity, the usual people were crucial for initiating place

marketing and promotions. They mobilised their social networks, start-up capital, skills and capacity in the sectoral and political domain. Even CSH, who exhibited activism, tended to be the same set of actors engaging in various community networks and events. Thus, in the nascent stages of network formation, existing social ties were utilised to lay the foundation (Rowley and Moldoveanu, 2003). Complementary legitimacy and existing social bonds can become the basis for multi-stakeholder governance for PB. However, at the time of the study, complementarity reflected the 'value exchange' motivations of ISH rather than 'value creation', which would be emblematic of collaboration.

The challenge for collaboration is acute in peripheral resource-constrained regions. Due to the political-economic-cultural conditions, these groups were often disbanded in the nascent stages. As a result, they did not attain maturity to provide a long-standing structure and policy for PB governance. Due to the lack of resilience, broader participation and buy-in from stakeholder groups was challenging to achieve (as noted in Section 9.3.3). The pattern of the same people engaging in networks time and again created a perception of 'exclusive networks' rather than inclusiveness. Thus, the resource-constrained conditions are linked with the *exclusive networks paradox*.

Evidently, the usual people were crucial for place brand initiation. However, their exclusiveness posed challenges for incorporating new and diverse social representations (Section 10.4.2.). A more critical challenge lies in these elite groups' perception and claims of openness. They denounced the claim that there were barriers for new stakeholders to engage and contribute, and anybody who wanted could join in (Section 10.5.4.). However, by clubbing the government, the private sector and citizens all as part of the same team without consideration for systemic inequalities, the so-called 'open networks' can be become 'the principal means of legitimising domination' and ignoring the critical, plural and alternative voices of citizens (Blakeley, 2010). Thus, attention needs to be paid to political, ideological, social and ethical characteristics of such networks to observe whether their power and influence is used to drive socio-economic development; or whether the use of visual and spatial strategies are used as a tool for imposing the views of dominant groups (Broudehoux, 2001 in Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). The current study argues that fostering collaboration and participation relies not only on sharing the principles and values of cooperation but also requires a concerted effort to implement mechanisms and enablers for wide participation.

11.4.3. Mechanisms for Widening Stakeholder Participation

In terms of enablers, ISH recognition and support mechanisms are central to eliciting participation from different types of CSH. The barriers to the participation of apathetic stakeholders concerned issues of mistrust and fairness, while SE-CSH needed further support for growing and incorporating their projects in PB. The exemplary implementation of the mechanisms would support CSH to self-engage with existing brand teams or, furthermore, form bottom-up brand communities. The discussion on enablers and mechanisms contributes to our understanding of how CSH assume and ascribe legitimacy in PBG. Further, the study offers pragmatic suggestions, responding to the call for engaging communities in all stages of the branding process (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008).

Establishing trust through community interface: From a community perspective, concerns about leadership and governance capacity and cynicism about the 'fairness' of processes had a bearing on establishing the democratic legitimacy of ISH's branding efforts (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013; Nunkoo, 2017). This was evident in the apathy exhibited by the disenfranchised public in Northamptonshire. For addressing mistrust and cynicism, 'intermediary' stakeholder groups who are connected and trusted by both ISH and CSH are favoured. In the case context, three groups could play the 'intermediary' role: VCS as 'relationship brokers' (Section 9.4.3.), university as 'network coordinator' (Section 9.5.3.) and CSH leaders and representatives as 'network mediators' (Section 10.4.1.). Organised VCS and community groups shared the functions of 'community leadership' and 'advocacy' through their concern for societal and civic interests. Not only can these community leaders and representatives help in keeping the message 'grounded in reality' (Section 10.4.), but they can also help with the implementation of community engagement strategies. In this regard, VCS showed the most potential to widen participation through their knowledge and practice of community engagement methods (discussed in Section 9.4.2.). The University also showed the potential to facilitate networks comprising of ISH and CSH owing to their civic role and engaged scholarship. However, a key challenge to fulfil this role was balancing their high levels of power and power of other well-resourced ISH and creating more participation opportunities for communities (Bisani et al., 2021; Purdy, 2012).

Listening to apathetic CSH: Since apathetic CSH felt disenfranchised with public consultation processes, using traditional market research and public consultation methods such

as surveys, focus groups, and interviews with residents may not be suitable. The findings indicate the potential for using engaged scholars' toolbox and VCS community engagement mechanisms for the publics disenfranchised by their governments (Sections 9.4.2. and 9.5.2.). Participatory action research with sociological interventions has been used to widen and deepen public consultation processes for PB practices (Ripoll Gonzalez and Gale, 2020). Design charrettes by external consultants (such as designers, researchers) have been used to stimulate civic engagement (Howard and Somerville, 2014; Dong et al., 2013). They have been applied to place brand development and assessment to facilitate collaborative tourism governance in all stages (Hudson et al., 2017). Taking inspiration from past studies, it is suggested that familiarisation and listening to CSH concerns and narratives is a prerequisite for engagement. Ethnographic and netnographic methods have been employed for such 'social listening' before engagement (Hudak, 2015). Further, ongoing social listening can bring forward alternative narratives and projects in placemaking, particularly in marginal neighbourhoods (Hudak, 2015; Coletti and Rabbiosi, 2020).

Leveraging the discursive legitimacy of community leaders: VCS and SE-CSH, through their active place narrative shaping and placemaking, have 'discursive legitimacy' on matters that concern the communities (Purdy, 2012). 'Communities' are a prominent stakeholder of the sectoral brands since they influence the place brand experience through their placemaking, volunteering and hosting of events. Their intimate knowledge about the place can lend 'authenticity' to the brand message (Braun et al., 2013; Kavaratzis, 2012). As per the UK Government Town Plan, "local knowledge and insight that communities can provide on the barriers to driving local growth and productivity" (GOV.UK, 2019, p. 20). Harnessing such concerns and narratives through trusted leaders of communities can enhance the democratic legitimacy of PB (through the quality of participation). For VCS, this leadership role can strengthen their position in PBG. Since they are resource-constrained and lack authoritative power in PB networks, they can legitimise their partnership status in brand teams by representing the important societal ideals and concerns of equality, inclusion, and diversity.

Thus, one of the mechanisms for enhancing the inclusiveness and legitimacy of PB is the engagement of CSH leaders as 'partners' in sub-brand teams. Recognising the challenges of attaining full and direct participation of residents in PB, which is usually associated with mature destinations seeking rejuvenation (Bichler, 2021), CSH representation in sub-brand teams is suggested through VSC or SE-CSH in the preliminary stages. However, while they possess the

confidence and discursive legitimacy on concerns of the communities, their weak practice legitimacy remains a challenge.

Addressing practice legitimacy through capacity building: Practice legitimacy is perhaps the most difficult to create for CSH as it draws heavily from the actors' perception of their role. It requires a certain degree of confidence in their ultimate contribution to the complicated undertaking of PB (Warren and Dinnie, 2018). ISH emphasised CSH's lack of expert knowledge on PB and moaners attitude to limit their role in PBG (Sections 10.2 and 10.3.). Both ISH and CSH tended to privilege 'expert' knowledge in marketing and branding for identity creation and creative leadership and decision making (Section 8.5.2.). Thus, a critical challenge for brand teams with varying types and levels of expert knowledge is in devising mechanisms for exchanging and sharing place brand meanings, goals and outcomes among stakeholders.

To enhance the legitimacy of PB, social representation theory has indicated, "a knowledge socially developed and shared" can be the basis for collaborative planning and decision making (Jodelet, 1984 in Castillo-Villar, 2018, p. 36). In this regard, HEI showed the potential to positively implicate CSH role and widen participation through its 'knowledge partner' function (Section 9.5.). Engaged scholarship research provides some indication that academics as facilitators can enable participation and collaboration in communities through their theoretical understanding and values (Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015; Ntounis and Parker, 2017). They can do this by providing "evidence to relevant audiences as to why it may be best for place practitioners to avoid creating and imposing a place brand and instead help shape it from the views of stakeholder constituencies" (Medway et al., 2015, p. 67).

Challenging the 'expert knowledge' perspective through bottom-up knowledge sharing has implications for tourism governance. It has been known to debunk the top-down process, upending the traditional relationships and roles in destination architecture and power-sharing (Trunfio and Campana, 2019; Go and Trunfio, 2011; Go *et al.*, 2015). In addition to the benefits of enhancing collective appreciation and a common language for articulating goals and vision (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008), the study contributes that HEI as educators and trainers are uniquely situated to facilitate learning among stakeholders through skills and capacity building.

In practice, capacity building of CSH can take the form of enhancing the scope and longevity of CSH projects that align with the sub-brand teams. This recommendation builds on the model suggested by Zenker and Erfgen (2014) that encouraged citizens to launch their projects in line with the place brand proposition. A challenge for SE-CSH in the case study was their capacity to expand the projects in scale and scope (Section 10.5.4.). Thus, the support mechanism at the expansion stage should help drive sustainability and longevity through generating income for their projects. For example, if the aim is to lead with the vision of 'social entrepreneurship', community entrepreneurship could be encouraged for CSH projects. For brand teams, this can enhance and mobilise knowledge to actionable projects (touchpoints) that can effectively contribute to PB. The ultimate goal could be for CSH projects to become the basis for creating new sub-brand pillars. The brand architecture structure allows new sub-brands and identity facets to be added to the region brand in response to their context-specific challenges.

Events and festivals for the formation of brand communities: Interested and informed CSH expected ISH to create mechanisms and platforms for engagement with one another and with the region brand (Section 10.5.4.). Events and festivals provide one such mechanism as they have been known to enhance the awareness and cultural offering of a place (Hassen and Giovanardi, 2018; Duignan et al., 2018; Walters and Insch, 2018; Lee, 2015). Festivals are breeding spaces for serendipitous opportunities for collaboration and networking (Duignan et al., 2018). However, when this study was conducted, stakeholder events were primarily used to demonstrate and launch initiatives, and to a lesser extent, events enabled new partners' engagement.

Participants in this study offered that attendance of 'events and festivals' require minimal effort and commitment, and if inclusively designed, can appeal to people from different walks of life (Section 10.5.3.). They were visualised as spaces for: generating awareness and impressions among CSH about the place-product offer of the town and county; engaging CSH to get their ideas and support for PB in a fun and accessible environment; CSH to meet one another and engage with ISH's branding initiatives and campaigns. Thus, events may be a catalyst for new narratives and community groups to emerge as CSH interact with one another. Further, the recurrent nature of festivals can allow longitudinal engagement (Duignan et al., 2018). CSH felt that they could contribute to the place's success and character through attendance and participation. Such bottom-up events, initiated by public authorities and organised by local communities, can promote the multicultural character and identity of places in which various

ethnic groups feel free to express and celebrate their own cultures (Hassen and Giovanardi, 2018). For stakeholder engagement and representation, they can serve as an umbrella entity under which plural stakeholder products can be showcased as spaces for aggregation and amalgamation. This can help achieve critical mass by linking up small businesses, industries or interest groups under one umbrella brand.

Thus, these principles and recommendations address the key issues for brand and stakeholder management under the conceptual framework for multi-stakeholder place brand governance. The two key themes from Chapters 9 and 10, 'whose opinions matter' and 'whose job is it', are discussed further to clarify the implications for PBG. The study contributes that the extended PPV model for brand teams has positive implications for CSH roles and participation. In the resource-constrained context, it is suggested that multi-stakeholder brand teams are formed of 'partners', who play a complementary role to address issues of mutual legitimacy and trust, that can potentially widen participation.

11.5. Summary

In this Chapter, the fundamental principles and mechanisms for modelling the *Conceptual Framework for Multi-Stakeholder PBG* and the practical implications for widening participation in a resource-constrained region were discussed. The issues of 'distinctiveness and representativeness', 'inclusiveness and legitimacy' and negotiating 'place brand vision and outcomes' were critical for place brand development in Northamptonshire. The literature from tourism, planning, corporate and public management, urban and regional studies support the inferences.

The conceptual framework consists of four principles that serve as a guide for a participatory approach to region branding. They are: Recognition (Section 11.1), Integrated Sustainable Development (Section 11.2.), Inter-Regional Connections (Section 11.3.) and Multiplicity (Section 11.4). The final principle is directly related to the strategic governance of multiple stakeholder interests, identities and relationships. Adopting brand architecture strategies, this principle governs the creation and management of sub-brands for cohesive region branding. Thus, Section 11.4.1. addressed the issue of distinctiveness and representativeness by creating an 'overarching vision and sub-brand identities'. Section 11.4.2. addressed the 'inclusiveness

and legitimacy' of brand teams by examining two multi-stakeholder governance models. Finally, Section 11.4.3. discussed the enablers/barriers to suggest mechanisms for 'widening stakeholder participation'.

The next and final Chapter of the thesis discusses the contribution to knowledge and theoretical, practical/policy and methodological implications of the findings from the case study.

Chapter 12. Conclusion

The previous Chapters have discussed the findings from the current research in relation to the literature review. Chapters 8-10 presented the findings on the perceptions of Northamptonshire and roles, relationships and participation of community and institutional stakeholders with reference to the literature reviewed in Chapters 2-4. Chapter 5 presented the theoretical framework and identified gaps in knowledge. Correspondingly, Chapter 11 developed the Conceptual Framework by incorporating the empirical findings, addressing the gaps and providing recommendations for practice and policy. This Chapter presents an overall summary of the findings in relation to the research questions and objectives (in Section 12.1), the theoretical contributions of the study and practice and policy implications (Section 12.2.), methodological contributions (Section 12.3.), and the limitations and scope for further research (Section 12.4.).

12.1. Overview

The study aims were achieved by developing the *Conceptual Framework for Multi-Stakeholder PBG* and discussing policy and practical recommendations and implications for widening participation in a resource-constrained region. The findings supported the relevance of diverse social representations, regional cohesion, brand architecture, stakeholder collaboration, and inclusiveness for managing the complexity of region branding. The framework addressed two key challenges: (i) the management of complex brand associations to create the perception of the region as a single cohesive entity (in Chapter 8) and (ii) managing the co-opetitive forces affecting local and regional political, economic and cultural stakeholders to mobilise them for a cohesive approach to region branding (in Chapter 9 and 10). The four research questions (Q1-4) and objectives (1-4) illustrated in Figure 12.1. were addressed in the following manner.

Findings in Chapter 8 addressed Q1 regarding the diverging social representations of PB Northamptonshire. Unsurprisingly, multiple competing and complementary identity narratives of Northamptonshire were observed. Diverging narratives along the urban-rural and local-regional dimensions shaped by (i) history and heritage, (ii) landscape and architecture, (iii) income and people, (iv) high and low culture and (v) transportation and network illustrate the diversity of stakeholder interests and influences inherent in PB identity construction. The critical conditions and issues affecting a cohesive approach to PB policy and practice were

found to be dominant social representations in PB, historically unequal development in urban and rural areas, and the marginalised position or feeling of neglect in the case context. A market-oriented approach was evident in the narrow interpretation of PB as a tourism marketing exercise. The application of brand architecture strategies is one way of managing the critical issues of 'distinctiveness and representativeness' and 'vision and outcomes'. A further issue was found regarding the 'inclusiveness and legitimacy' of PBG in Chapters 9 and 10. Thus, objective 1 was achieved.
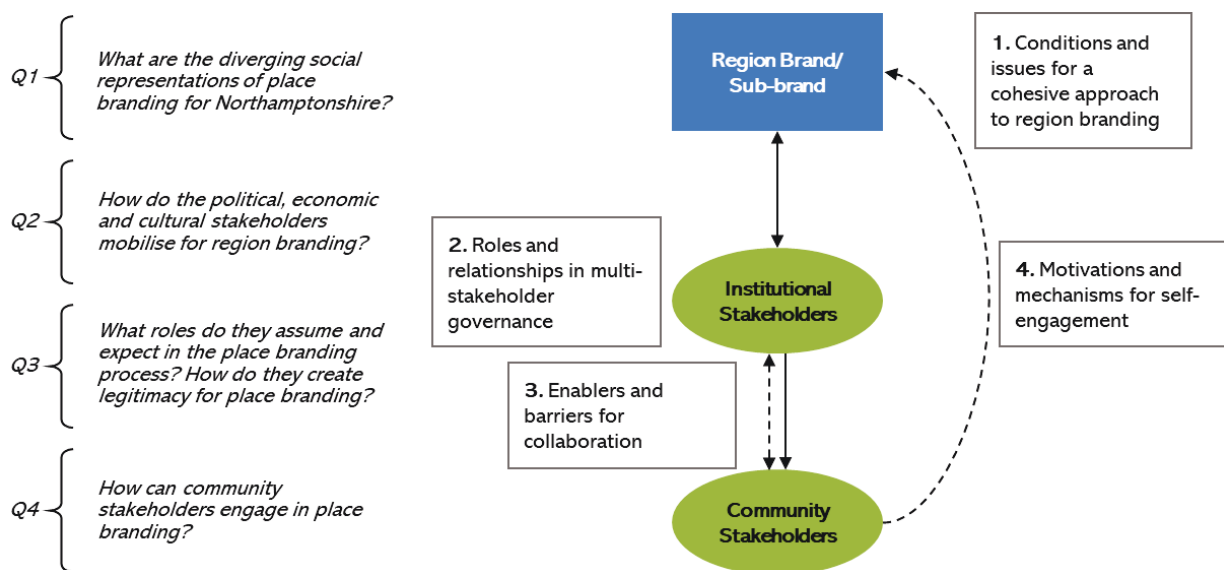
Figure 12.1. *Research questions (Q1-4) and research objectives (1-4) addressed in this study. Source: Author.*

Findings in Chapters 9 and 10 respond to Q2 and Q3, illustrating how the political, economic and cultural stakeholders (ISH and CSH) mobilise for region branding, their assumed, expected and potential roles and how they create legitimacy. In addition to the widely recognised role of the private sector, previously underexplored groups, HEI and VCS, have a critical role in providing joint leadership in PB networks. In the absence of a public sector-led strategy, non-governmental stakeholders could create legitimacy for themselves and the PB initiatives by taking up 'complementary' roles. While CSH had the potential to be utilised as a development resource, strained stakeholder relationships hampered 'mutual trust and legitimacy' for engagement. Thus, the exploration of roles and relationships revealed the scope for multi-stakeholder PBG (objective 2).

Findings in Chapter 10 focused on Q4, exploring CSH engagement in place branding. The PPP governance model seemed to negatively impact CSH's active participation in PB. Comparatively, the 'intermediary' linkages of the VCS and HEI seem conducive to fostering a participatory ethos in PB. In line with the literature review, community leaders or SE-CSH, through their activism, showed the most potential for active engagement in PBG. The main enablers to collaboration from SE-CSH perspective were found to be self-efficacy and networking. More widely, their motives for engagement were interest and identity-based, which could be utilised through events, festivals and community projects. Thus, objective 3 was achieved. Further, they need to be supported by institutional mechanisms for building legitimacy, capacity and engagement. These findings illuminate the expected role and recommendations for ISH in widening participation – addressing objective 4. It is argued that by facilitating a more active role to CSH and creating opportunities for engagement, ISH can enhance PB legitimacy.

12.2. Theoretical Contributions and Implications for Policy and Practice

Drawing from the domains of tourism, planning, corporate and public management, urban and regional studies, this thesis is firmly situated in a multidisciplinary body of knowledge. Over and above the issues and conditions identified, the present study contributes to the field by suggesting a framework for region branding. The complexity of managing representations and participation in PB is addressed in the framework by explaining the principles and mechanisms of participatory governance. The case study context of an urban-rural peripheral region is apropos since past studies are concerned with success cases of well-known cities and nations. By contributing to the underexplored study of region branding, this thesis hopes to advance theory building in the field of study. Adopting the metaphor of the 'roof and pillar', the principles (or pillars) of the conceptual framework are 'integrated' – they reinforce each other and provide the framework for region branding (the roof). The principles are broadly supported by the literature. Figure 12.2. illustrates the key contributions to knowledge.

Additionally, the practical implications for widening participation in a resource-constrained region are discussed. Place brand managers have been ascribed the role of managing diversity rather than seeking simple consensus (Jernsand, 2016). Relatively few practical recommendations are available on how practitioners and policymakers should deal with issues of balancing distinctiveness and representativeness, vision and outcomes, and inclusiveness

and legitimacy. In a resource-constrained context, where a central coordinator or DMO does not exist, this issue is more challenging to address. Unsurprisingly, the social representations for PB are dominated by visitor economy stakeholders forming informal networks or vital coalitions. The recommendations are directed towards practitioners and policymakers who play a prominent role in these vital coalitions since institutional recognition and support is found to be central to diversifying the social representations and participation in PB.
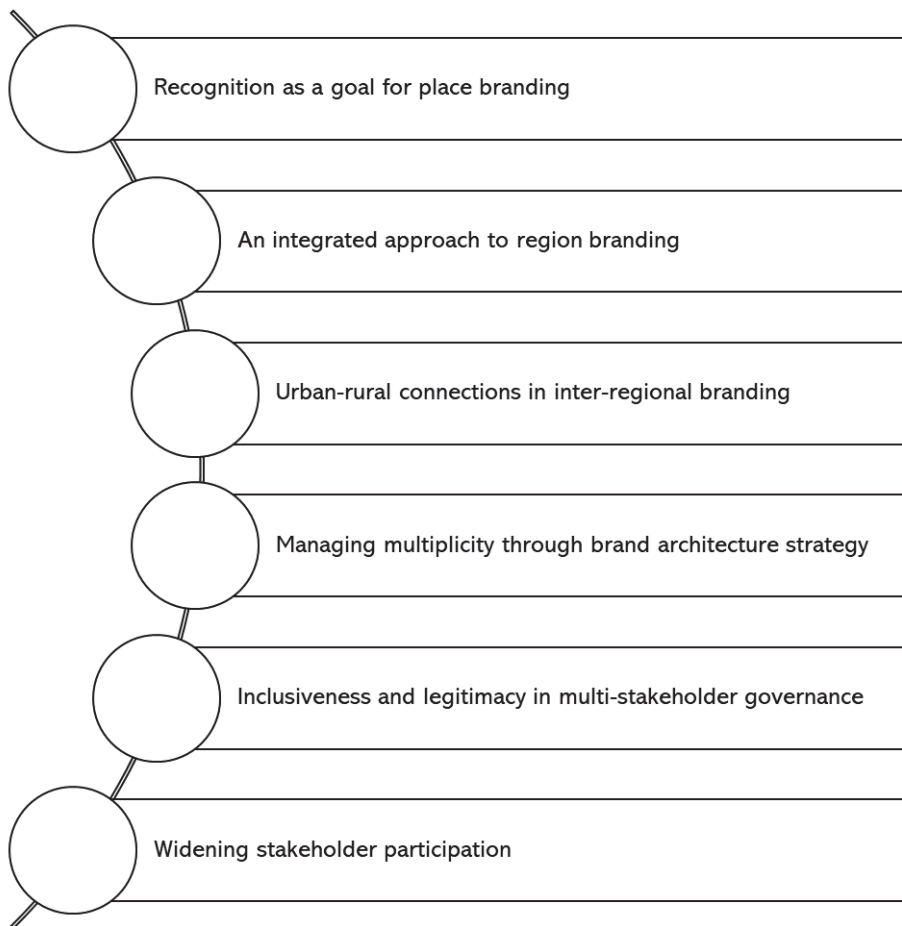
Figure 12.2. Key contributions to knowledge. Source: Author.

12.2.1.Recognition as a Goal for Place Branding

In current PB literature, *recognition* is synonymised with reputation, referring to the visibility and image of the place among external target audiences (Anholt, 2006). It is considered the goal of PB to garner recognition in order to attract more visitors, students, exports and investors. The present study adds that achieving recognition through PB should also be concerned with community needs in regional development policy (full discussion in Section 11.1.). Garnering *recognition* is a significant goal for small municipalities and rural place

240

brands, especially in the so-called 'left behind' regions. It maybe employed a political tool to promote socio-economic, equitable development. However, 'actions' need to complement 'communications' (Anholt, 2008) where governments use this goal to balance or undo inequitable development and uplift the public and resident communities (Moscardo, 2011; Jernsand, 2016).

The need for recognition at the individual and collective level links it with positive social identification with the place and brand ownership. In this context, recognition means empowering community voices by giving them the means to influence PBG and decision making; and the mechanisms for self-assessing the impact of their engagement and contribution (Hereźniak, 2017). Recognition is manifested in *representations* of what is valued and known about the place; it is conceived at the interaction of image and identity narratives. Recognition can also be examined through the opportunities for *participation*, which indicate whose opinions are valued in place governance and development. By emphasising economic and societal concerns, recognition as a goal of PB has implications for the sustainable development of places (Karavatzis et al., 2019; Jamal and Camargo, 2017; Jernsand, 2016; Pike et al., 2007).

12.2.2. An Integrated Approach to Region Branding

The principle of *Integrated Sustainable Development* addresses the critical concerns of PB as a tool for 'perception management' and 'economic development' (reviewed in Section 2.4.1. and 2.4.4. respectively). PB as a tactical tool for sectoral development likens it to the sales approach of tourism and export marketing, leaving the untapped potential for its use in reputation management (Anholt, 2008). Further, the neglect of the social aspects of development overlooks the goal of development itself (Pike et al., 2007). This has been linked with the PB process becoming undesirable, similar to gentrification, for pursuing a neo-liberal agenda by legitimising commercial interests and dominant identities (Zenker and Braun, 2017; Slocum and Everett, 2014; Zenker and Seigis, 2012). The resource-constrained conditions aggravate this issue as commercial interests control the destination image (Slocum and Everett, 2014). However, the same conditions necessitate a collaborative approach to PB. In the face of weak public sector finances and governance arrangements, non-governmental and CSH become *self-engaged* and mobilise to shape the place narrative. However, lacking a joined-up strategy, issues of fragmented leadership and parochialism were observed.

The Integrated Sustainable Development principle suggests a *cross-sectoral collaborative approach* wherein tourism is one of the socio-economic activities for PB (see for instance models reviewed in Section 3.4.2. and 3.4.3). Further, it reinforces the notion of identity construction along the PM-PB continuum, emphasising interaction rather than the dichotomy of internal and external stakeholder perceptions and needs. Finally, it responds to the calls for a more inclusive, socially responsible approach to orchestrating PB (Karavatzis et al., 2019; Hereźniak, 2017; Jernsand, 2016; Rebelo et al., 2020) by illustrating the use of UN SDGs for an integrated approach to PB. Thus, adding another perspective to the growing interest in this topic area, which seeks a balance between economic efficiency, growth and social equity (Therkelsen et al., 2021).

12.2.3. Urban-Rural Connections in Inter-Regional Branding

Inter-regional branding is concerned with the joint branding efforts of two or more regions within one country or between countries (Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015). The present study offers a novel perspective to *inter-regional connections* by analysing the intertwining of the urban-rural identity and development narratives. Despite the challenge of reconciling diverse identities in a cohesive brand storyline, a social representation of an urban-rural region cannot be mutually exclusive if it is to achieve distinctiveness and representativeness. The interdependencies created by the resource-constrained conditions make it necessary for the region to forge connections between the disparate stakeholder groups. The economic and sustainable development rationale for connected places is discussed in Section 11.3. It is argued that linking urban and rural policy has value beyond the functional aspects of transportation, regional supply chains, migration and employment, conservation and planning (Gentry et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2007; Rego et al., 2017). It can provide a framework for managing (i) complex brand associations and (ii) stakeholder multiplicity inherent in a region – in order to create shared identity and goals for a cohesive approach to region branding.

12.2.4. Managing Multiplicity through Brand Architecture Strategy

The primary link between brand architecture and PB theory (and practice) has been managing the various images and associations of a place (Dinnie, 2018; Zenker and Braun, 2017; Ikuta et al., 2007). In the current study, brand architecture strategies are adopted to manage the *multiplicity* of brand and stakeholder relationships in region branding. It is suggested that

identity-based sub-brands should be conceived along the PM-PB continuum. Foremost, they should cater to internal stakeholders' need for positive social identification. Next, assessing external stakeholders' positive perceptions of recognition (awareness) and uniqueness can strengthen the case for launching such a sub-brand. In this way, bottom-up sub-branding can bridge the gap between 'place attachment' (as defined by Zhang and Xu, 2019; Sofield et al., 2017; de Azevedo et al., 2013) and 'brand identification' (Insch and Stuart, 2015; Zenker et al., 2017).

Applying this model, sub-brands will represent disparate identities and needs of internal stakeholder *segments* or *communities*. Each sub-brand should be sufficiently distinctive to fulfil stakeholders' need for differentiation. A holistic view of the sub-brands should represent diverse rather than dominant identities. Each sub-brand can be (semi)autonomously managed through a partnership between stakeholder groups that share the same vision and identity. They may form sub-brand committees or *brand teams*. The unification of brand teams is suggested by setting a shared vision and overarching narrative for the region brand. In contrast to the assets-based territorial approach suggested for rural, regional branding (Donner et al., 2017), a *value-based* approach to vision setting is indicated for urban-rural regions. This means negotiating ideological associations or brand personalities of the urban-rural identities to articulate PB vision and values. This is not a call-to-action for all urban-rural regions to create their sub-brands based on these characteristics. Stakeholders of the region will need to decide on the brand architecture strategy that enables them to retain distinctiveness and representativeness. The exercise of sharing values is imperative for the orientation of brand teams with distinctive identities. The role of brand teams is significant in shaping social representations as well as participation in PBG.

12.2.5. Inclusiveness and Legitimacy in Multi-Stakeholder Governance

Complementary roles and legitimacy in brand teams can serve as the basis for multi-stakeholder PBG. In this regard, the extended Public-Private-Voluntary (PPV) model is found to be more conducive to participatory governance compared with the traditional PPP model. Findings regarding the 'intermediary' position of VCS and HEI and the potential for sharing the leadership function in PB networks also extend our current understanding of these groups' underexplored roles. It is argued that fostering participatory processes will enhance the legitimacy of ISH and their PB initiatives. The notion of legitimacy is expanded from the

democratic 'right to the place' (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013) to include expertise in marketing, branding and creativity (practice legitimacy) and the power to talk on community matters and needs (discursive legitimacy) that various stakeholder groups can bring to the process.

However, the challenge for CSH participation in PBG is their ascribed roles as ambassadors and non-binding consultants for identity building. Their role is relegated to 'customers' or 'consumers' of PB communication rather than 'partners' in PBG. A novel finding affecting CSH role was their weak practice legitimacy, which was emphasised to limit their role in PB. Further, the current study calls for an examination of the so-called 'open networks' since overlooked systemic inequalities may be the principal means of legitimising domination and ignoring the critical, plural and alternative voices of communities.

12.2.6. Widening Stakeholder Participation

Principles, as well as mechanisms, are needed to enable shared interpretations, cooperation, and widening access to participation. Five main mechanisms are suggested based on the case study. (i) *Establishing trust through community interface* of relationship brokers and network facilitators who play an advocacy role in representing societal and community interests and have the knowledge and practice of community engagement; (ii) *Listening to apathetic CSH* utilising multidisciplinary methods such as ethnography and netnography, participatory action research with sociological interventions and design charrettes; (iii) *Leveraging the discursive legitimacy of community leaders* by ascribing them an active role as 'partners' in brand teams; (iv) *Addressing practice legitimacy through capacity building* by facilitating knowledge transfers and institutional support for CSH projects so they may become the basis for creating new sub-brands; and finally, (v) *Events and festivals for the formation of brand communities* which engage CSH with one another and the PB efforts leading to the expression and creation of emergent and alternative narratives. The last three mechanisms can particularly bridge the gap between activism or 'active citizenship behaviour' (de Azevedo *et al.*, 2013; Zhang and Xu, 2019; Zenker and Rütter, 2014) and self-engagement in PB.

12.3. Methodological Contribution and Implications

The in-depth, qualitative single-case approach helped fill the gaps in the theoretical understandings leading to the development of the *Conceptual Framework for Multi-*

Stakeholder Place Brand Governance. Simultaneously, the case of Northamptonshire illustrated the conceptual argument and policy implications of multi-stakeholder governance and wide participation despite, and one might argue that owing to the resource-constrained conditions. The choice of case study is apropos as it tackles the complex issues, conditions and framework for branding a peripheral urban-rural region. It resulted in greater understandings of the 'urban and rural' and 'local and regional' (dis)connections as diverging identity narratives and dominant and non-dominant social representations emerged.

A key challenge was to conduct region branding research in a field where the methodological development has focused on city branding. In line with Cleave and Arku (2015), experts were recruited from various geographic, political and economic contexts representing the urban, rural, local and county levels. A diversity of dimensions and constituencies that are central to the explanation were considered, i.e., the spatial scale (town or village, district and county), interests (political, economic and cultural), levels of engagement with PB (from apathetic to self-engaged) and social structures (formal, informal and non-groups). While it is not uncommon to capture the views of stakeholder groups who have direct and indirect participation during the development of the brand (Eshuis et al., 2014), the so-called 'experts' in PB research often represent the institutional (Sarabia-Sanchez and Cerda-Bertomeu, 2018) or practitioners view (Vuignier, 2017; Cleave et al., 2017; Warren and Dinnie, 2018).

Studies concerned with the role of underexplored stakeholder groups tend to tackle one group at a time, such as artists (Mittila and Lepisto, 2013), entrepreneurs (Kaya and Marangoz, 2014) and Higher Education Institutions (Cavicchi et al., 2013; Popescu, 2012). The literature presents much fewer cases where holistic exploration was sought from multiple stakeholder groups. This study purports that the expertise of different stakeholder groups is critical for PB studies and practice. This view affected the sampling strategy as ISH participants were invited due to their expertise and experiences in PB; and CSH as holders of expert knowledge on Northamptonshire. Viewing each participant as an expert in different aspects of PB Northamptonshire also reflects the constructivist approach to knowledge co-creation. This sampling strategy allowed for understanding nuanced stakeholder roles (assumed, expected and potential) of government, businesses, voluntary and community groups for imagining a future scenario for collaborative PBG.

Data collection and analysis followed an iterative and abductive approach carried out in two phases, resembling a double diamond. The Design Council UK's Double Diamond framework was adopted due to its diverge-converge approach to problem-solving (DesignCouncilUK, 2015). It has been widely used in business and social innovation but scarcely in PB research (Bisani and Choi, 2016). Following its successful implementation for case study analysis in the regional setting of Northamptonshire, the framework is suggested to future researchers employing iterative design with abductive analysis. Abductive understandings feed into the research process as soon as data collection begins. This enabled the development and comparison of the theoretical framework through empirical evidence. Thus, the double diamond approach would be useful for research in new settings and underexplored phenomena where the issues become clearer as the investigation progresses. In addition to a comparison between theory and practice, the multiple rounds of coding, theme generation and analysis, which are all intrinsic to the double diamond framework, are associated with enhancing the trustworthiness of qualitative findings (Nowell et al., 2017). In the current study, theoretical saturation was reached when the second loop of the double diamond was complete.

12.4. Limitations and Further Research

The present case study is a step in the direction of theory building regarding the branding of lesser recognised regions since extant literature focuses on well-known or best practice case studies of city and nation brands. Universal generalisations cannot be made and are not desirable from a single case study (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). A systematic review of region branding is timely for theory building regarding differentiated PB strategies.

As discussed in Section 12.2., the principles are broadly supported by the literature. The concepts and constructs (themes and model) derived in this study have relevance to other settings. The issues of 'distinctiveness and representativeness', 'inclusiveness and legitimacy' and negotiating 'place brand vision and outcomes' were critical for PB development of the peripheral region. Even mature place brands which have established sub-brands, stronger brand and stakeholder relationships, and innovative mechanisms for community engagement face these fundamental issues (Dinnie, 2018). Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that the issues identified in this study are not exhaustive. Additional issues concerning PB development may emerge due to significant changes over time or differences in the political, economic and cultural conditions that were not observed in this study. This is in line with the social

constructionist notion that reality and knowledge remain in a state of flux (Lock and Strong, 2010). Cultural divergences caused by political polarisation and religious identities may be of interest to future researchers examining the use of brand architecture models to manage multiplicity. Moreover, brand architecture is one way to address these issues under a single framework. Future researchers are invited to identify fundamental issues concerning PB praxis and develop responsive models to address them.

The relationship between the principles is visualised as 'pillars' supporting the framework for region branding. The inspiration of the 'integrated' pillars came from the brand architecture model suggested by Ikuta et al. (2007) and the relationship between the UN SDGs. Notably, 'recognition' is indicated as a goal of PB, and this theme recurs in the discussion of the other three principles. Thus, it is hypothetically suggested that recognition may be considered 'the roof' (the goal and outcome), supported by the pillars of Integrated Sustainable Development, Inter-Regional Connections and Multiplicity. Further explanatory studies are needed to test the relationship between recognition and the other principles, especially in peripheral regions.

Further research could explore in-depth each of the principles, such as inter-regional connections between the urban and rural areas. Disconnections in urban-rural physical and functional linkages are widely attributed to a lack of political and economic cohesion, i.e., separate administrative, policy developments and socio-economic needs (Gentry et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2007; Rego et al., 2017). Additionally, the psychological (dis)connections found in this study are attributed to: (i) history and heritage, (ii) landscape and architecture and (iii) high and low culture, reflecting a lack of cultural cohesion. Further studies should verify these factors affecting cultural cohesion in the branding of urban-rural regions. For instance, hypotheses can be developed to test whether a lack of representations and participation of one stakeholder group over the other affects cohesion or perhaps the multiplicity and diverging identities in themselves are the root cause.

Mechanisms for widening participation recommended in the current study draw inspiration primarily from the marketing and public administration literature. Further, participation and co-creation have been addressed in studies concerning social innovation and participatory/co-design, which would be valuable references for developing community engagement strategies for PB (Trunfio and Campana, 2019; Go *et al.*, 2015; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2017). Practices and practitioners from these two domains are known for teasing out the creative and innovative ideas and insights from CSH (Manzini and Rizzo, 2011; Storni et al., 2015), as this seems to

be a favourable output of CSH consultation in PB development. Evaluating their success in the PB processes can strengthen the models and tools for a more co-creative approach. Thus, the effectiveness of the mechanisms and interventions in moving CSH to the next level of engagement can be explored in further studies.

The role of the private sector, industry players, businesses or entrepreneurs is widely established in PB and tourism research. Two groups of ISH that require further attention are higher education and the third sector (Reynolds, 2018). The findings regarding the role of HEI from the case study of Northamptonshire arguably have validity based on the literature. It integrates knowledge about universities' contribution to the economic and societal goals of regional development. The inferences cannot be generalised but may be transferrable to other single player universities in peripheral regions since their civic and social ethos, and knowledge institution identity may create a legitimate claim to their engagement as 'facilitators' in PB. Next, the role of VCS in PBG is perhaps the least explored, particularly their intermediary position between ISH and civil society. These findings are preliminary since they emerge from an exploratory study. In core regions and cities, a central coordinator or agencies, such as the DMO or LEP, are likely to play these roles. These agencies may engage external consultants to fill the knowledge and engagement gaps. Further evidence of the extended PPV models in different case contexts is needed to support the findings regarding HEI and VCS in PB. Examining their structural embeddedness in regional development and branding networks can be a useful starting point.

In terms of the methodology, a small sample was recruited within the time and resource limitations of the PhD degree study. The theoretical sampling of ISH and CSH aided in examining stakeholders with different interests and influences in PB. Nonetheless, the study cannot escape the complexity of involving stakeholders in a system of blurred ownership (Reynolds, 2018). For instance, CSH may also represent VCS or ISH-B interests due to their employment; ISH-B or ISH-G's views may be shaped by residential and institutional experiences. Thus, while the codes assigned pertain to their primary role and contribution in PB networks, their perceptions are shaped by the 'many hats' they wear as producers and consumers of the place and place brand. Indeed, data analysis revealed an intermediary position some groups occupied due to the interaction of their institutional and community connections. The present study recognises and embraces this complexity since it illustrates the challenge of stakeholder-led PB.

Additionally, there is the issue of access and responsiveness of stakeholder groups. The current study could have benefited from including a wider range of ISH-B representing engineering, real estate and logistics industries; representatives of county and regional level organisations such as NCC and SEMLEP; and SE-CSH operating in rural settings. One way in which this limitation is addressed is by considering the literature on such stakeholders (Otgaar, 2012; Cleave et al., 2017; Sofield et al., 2017; Quinn, 2015). Further, the significance and role of these groups were discussed by those engaged in the current study. Nonetheless, their direct engagement might have added to the richness of evidence and nuanced understanding of existing themes.

Since an existing PB strategy for Northamptonshire does not exist, ISH and CSH groups who in the past, present or future have the most potential for engaging in PB initiatives formed the majority of the sample. A more mature place brand may concern itself with engaging disengaged stakeholders. Especially in this regard, attention can be paid to stakeholders who do not possess this initial level of access (Reynolds, 2018). Future studies can examine the social representations and inclusion of disadvantaged communities and groups based on demographic profiles.

While it is recognised that place brands are developed at the intersection of internal and external stakeholders' perceptions and needs, given the aim of this study to develop a model for PBG, stakeholders were selected based on their internal relevance and access to engagement processes. This selection process omitted external stakeholders, such as visitors, investors, prospective students, future residents etc., who are important when investigating representations and identity construction. Past studies have looked at the discrepancies between internal and external stakeholders' associations and needs from PB (Zenker and Beckmann, 2013; Merrilees et al., 2012). Based on the conceptualisation of the PM-PB continuum, future researchers should pay attention to the influence of internal and external stakeholders' perceptions and needs on PB development, how these interact and how they may be balanced or addressed by place brand managers.

Despite the constructivist approach to knowledge co-creation, in this study, the focus was on gathering stakeholders' views to understand how they perceived their involvement in the co-production of PB strategies. This study did not engage community stakeholders in participatory action research to build the brand for the county due to the time constraints and resources

available to the researcher. This would be the prime recommendation for researchers, policymakers and practitioners in Northamptonshire. In line with the sentiment expressed by participants in this research, it is an opportune time to publish and make accessible this research since it can inform the spatial and visual strategies of the two new unitary authorities in the county.

Thus, the present case study makes significant theoretical and practical contributions to the branding of urban-rural, resource-constrained regions. This research contributes to a growing body of literature on region branding encompassing various disciplinary perspectives, examining different types and scales of regions and examining contemporary issues of brand and stakeholder management. Future researchers can use the *Conceptual Framework* to analyse city, region and nation branding practices – to draw comparisons based on 'distinctiveness and representativeness', 'inclusiveness and legitimacy' and 'place brand vision and outcomes'. For practitioners and policymakers, it is hoped that the principles and mechanisms for multi-stakeholder PBG will inspire them to develop a more cohesive approach to region branding based on their context specificity.

Appendix 1. List of Acronyms

BBS	Britain's Best Surprise
BID	Business Improvement District
CBC	Corby Borough Council
CSH	Community Stakeholders
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
EMDA	East Midlands Development Agency (the former Regional Development Agency, from 1999-2012)
F&B	Food and Beverage
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ISH	Institutional Stakeholders
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
NBC	Northampton Borough Council
NCC	Northamptonshire County Council
NEP	Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (the former LEP, 2012-2016)
NEL	Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd. (previous company name of NEP, from 2006-2011)
PB	Place Branding
PM	Place Marketing
PBG	Place Brand Governance
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PPV	Public Private Voluntary partnership
SNC	South Northamptonshire Council
SE-CSH	Self-engaged Community Stakeholders
SEMLEP	South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership
UN SDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goal
UON	University of Northampton
USP	Unique Selling Point
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector
WOM	Word of Mouth

Appendix 2. Data Collection Schedules

Phase I: Interviews

Participant code	Date	In Time	Out Time	Audio length	Location
ISH-G-01	28/01/2019	13:30	14:45	65	Participant's workplace
ISH-G-02	06/02/2019	16:00	17:00	50	Participant's workplace
ISH-G-03	11/02/2019	13:00	14:30	75	University
ISH-G-04	11/02/2019	15:00	16:30	82	University
ISH-G-05	21/02/2019	10:00	11:30	96	Participant's workplace
ISH-B-06	13/02/2019	12:30	14:00	85	University
ISH-B-07	12/06/2019	14:30	16:30	60	Participant's workplace
ISH-B-08	08/07/2019	11:00	12:30	70	University
ISH-B-09	17/07/2019	15:00	16:30	86	Participant's workplace
ISH-B-10	07/02/2019	14:00	16:00	112	University
ISH-B-11	02/09/2019	14:00	15:00	60	Phone
ISH-B-12	08/07/2019	14:00	16:00	80	University
ISH-B-13	05/03/2019	10:00	11:30	83	University
ISH-V-14	07/08/2019	14:00	15:30	99	Phone
CSH-V-15	18/02/2019	11:00	12:30	60	Participant's workplace
CSH-V-16	04/07/2019	16:00	16:50	49	Participant's workplace
CSH-V-17	17/07/2019	14:00	16:00	60	Participant's workplace
CSH-V-18	06/09/2019	11:30	12:30	52	Phone
ISH-U-19	17/01/2019	15:30	16:30	42	University
ISH-U-20	31/01/2019	11:00	11:55	52	University
	06/02/2019	12:00	13:20	59	University
ISH-U-21	31/01/2019	14:30	15:30	60	University
ISH-U-22	06/02/2019	09:30	10:30	51	University
ISH-U-23	15/07/2019	11:00	11:45	42	University
CSH-I-01	15/07/2019	13:00	14:30	62	University
CSH-I-02	17/07/2019	11:00	13:00	120	University
CSH-I-03					
CSH-I-04	01/08/2019	11:00	12:00	41	University
CSH-I-05	21/08/2019	11:30	12:30	48	University

Phase II: Focus Groups

Focus Group code	Date	In Time	Out Time	Audio length	Location
CSH-F1	19/11/2019	09:00	11:00	116	University
CSH-F2	25/11/2019	18:00	20:00	112	Community hub
CSH-F3	27/11/2019	17:00	19:00	100	Community hub
CSH-F4	29/11/2019	14:00	15:00	43	University

Appendix 3. List of Secondary Documents Analysed

Sorted in chronological order in accordance with year of publication

Document name	Published	Responsible organisation
Creative and Cultural Sector Group Terms of Reference	2014	SEMLEP
Northamptonshire Strategic Economic Plan	2014	NEP
Strategic Plan for Arts, Heritage, Sports, Visitor Economy, Cultural and Creative Industries: Enhancing the Quality of Life and growing the Economy in the South East Midlands	2014	SEMLEP
Northamptonshire Food & Drink Strategy	2015	NEP
Raising the Bar at the University of Northampton: A review of 5 years of the Changemaker initiative 2010-2015	2015	UON
Research Study: SEMLEP Arts, Heritage, Sports, Visitor Economy, Cultural and Creative Sector	2015	SEMLEP
UON Changemaker Challenges *(4)*	2015	UON
Northamptonshire Heritage Strategy	2016	NCC
Rural Northamptonshire: A plan	2016	SEMLEP
We Love Corby Tourism Policy	2016	CBC
Nenescape Project Governance	2017	Nenescape.org
Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/2018	2017	NBC
South Northamptonshire Tourism Evaluation	2017	SNC
UON Social Impact Report 2016-2017	2017	UON
Future Northants: Local Government Reform Consultation	2018	All councils in the county
UON Strategic Plan 2018	2018	UON
UON Operational Plan 2018 - 2022	2018	UON
Northamptonshire Destination Management Plan 2019-2024	2018	Northamptonshire Surprise Group
Local Industrial Strategy: Emerging policy themes and propositions	2018	SEMLEP
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report: Scrutiny panel – Culture and Tourism	2018	NBC
UON Annual Reports *(4)*	2016-2019	UON
Demography Update: JSNA Insight Pack	2019	NCC
Northamptonshire Surprise Membership Structure	2019	Northamptonshire Surprise Group
Northamptonshire Business Growth report: A closer look tracking the growth of the leading performers in the county	2019	BDO LLP
SEM Local industrial strategy: A Partner in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc	2019	SEMLEP
South Northamptonshire Business Plan 2019-20	2019	SNC

Appendix 4. Place Branding Handout Sheet for Participants

Place Branding: At a glance

Branding is creating narratives: It is the stories we tell ourselves and others about who we are as a place/community.

Place brand is formed of the **brand perception of the target audience (reputation)** and **the self-perception of the place stakeholders (identity).**

Goals of Place Branding:

- Celebrating the place
- Finding the uniqueness
- Raising awareness or profile
- Changing perceptions

Multi-stakeholder Process of Place Branding:

- **Setting vision** for the place : based on identity, uniqueness and value proposition
- **Creating structures for implementation :** strategy, blueprint, institutions / working group, policy
- **Building assets strength** : infrastructure, services, culture and intangible assets
- **Mobilising stakeholders on-the-ground** : engaging business and community groups
- (finally) **Marketing the offer** : communication to internal and external audience

Appendix 5. Extracts from Data Analysis

5.1. Extracts from the Notebook

5.1.1.   Notes made during the first interview (17/01/2019)
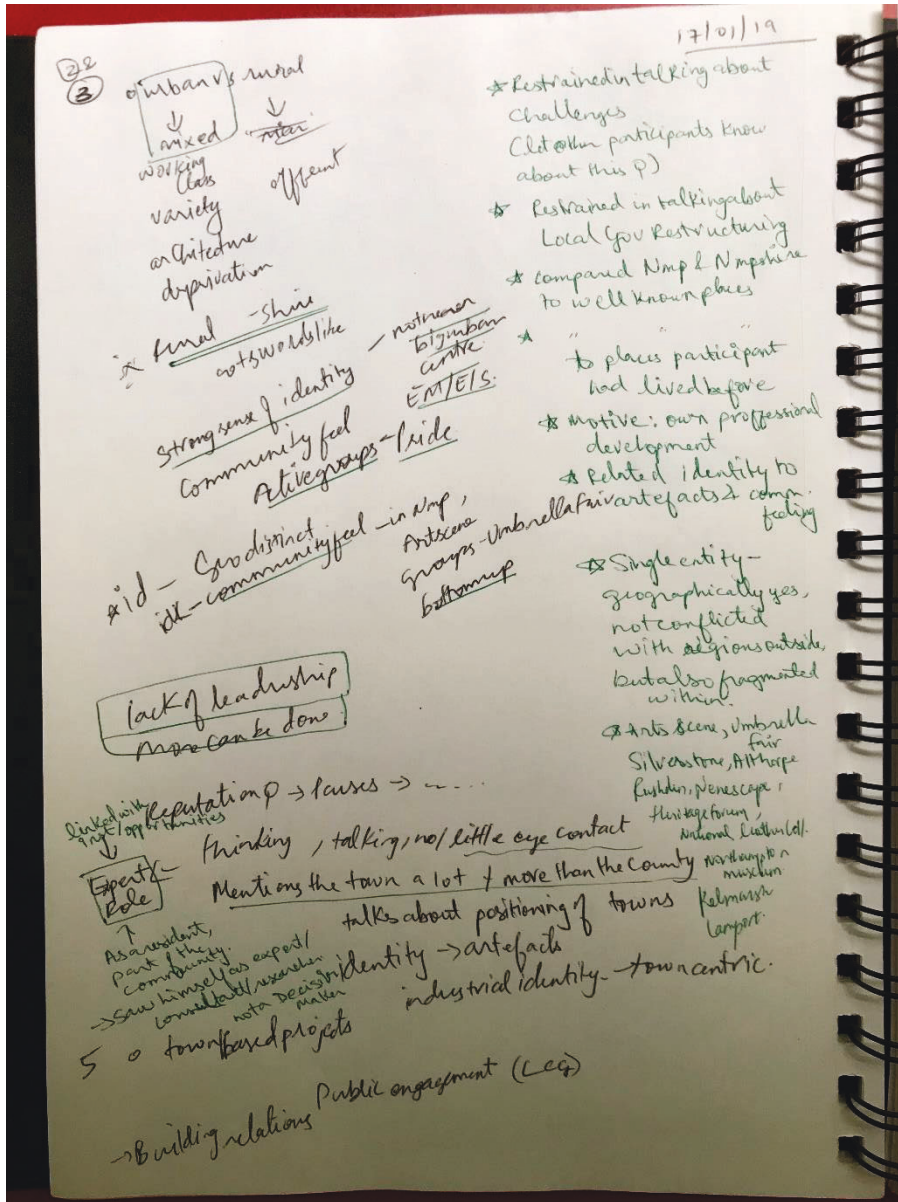
5.1.2. Notes made while analysing the roles of stakeholders
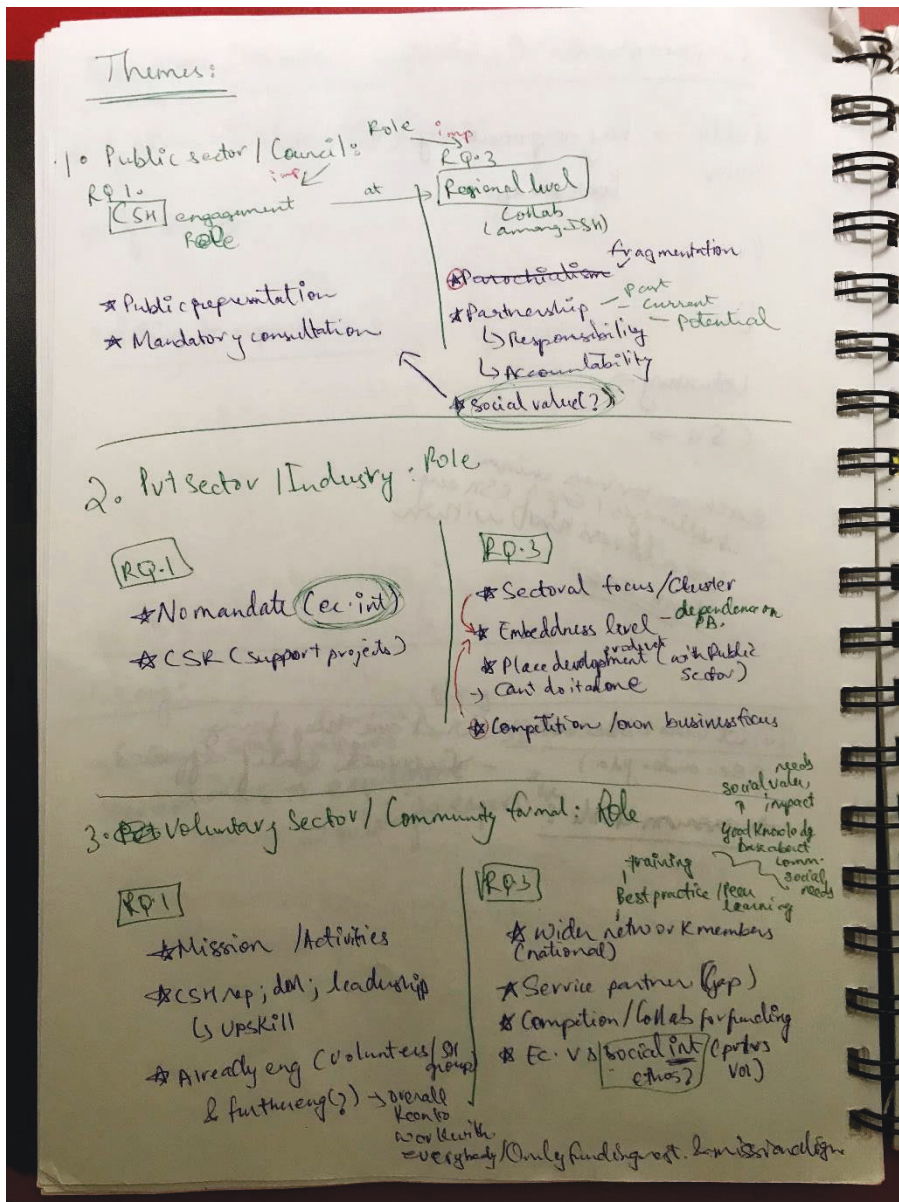
5.1.3. Overview of stakeholders' expected (X), assumed (O) and potential (OO) roles.

	Public	Pvt	VS	CSH
1. Ideation (Brainstorming) vision-identity-story	O	OO *creative*	O	OO *commit*
2. Basis of identity	X *negative*	O *sectoral*	O → *comm.*	O *spirit*
3. Expertise /Steering Creative decision	~ *maybe profes*	OO	~ *maybe profes*	X
4. Deliveing the Brand experience	OO *develop*	O *comm. T.P.*	O *service*	~ O *placemaking*
5. funding	O *exp.*	O *exp*	X *inexp.*	X
5a. funding CSH projects	O *respons.*	O *CSR*	~ *manager expert*	X
6. Community engagement	~ *mandate basic*	X	O *rep*	O *SE ref*
6a. SH engagement	O *instigator ISH*	~ *big/small Sector*	~ *CSH → CCH*	O *info*
7. wom				OO
Representation	*Place spatial boundary*	X *ec. interest Sector*	CSH *Social*	O *CSH resider*

257

5.2. Extracts from NVivo12 (abductive analysis)

5.2.1. Initial Coding of stakeholders roles (dated 23/04/2019)

SH categories	10	32	08/04/2019 13:31
Businesses - Private sector	6	8	07/02/2019 11:09
economic contribution	0	0	16/04/2019 14:42
Given role	0	0	23/04/2019 10:12
marketing expertise	0	0	16/04/2019 18:21
missing the bigger picture	1	1	08/04/2019 12:13
opportunism economic incentive	0	0	16/04/2019 14:40
Own role	0	0	23/04/2019 10:12
Community	4	5	25/01/2019 14:49
Government	4	15	25/01/2019 14:42
LGR uncertainity	2	2	12/04/2019 10:13
low expectations	1	1	16/04/2019 12:35
Political agenda	3	5	11/04/2019 13:49
Relationship	2	2	01/03/2019 10:23
Role - Responsibility	0	0	09/04/2019 10:54

5.2.2. Sorting codes into categories - assumed and expected roles (dated 12/06/2019)

Government	5	15	25/01/2019 14:42
Assumed-given role overlap - in place	0	0	04/06/2019 12:16
Given role - in place	1	1	23/04/2019 10:11
Political agenda	4	6	11/04/2019 13:49
Relationship	1	1	01/03/2019 10:23
Rigidity - our rules	1	1	04/06/2019 15:31
Self-assumed role - in place	0	0	23/04/2019 10:10

5.2.3. End of Phase I - inductive-deductive analysis leading to categorisation of stakeholders roles, motivations, enablers/barriers (dated 13/11/2019)

SH roles

Name	Files	Referen	Created On
CSH	19	30	28/05/2019 13:44
ISH	40	328	08/04/2019 13:31
Businesses - Private sector	12	20	07/02/2019 11:09
Councils	30	160	25/01/2019 14:42
Cultural institutions	1	1	30/10/2019 10:13
Intermediaries	7	12	25/01/2019 14:12
ISH hymn sheet	1	1	31/10/2019 13:08
Media	0	0	07/03/2019 14:33
Self perception identity	8	9	18/04/2019 12:47
SEMLEP	9	21	31/07/2019 12:26
SH traits	0	0	09/07/2019 15:13
Themes	0	0	12/03/2019 15:24
University	24	86	08/04/2019 13:39
Barriers to access	3	3	13/11/2019 17:02
Contribution	2	2	13/11/2019 16:59
Expected role	2	3	05/07/2019 13:34
Motivations	7	13	07/06/2019 14:22
Role	10	35	25/01/2019 14:17
Voluntary sector	9	18	18/04/2019 14:55

5.2.4. Phase II – Generating themes and codes for CSH and SE-CSH engagement (dated 19/06/2020)

4. PPB

Name	Files	Reference	Created On
○ CSH Engagement strategies from ISH pov	17	42	31/07/2019 16:10
⊞ ○ Barriers	9	12	07/04/2020 10:30
○ Efficacy	4	9	05/06/2019 11:24
⊞ ○ Inclusion	11	18	04/07/2019 11:51
○ Logistics issues	3	4	19/06/2020 10:25
⊞ ○ Physical space	19	35	09/07/2019 15:26
⊞ ○ Process	8	15	28/05/2019 09:55
○ Transition county	1	1	02/04/2020 18:05
○ SE CSH	34	121	25/01/2019 14:30
⊞ ○ Barriers	6	10	01/03/2020 12:05
⊞ ○ Benefits of CSH participation	7	12	01/03/2020 12:05
⊞ ○ Challenges	19	48	23/04/2019 10:06
⊞ ○ Enablers	11	18	23/04/2019 10:02
⊞ ○ Motivations	10	12	23/04/2019 10:01

5.2.5. Finalising CSH roles – Concept map created on NVivio12 (dated 16/06/2020)
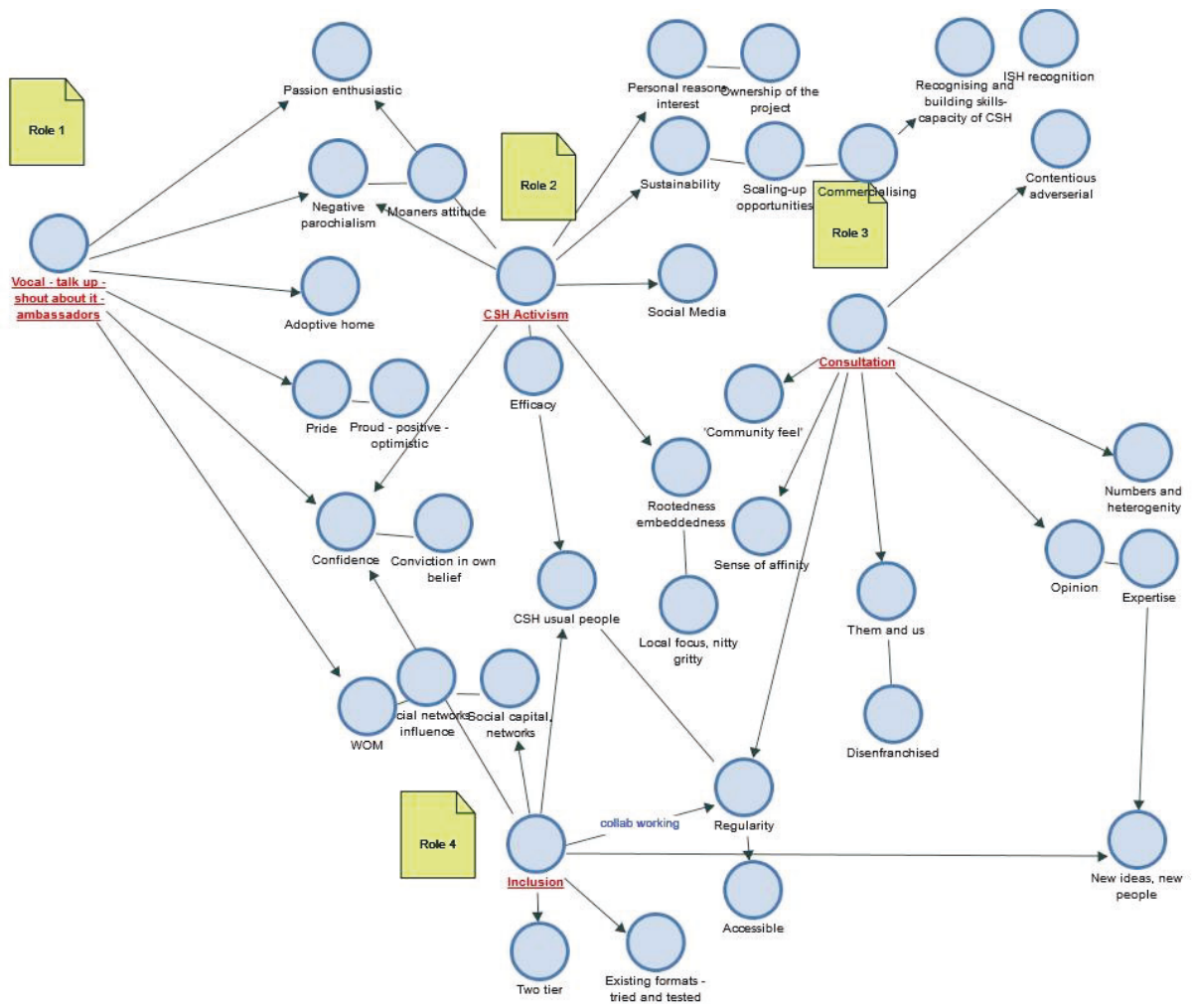
5.3. Extracts from Focus Groups participants' brainstorming on post-it notes

5.3.1. Selected extracts from Focus Group 2 and 3 – responding to the prompts:

- What comes to mind when I say Northamptonshire?
- What makes Northamptonshire a unique place to live, work, or visit?
- How would you describe Northamptonshire to an outsider? Summarise in three words.
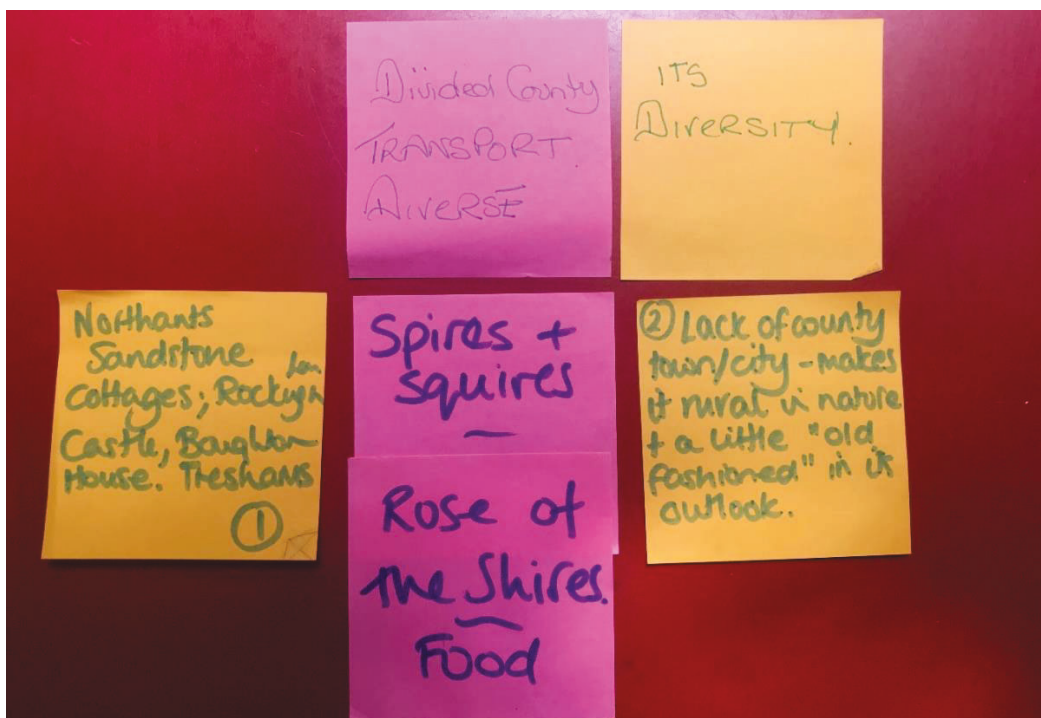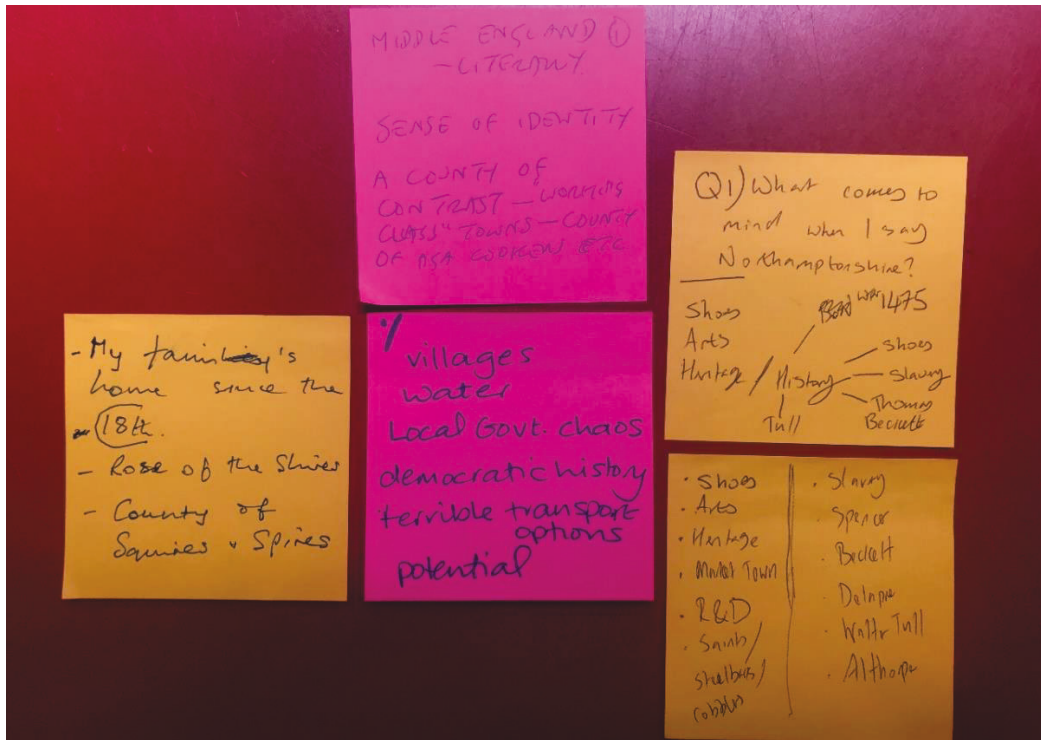
5.3.2. Researcher's concept generation for identity-based brand architecture strategy
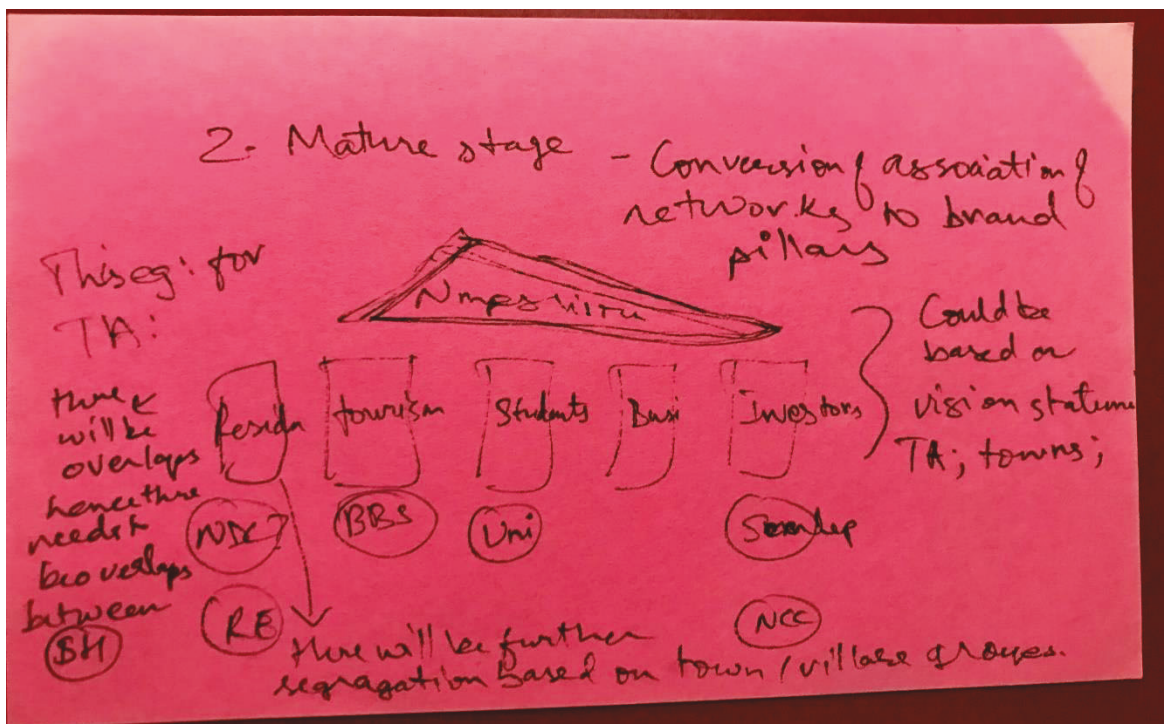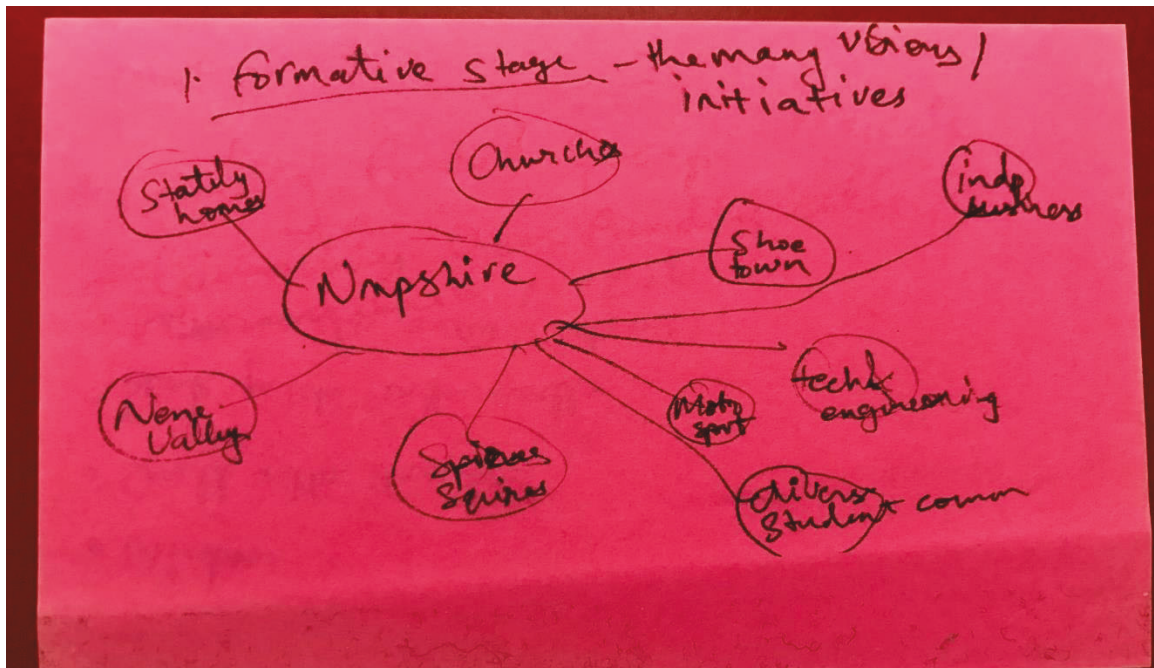
5.3.3. Researcher's concept for 'brand teams' of existing PB initiatives in Northamptonshire

Appendix 6. Selected Entries and Notes from the Reflexive Journal

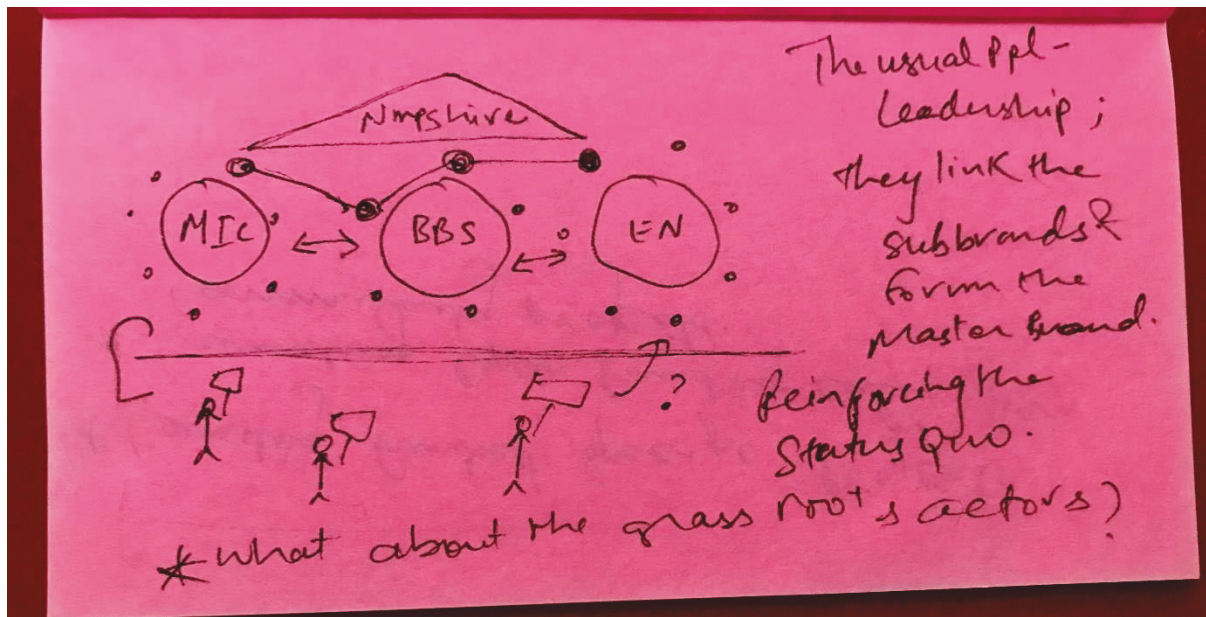| Date	Notes	Action points
15/01/2019	I have secured four interviews with institutional stakeholders (govt and university) in the upcoming weeks. I would like to modify the interview schedule to tailor it to the interviewees (**what knowledge they hold, what rich info I can gather from them based on their expertise and experience**) but without losing focus of the research aims and objectives (what I want to know that is pertinent to the research). Striking this balance is really important for two reasons - (i) I have limited time to interview ISH because of their tight schedules. (ii) If I produce an unmanageable data set it will be tedious to sort and analyse.	
28/02/2019	The key decisions I have made so far is: 1. Interviewing Institutional Stakeholders first to understand the current state of SH collab in Nmpshire and the current branding efforts. 2. I mostly interviewed govt stakeholders (such as officers and councillors) since their role was most closely related with boosting the reputation, raising the profile and economy of the area and they often sign posted and networked with the business community in their area). I spoke to one councillor who was incharge of community engagement and one key decison makers because they are in a position to directly influence policy making. 3. I spoke to ISH-B - who had previously been involved in 'branding' of the county and towns. They provided good secondary sources for examination such as strategy plans and creative outputs of the previous campaigns. 4. ISH-V was good to provide an understanding of rural communities, issues etc. 5. Another ISH-B revealed the views of 'big' businesses in the county - why would they get involved, how, their incentive and view point. 6. A number of staff from the HEI in the county provided 'expert' opinion on the county - their view as a collaborator with public/private/voluntary sectors and community groups. It also seems that they play an 'intermediary' role. 7. Basis, the interviews thus far, some sort of repetition was seen in the accounts of - officers, different types of ISH from the same town (Nmp in this case), and overall govt stakeholders. In the next phase of interviewing, the following views will be sought - **businesses (associations, small independent, big touristic destinations), Sh from varied towns and districts** (esp Corby and South Northants since their views have not been captured yet), **parish councils.**	

	9. It is expected that from these new contacts in the next phase, rural community groups, community groups from outside the central town will be recruited for focus groups. 10. Since so far, 6/13 ISH interviewees have been from Nmp town, attempt will be made to include ISH and community stakeholders from outside this locale. After all other locales have been explored, in the last focus group, if need be, participants from nmp town will be included.	
01/03/2019	**Abductive Coding:** For generating initial codes, given the vast amount of data (1 hr + average audio time), the following parent nodes (categories) were created on nvivo - Branding, Identity, Development, Reputation, Collaboration, Role of Govt, Role of Community, Role of Pvt sector, Rural vs Urban / Local vs Regional. These parent nodes weren't directly coded, however, the nodes that were being generated were placed under one of these categories. Obviously, miscellaneous nodes also appeared, they were coded and new categories emerged such as: <u>About Participants, Role of Intermediaries, Situational Local Government Restructuring, Identity-development (theme), The place</u>. This coding guide (categories) were populated inductively. These were felt necessary to establish at the begining of coding because participants relayed a lot of information that could be considered relevant to their perception of place and branding, and other place-related elements such as governance, personal background, growing-up etc. However, this was felt to be too broad and coding everything inductively (using grounded theory approach) would make it difficult to answer the research questions that were related to perceptions of: <u>role of different stakeholders in place branding, stakeholder collaboration and local vs regional branding.</u>	
04/03/2019	**Coding and Analysis:** The decision logged in the last entry was made based on a pilot coding that was done with the first three interviews. While these interviews were being conducted, I transcribed them and fed them into Nvivo 11 (later converted to 12). I tried to code theme inductively only which seemed challenging given the long lengths of the interview and that 'everything' seemed important to code at that point. This is quite common for novice researchers and even for other qualitative researchers at the begining of the coding/analysis process. To overcome this challenge, primarily regarding data management and sorting (preparing for more detailed analysis), I established categories based on the literature review and coded and allocated nodes under them inductively, miscellaneous codes also arose, these weren't discarded. **Additions to Literature Review:** (i) network governance, self-governance, tourism governance (top-down and grass roots), multi-stakeholder governance approach, Collaborative governance (keep it limited - tightly scoped). (ii) Stakeholder self-engagement/<u>community self-engagement</u> in civic matters, tourism, political participation activism, place making, policy making.	

05/03/2019	**Secondary data:** All strategy documents published for the county of Northamptonshire or any of its constituent institutions and organisations in relation to making the place better were identified since 2015. The aim of secondary data analysis is - to assess the existing mood/appetite for collaboration in the county. However, local authority restructuring means the strategy plans drawn regarding place branding before unitary change are redundant since these will change, however, private sector plans would be unaffected so these will be reviewed. **Analysis tools on Nvivo:** Autocode, esp, secondary documents. Generate - Heirarchy codes chart.	
06/03/2019	**Initial Coding:** In the first instance, I am coding intuitively, everything that feels important manually taking an abductive approach and then using the _Autocode_ option on Nvivo 12 to compare nodes/codes generated manually and the system to capture the essence of the interview, ensuring ensure nothing has been missed and the first list of codes have been expanded. Autocoding is good for generating general themes discussed in the interview and describing what was said about certain aspects so probably sentiment mapping - this can be beneficial in guaging views on particular stakeholders and collaboration in general, affinity to town/locale vs county/region. Case selection: I am considering creating further units of analysis within the case study of Northamptonshire, for example the differences between projects/initiatives driven by top-down approach and grass-roots approach (eg. BBS /Love Corby vs Made in Corby). Additionally, smaller units of analysis for local vs regional brands, at the local level focusing on the brands of Corby, (maybe East Northants), Northampton (two types of initiatives from ISH and CSH) and South Northants (district) vs Northamptonshire. So across all local cases comparing the initiatives led by ISH and CSH. Also, analysing how these three places might be working with one another vs how the county might be functioning (the future of the county-level organisations - NCCom, NCCoun).	
12/04/2019	At first, I started heavily populating the parent nodes of - Identity, Development, Reputation (ocassionally), Branding (definition, elements), The Place and About Participants. I realise now that I was collecting and coding descriptive data. I created many categories of descriptive words that were said about these topics, I was using those topics as a theme. I started seeing patterns and links between Identity and Development, a sort of inverse relationship. This was the first relationship I discovered in my data and it was exciting. However, I soon realised that it wasn't clear how this relationship related to my research questions. At the same time, the relationship didn't seem novel - it was kind of a given/established phenomena in perhaps Geography or Urban Development that whenever there's a new development, community may oppose it because they see it as a loss of their place identity.	

	Now, I realise as I code more in the following Sections: SH categories, Collaboration, Branding (Organisation), Local vs Regional, that I am begining to move things away from the descriptive nodes and add them to the parent node (that are critical to my research) where they make the most sense. The only discrepancy is that sometimes I feel one node can be moved to multiple categories. For example, 'Placemaking' was under Branding (Elements), it appeared that ISH thought this to be the role of community, so I moved it under Community (role), however, in some instances ISH (govt) think that they are also enacting placemaking - so there was a dilemma whether I should duplicate the node. I had read in some guidelines before starting coding that it's bad practise so for the time being I have placed Policy and Planning (which was previously under Development) under Government (Role - Responsibility). This is similar to 'placemaking' but completely different since it implies that govt have the responsibility of affecting big developmental and policy changes whereas community are enacting community-level-grassroots change in their place.	
15/04/2019	This Phase I helped me gauge that while participants were happy talking about their locale and what they have done (initiatives/schemes/projects), they didn't necessarily reflect a lot on their actions pertaining to engagement and collaboration - these aspects are relevant enough to focus but leaving to the very end presents a very narrow opportunity to explore them in depth. These need to become central themes in the interviews and spoken about in the first possible instance. In Phase II, I want to narrow my focus on my core research topic - Collaboration and Community Participation. So I want to talk specifically to those who respond to my invitation after having taken in these key words.	
16/07/2019	The selection of methods - interviews - for engaging ISH was felt to be straightforward. It seemed the natural choice (even though DELPHI and other discursive forms of engagement were discussed and debated with self and supervisors). For CSH this selection of appropriate methods is still being thought about - should it be also Interviews or only FG (owing to its discursive format) or a blend of Interviews and FG to capture both depth and breadth. Motivation to use FG or workshop/design charrette format was based on the personal view of doing a multimethod study. Challenges would be - how to analyse this data, the format would not be the same as interviews so there would be challenges in organising, recruiting participants, facilitating for a novice researcher and then analysing data with multi participants in the same setting. This dilemma reflects the complexity of CSH engagement even in PB where modes/formats/tools for consultation are not particularly clear. But by using a challenging method/applying charrettes in the PB context, my research could make a methodological contribution.	Decide methodology for CSH data collection and analysis based on Research questions.

09/01/2020	Transcribing FG data: The emergent data is group data and cannot be viewed as individual opinion as it is generated in response to the group's prompts, norms, context. Within a different group the same person would seem to hold different opinions and priorities. the data is result of group interaction. Both what info is revealed and what is withheld by an individual is their response to the group conversation.	
04/05/2020	As I am writing my findings, having the frames of reference/broader constructs from the literature are helping my structure my writing. For eg. in the 1st findings Chapter I am analysing perceptions of Northamptonshire through the constructs of reputation, sense of recognition (relating to image) and development and identity (both historic and transient/that which is considered marketable). Further concepts of vision and uniqueness are also important and are cropping up in both perceptions of Northamptonshire and Branding.	Use RQ and LR concepts to structure the analysis/discussion.

Appendix 7. Ethical Approval Documentation

7.1. Overview of the ethical procedures

I have read and understood the University of Northampton's research ethics guidelines (2015). To safeguard the institutional stakeholders participating in this research, I will:

- *maintain the highest professional standards and act in a moral and ethical manner throughout the research project.*
- *represent the University of Northampton positively.*
- *adhere to the University's Code of Ethics.*
- *maintain integrity and ensure the work of others is acknowledged and cited appropriately.*
- *promote equal opportunity wherever possible and will avoid any discriminatory behaviour.*
- *develop and maintain professional relationships with all involved in the research project, ensuring courtesy and respect at all times.*
- *continuously reflect on and ensure adherence to health and safety considerations.*

Duration	1 January 2019 – 30 November 2019
Project Funding	University of Northampton, Faculty of Business and Law Studentship 2017-2020
Ethics Training Completed	Compulsory online modules: • Research Ethics: Good Research Practice • Becoming an Ethical Researcher Optional online modules: • Research with Human Subjects • Research Ethics in Practice
Ethical approval	Phased approval was obtained from UON Research Ethics Committee on 8/11/2018 for Phase I (interviews with ISH and CSH). Full approval was obtained on 16/10/2019 for Phase II (focus groups with CSH) – to conclude the research.
Access to research setting	**Interviews:** For the collection of data, I am required to have access to members of the local government, businesses and civil society who are actively involved in Northamptonshire's community. Some networks have been established by me and the supervisory team in preparation for data collection. Additional networks will be made through the University of Northampton's Key Sector and Knowledge Transfer Manager. When recruiting institutional stakeholders it will be made clear that they are being interviewed for their opinions and views and not representing the views of the organisation they work for. Neither the participants nor their organisations will be identified in the study. Since participants will only be

	asked about their own opinions and not about the factual or sensitive details of their personal and professional life, no additional permission is required. No gatekeepers are involved. The individuals' consent to participate in the research will be of utmost importance. Consent will be obtained prior to commencing the interviews. The next step in this research would be to invite stakeholders to take part in the interviews. **Focus Groups:** No institutional/organisational permission is needed to access the research participants. The focus group sessions will be conducted on the University premises in Northampton. In other towns and villages, community centres or function rooms in a central location will be hired (£15 per hour) for a half a day.
Sampling and recruitment	**Interviews:** This research will use purposive sampling technique to recruit institutional stakeholders and community stakeholders from Northamptonshire. These two categories have been derived from the literature review. In each category a heterogeneous sampling strategy will be employed to recruit stakeholders with diverse profiles so that a wide range of themes concerning each category of stakeholders can be observed. A key criteria that all participants of the study must meet is that they must be residents of Northamptonshire. Purposive sampling is useful in identifying those stakeholders in Northamptonshire who will be interested in collaborating for place branding. Active members of Northamptonshire's community have been identified through their mention in media and participation in community events. I have gathered some contacts through networking and through the supervisory team. These are collated in the list of potential participants. Participants will be recruited through an Invitation Letter sent via my University email id. This letter will summarise the aim and method of the study and ask the participants if they want to participate in the research. **Focus Groups:** This research will use purposive sampling technique to recruit community stakeholders from Northamptonshire. Purposive sampling is useful in identifying those stakeholders in Northamptonshire who will be interested in collaborating for place branding. Active members of Northamptonshire's community have been identified through their mention in media and participation in community events. Additionally, some networks have been established during the Phase I of data collection. Voluntary sector organisations that are engaged with their local community will help me recruit participants for the focus group.

	A heterogeneous sampling strategy will be employed to recruit stakeholders with diverse profiles (age, gender and ethnicity). A key criterion that all participants of the study must meet is that they must be residents of Northamptonshire. A call for participants will be sent out through these organisations. The invitation letter has been attached.
Participant Information	The Invitation Letter and Participant Information Sheet will be sent to the participants via email. On the day of the interview/focus group, a printed copy of the Information Sheet will be made available to all participants, this will outline the research aims and methods. There will be opportunity to ask questions before, during and after the interview/focus group session.
Informed consent	On the date of the interview/focus group, participants will be provided with the printed version of the Information Sheet along with the Consent Form. They will be given ample time to read the two documents. Any concerns regarding their participation will be discussed and resolved. I will obtain informed consent from participants prior to commencing the interview/focus group. This study does not expect to involve disadvantaged/vulnerable people, disabled or differently abled persons.
Right to withdraw / amending consent	Participants will be informed about their right to amend consent and withdraw from the study within 30 days from the interview/focus group date and that they can chose not to answer any question. All this information will be provided in the Information Sheet and Consent form. This will also be verbally explained to the participants prior to the interview/focus group discussion.
Avoiding harm	It is unlikely that the participants will be adversely affected by this research. Still, the research recognises these issues pertaining to the research method: Communication between researcher and participants: I recognize that the views of the participants may be different from mine. I will be sensitive to their point of view and in my line of questioning. To ensure clear and conflict-free communication, I will avoid using emotive and confusing words in my communication. To ensure that I have not misheard or misinterpreted the participants, clarifications will be made during the focus group. Attendance to interpersonal dynamics: The rules of the meeting will be established at the beginning of the meeting and mentioned again if the need arises. This will aid in minimising distress caused by participation in a group setting. Since the participants are asked to reveal individual experiences and thoughts, differences in opinion may occur. This is not an issue, per se, however if such differences hijack the group discussion, I will request the participants to move onto the next topic to keep with time. If an issue cannot be resolved in this manner and causes distress to participants, the session will be concluded.

	Control and use of data: Participants views shared during the group discussions will be made anonymous as much as possible by using pseudonyms. While I can request that participants maintain confidentiality about what has occurred in the group, this cannot be assured. All this will be clearly communicated in the Information Sheet and Consent Form. It is very unlikely that matters of wider concern or evidence of past, present or probable harm or malpractice will be disclosed by the participants during this research owing to the line of questioning. However, if such situation arises, I would consult with my supervisor and participants would be directed to appropriate sources of advice. If differences in opinion between participants hijack the group discussion, I will request the participants to move onto the next topic to keep with time. If the issue cannot be resolved in this manner and causes distress to participants, the focus group session will be concluded. Based on the Risk Assessment, it is not likely that this study will pose risk of harm or distress, psychologically or physically, to researchers or participants. Thus, it is unlikely that this research will have to stop because of the aforementioned reasons.
Anonymity	Personal details of the participants will only be known to me. All participants will be informed before the session starts and through the consent form that they are responsible for keeping confidentiality about the other participants and everything they have heard during the session. During transcription, participants will be allocated codes and their personal details kept separate and secure in a separate location from the transcripts and audio files. Participants views shared during the group discussions will be made anonymous as much as possible by using pseudonyms. Participants will be able to withdraw all or part of their answers.
Researcher's Experience	I hold a BSc in Visual Communication (1st class) and MA in Design and Branding Strategy (Merit). I developed an interest in my field of research – Place Branding – while writing my postgraduate dissertation, 'Fostering Brand Advocacy via City-Citizen Interactions'. The key findings of my research were published by Strategic Design Research Journal in the article, 'Strategic Design to foster City-Citizen Interactions' in 2016. I have engaged with the field of place branding by attending pertinent conferences such as Corfu Symposium 2019 and Academy of Marketing Doctoral Colloquium 2019. My professional background is in Digital Marketing and Branding. I have worked as Junior Brand Manager and conceptualised digital campaigns for global and local brands in India. I have attended the following Graduate School workshops to support my understanding of Research Ethics: Risk

	Assessing your Research; Reflective practice and the research process: collecting and analysing qualitative data; Project and Time Planning Tips and resources. I have also attended the Faculty of Business and Law - PhD Boot Camp on Data Management Planning. In the first phase of data collection, I conducted about 30 interviews with institutional and community stakeholders in Northamptonshire. Through this I have gained experience of conducting research with human participants. I have now a greater awareness and engagement with my case study context, Northamptonshire. I will continue to seek guidance from the supervision team on my methodology.

7.2. Interview Invitation Letter through the University Connection

Subject: UoN Research regarding Northamptonshire

Hi [name],

Following up on our conversation earlier, I would like to invite the government and business stakeholders in Northamptonshire to take part in my PhD research - 'Stakeholder Collaboration in Branding the county of Northamptonshire'.

Interested stakeholders are invited to an hour-long interview, scheduled at their convenience and at their premises or the University campus. The aim is to understand their views about the identity, reputation and development of Northamptonshire. My research will gather diverse views and provide insight into the intent for collaboration among public, private and voluntary sectors at the local and county level. The research findings and insights will be shared with all participants in the form of a report. This can be used by the participants to identify like-minded organisations, learn from existing case studies of collaboration and create partnerships to promote their sector and the county. As such their participation will contribute to understanding how local stakeholders may work together to enhance the place brand reputation of the county.

Could you please share this invitation among your contacts and direct the interested parties to me.

Thank you for your help!

Shalini Bisani
PhD student
Faculty of Business and Law
University of Northampton
shalini.bisani@northampton.ac.uk

7.3. Focus Group Invitation Letter

Dear (First Name),

My name is Shalini. I'm a PhD student at the University of Northampton. I am conducting research on Branding the county of Northamptonshire and I would like to talk to you about your opinions on the county and how you are engaging in the community.

The aim of my research is to understand the views of the local government, businesses and community about Northamptonshire. This research will help to understand the opinions of stakeholders across the county for working together.

If you would like to share your experience and knowledge of the county to help my research, please get in touch by emailing me at shalini.bisani@northampton.ac.uk. Participation in this research involves taking part in a group discussion in (name of place) that would last approximately 2 hours. Ideally, the discussion will be audio-recorded and notes will be taken.

As a participant, you will receive the findings from this study in the form of a report. This can be used to identify like-minded groups and organisations, learn from existing case studies of collaboration and create partnerships to promote your projects and the county.

Please get in touch with me if you have any questions. You can also contact my academic supervisors Dr Marcella Daye and Dr Kathleen Mortimer at the University of Northampton.

Best regards,
Shalini Bisani
PhD student
Faculty of Business & Law
University of Northampton
shalini.bisani@northampton.ac.uk

7.4. Participant Information Sheet

Research Title: Exploring stakeholder collaboration in place branding strategies for the county of Northamptonshire.

Researcher: Ms Shalini Bisani

About the research
This research is funded by a studentship from the University of Northampton. The PhD research is situated in the Faculty of Business and Law in the field of 'Place Branding'.

The aim of my study is to understand the views of the government, business and local community about collaboration and community engagement in branding Northamptonshire. The research findings and insights will be shared with all participants in the form of a report. This can be used by the participants to identify like-minded organisations, learn from existing case studies of collaboration and create partnerships to promote their sector and the county. This research will help all involved participants understand the mood of stakeholders across sectors and across the county for working together.

What will my participation involve?
Participation in this study involves taking part in a face to face interview that would last approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour. Ideally, the interview will be audio-recorded and notes will be taken during the interview.

I will be asking you about your views and opinions on the county of Northamptonshire, its identity, its stakeholders and the spirit of collaboration. There are no right or wrong answers and you will be encouraged to share your perspective on the subject.

What happens after the interview?
The recorded interview will be transcribed (typed up) by me. I will anonymise your data by removing all personal identifying information about you from the transcripts. If you wish to receive these transcripts, please indicate this in the consent form. This will give you the opportunity to check that the transcript accurately represents your opinions. You can delete or modify any piece of information you believe to be inaccurate or that may identify you or cause reputational damage.

Will other people know what I say in the interview?
Any recorded interviews will only be accessed by me and my two supervisors. Your real name and any other information that may personally identify you will not be mentioned in the interview transcripts. In place of your name, I will allocate a code name so that your details are not shared with anyone other than myself and my supervisors. When I am writing up my PhD dissertation, I may quote something you have said during the interview, however, your name will not be mentioned in any publications.

Your personal details will remain confidential. Anonymity is guaranteed for all information shared with me during the interview. The only exception is: if any matters of wider concern or evidence of past, present or probable harm or malpractice are disclosed, I will have to report it to my supervisors.

What if I don't want to answer a question or take part in the study anymore?
You only have to answer questions you are happy to answer and you may stop the interview at any time. You can also amend any part of the consent form within 30 days from the interview date.

What will happen to this research?
This research will remain the property of the University of Northampton but it is expected that the findings will be shared with the wider research community and submitted for publication at conferences and academic journals. These submissions will contribute to the body of research in 'Place Branding'. Further, the research findings and insights will be shared with all participants in the form of a report.

Contact Information

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Northampton Research Ethics Committee. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact me, Shalini Bisani at shalini.bisani@northampton.ac.uk

You can also contact my PhD supervisors:

Dr Marcella Daye (marcella.daye@northampton.ac.uk) and

Dr Kathleen Mortimer (kathleen.mortimer@northampton.ac.uk)

Privacy Notice:
This privacy notice tells you about the information I will collect from you during the interview. In collecting this information, I am acting as a data controller and, by law, I am required to provide you with information about how I will collect, use, manage and share your data.

What personal details will be collected?
When you agree to be interviewed, I will ask for your permission to store your name and email address in the research database only for the duration of the PhD research (approximately 2 years). After the completion of the PhD, your personal details will be deleted from the database.

Why are you collecting this information?
This information is collected in order to maintain contact with you, to clarify information about the interview, share the interview transcripts, research updates and results. Your information is stored in the research database accessible only to me and my two supervisors. Your personal information is not shared with any third parties. It is not sent outside of the UK. I will not use the information to make any automated decisions that might affect you.

Where will my information be stored?
Digital data will be encrypted and stored on the University of Northampton's secure servers and physical data and materials will be stored under lock and key on university grounds.

How long will you keep this information for?
Personal details will only be kept for the sole purpose and duration of the research. Anonymised data from the interviews will be archived for 10 years on an open access repository.

Your rights over your information:
By law, you can ask me what information I hold about you, and you can ask me to correct it if it is inaccurate. You can also ask for it to be erased and you can ask for a copy of the information. You can also ask me to stop using your information – the simplest way to do this is to withdraw your consent, which you can do within 30 days from the interview date.

If you have concerns about this research:
This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Northampton Research Ethics Committee. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Chair of the Ethics Committee at the University of Northampton, Dr John Horton.
Full address: The University of Northampton, University Drive, Northampton NN1 5PH (or email at John.Horton@northampton.ac.uk)

7.5. Interview Consent Form

Research title: Exploring stakeholder collaboration in place branding strategies for the county of Northamptonshire.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project.

Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken by UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to be interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation.

If you have any questions regarding the research please find the information provided on the Information Sheet.

Important Note:

a. If you do not understand any aspect or would like further information please do ask.
b. If you **do not consent** to the statements below, please mark it and we can discuss this further.
c. Sign the bottom of the sheet if you agreed with the consent form.

Contact Information

Name of researcher: Shalini Bisani

E-mail: shalini.bisani@northampton.ac.uk

You can also contact my PhD supervisors:

Dr Marcella Daye (marcella.daye@northampton.ac.uk) and

Dr Kathleen Mortimer (kathleen.mortimer@northampton.ac.uk)

By signing this form I agree that:

Please enter your initials in the appropriate box to confirm your understanding and agreement with each statement.

	Yes	No
I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time.		
I have read the Information Sheet and know what the research involves.		
I do not expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation.		
I agree to my name and email id being stored in the research database for the duration of the research.		
I understand that I may be contacted at a later date of this interview for further clarification.		
I agree to this interview being audio recorded.		
I would like to request a copy of the transcript of my interview.		
I understand that I can make edits to the interview transcripts to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality.		
I understand that this data will be kept at the University of Northampton and its online systems and may be used for articles or reports as an output of this research thesis, but my confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained.		
I agree to be quoted directly.		
I understand that I have the right to erasure up to 30 days after this interview, without having to explain my reasoning, and my record of participation will be destroyed. After the 30 days period, I will be unable to withdraw from the research.		
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and my participation.		
I understand that if criminal activity is clearly identified during the research, it will be reported to the proper authorities.		
The use of the data in the research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.		
I agree to participate in this data collection as outlined to me above.		

Printed Name: _____

Participant's Signature _____   Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____   Date _____

7.6. ISH Interview Guide

My name is Shalini Bisani. I am a PhD student at the University of Northampton. I am here today because I would like to understand your views (as a stakeholder) about your county - Northamptonshire, (specifically) about collaboration and community engagement in branding Northamptonshire.

I would like to stress that the information you share with me today will be considered as your personal views and not those of the organisation that you represent. There are no right or wrong answers and I hope you can share your honest opinions and experiences with me.

This interview will be used as a primary source for my PhD research. The findings of this research will be presented as a part of my PhD research degree and can be published in academic conferences and journal articles. The research findings and insights will be shared with all participants in the form of a report.

To ensure that I do not miss anything while interviewing you, your interview will be audio recorded. If you do not feel comfortable at any point of the interview, please let me know and we can stop/pause the recording. But it is important for you to be aware that your identity and all information recorded from this interview will be only be accessed by me and my supervisory team. In all typed up documents, your identity will be anonymously coded and nobody can identify you in any way. You have the right to withdraw from the research within 30 days from the interview date.

You will find more information on how the data will be stored and managed in the Information Sheet. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me.

This interview will last for about 1 hour. If you do not wish to answer one or more of the questions, please let me know during the interview and we will skip those. If you are still happy to participate in the interview now, please state so.

Date:

    1.About your hometown/residence/workplace in Northamptonshire:
        A.Do you live in Northamptonshire?
        B.Where are you from in Northamptonshire?
        C.What brought you to ( ) (if you were not born here)?
        D.For how long have you lived here?

    2.Perceptions about Northamptonshire:
        A.What comes to mind when I say 'Northamptonshire'?
        B.Relation to own locale (town/village of residence or workplace)
        C.One single entity?
        D.Identity
        E.Reputation
        F.Your vision

3.Place Branding

    A.Meaning

    B.My definition : not only communicating the offer (marketing), requires setting vision, enacting policy, product (asset) development and working with stakeholders for delivery.

    C.Any thoughts/comments?

4.'Branding' Northamptonshire

    A.Awareness

    B.Own participation

    C.Motivation

    D.Role – institutional / intermediary / community

    E.If - Part of community groups? What capacity?

    F.Who should lead?

    G.Who should be involved/consulted?

    H.Their role

    I.What is needed?

    J.Challenges

5.Community participation

    A.Role

    B.Benefits

    C.Challenges

    D.Engagement strategies (how)

6.Your groups/projects

    A.Relation to PB

    B.Your role

    C.Other actors (roles)

7.Experience of Collaboration

    A.Government – for PB?

    B.Businesses – for PB?

    C.Community groups – for PB?

    D.University – for PB?

    E.Local Media – for PB?

    F.Outside the county

    G.Organisation – structure, representation

    H.Challenges

8.Collaboration for PB

    A.Benefits at county level?

    B.What is needed?

    C.Organisation?

    D.Challenges

9.Before we conclude the interview, is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think is important or would like to discuss? If I have any follow-up questions, can I email them to you?

<Off-Record>

Can you recommend any institutions/individuals who might be interested in this research?

7.7. CSH Interview Guide

My name is Shalini Bisani. I am a PhD student at the University of Northampton. I am here today because I would like to understand your views (as a stakeholder) about your county, Northamptonshire.

My research aims to understand how stakeholders' perceptions relate to collaboration in 'place branding'. I would like to stress that the information you share with me today will be considered as your personal views and not those of the organisation that you represent.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I will ask you. My aim is for this interview to feel like a conversation within which you will share with me your views and experiences.

This interview will be used as a primary source for my PhD research. The findings of this research will be presented as a part of my PhD research degree and can be published in academic conferences and journal articles. The research findings and insights will be shared with all participants in the form of a report.

To ensure that I do not miss anything while interviewing you, your interview will be audio recorded. If you do not feel comfortable at any point of the interview, please let me know and we can stop/pause the recording. But it is important for you to be aware that your identity and all information recorded from this interview will be only be accessed by me and my supervisory team. In all typed up documents, your identity will be anonymously coded and nobody can identify you in any way. You have the right to withdraw from the research within 30 days from the interview date.

You will find more information on how the data will be stored and managed in the Information Sheet. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me.

This interview will last for about 1 hour. If you do not wish to answer one or more of the questions, please let me know during the interview and we will skip those. If you are still happy to participate in the interview now, please state so.

Date:

    1.Do you live in Northamptonshire?

    2.About your hometown/residence/workplace in Northamptonshire
        A.Where are you from in Northamptonshire?
        B.What brought you to (   ) (if you were not born here)?
        C.For how long have you lived here?

    3.Perceptions about Northamptonshire
        A.What comes to mind when I say 'Northamptonshire'?
        B.One single entity?
        C.Identity
        D.Reputation

E.Your vision

4.Your groups/projects
    A.Motivation
    B.Your role
    C.Other actors (roles)
    D.Outside the county
    E.Challenges
    F.Local vs regional
    G.Experience of Collaboration

5.'Branding' Northamptonshire
    A.Awareness
    B.Own participation
    C.Motivation
    D.Role – inst / int / community
    E.Who should lead?
    F.Who should be involved/consulted?
    G.Their role
    H.Enablers and barriers
    I.Vision / strategy
    J.What is needed?

6.Collaboration
    A.Government? Why?
    B.Businesses? Why so?
    C.(other) Community groups? Why?
    D.Local vs regional
    E.Benefits at county level
    F.Challenges
    G.Organisation
    H.What is needed?

7.Community participation
    A.Role
    B.Benefits
    C.Challenges
    D.Engagement strategies (how)
    E.What is needed?

8.Before we conclude the interview, is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think is important or would like to discuss? If I have any follow-up questions, can I email them to you?

\<Off-Record\>

Can you recommend any institutions/individuals who might be interested in this research?

7.8. Focus Group Guide

1.Arrival - 15 minutes – informal intros, refreshments – info sheet and consent form, name tags

2.Starting the session (15 minutes past): formal intro to me and research (10 mins)

My name is Shalini. I am a PhD student at the University of Northampton. Thank you for coming out today. I have invited you because I would like to understand your views (as a stakeholder) about your county - Northamptonshire, specifically about:

- •Identity and vision for the county
- •Sense of affinity to the county
- •Your project/group/initiatives (engagement in the local community or entrepreneurship)
- •Your role in place branding

To ensure that I do not miss anything from this discussion, I would like to audio record the discussion. This will be used as a primary source for my PhD research. It is important for you to be aware that your personal information and the audio recording will only be accessed by me. In all typed up documents, the views you share during the group discussions will be made anonymous as much as possible by using pseudonyms. You have the right to withdraw from the research within 30 days from the discussion date. You will find more information on how the data will be stored and managed in the Information Sheet. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me.

The findings of this research will be presented as a part of my PhD research degree and can be published in academic conferences and journal articles. The research findings and insights will be shared with all participants in the form of a report.

This session will last for about 2 hours. If you are still happy to participate in the group discussion now, please state so.

3.**Expectations/rules of the meeting:**

- •No right and wrong answers
- •Positive and negative comments are welcome
- •Your opinions are important
- •Free to talk (in any way that's not disrespectful to others)
- •Please don't talk over others, let people finish their points
- •No pressure to speak/answer every question
- •Don't worry about building consensus
- •Keep confidentiality about what is being discussed here (who said what)

4.**Getting Started** (35 minutes)

4.1. Briefly introduce yourself – name, what you do, where (urban/rural) and how long you've lived in the county?

4.2. Perceptions of Northamptonshire?
- What comes to mind when I say Northamptonshire? [post it]
- What makes Northamptonshire a unique place to live, work, or visit? [post it]
- How would you describe Northamptonshire to an outsider? Summarise in three words. [post it]

- Relation between your town/village, nearest urban centre/county town and the county
- Do you feel a sense of affinity to the county (village/town/area)?
- Level of pride in town/village and county? how would you feel if people outside the county recognised and had a positive image of the county?
- Are you a Northamptonshire person?
- Do you see yourself as a (community) stakeholder?
- Vision for the county

5. Discussion & Reflection (20 minutes)

What does branding Northamptonshire mean to you? [Discuss, then share handout]
- Who should lead the place branding?
- Perceptions and role of the university
- Perceptions and role of voluntary sector organisations
- Role of the community?
- How can the Community be represented?

Scenario: (30 minutes)
- Your role
- What support would you need to get involved?
- Who do you need to work with?
- What would be your motivation?
- (financial) Sustainability of your project

6. **Closing remarks** (10 minutes)

- Do you wish to make any other comment about this research on Branding Northamptonshire?
- Limited time : Any additional thoughts, comments and reflections can be emailed to me.

![DMPonline — The DCC Data Management Planning Tool]

Exploring stakeholder collaboration in place branding strategies for the county of Northamptonshire

Ms Shalini Bisani
University of Northampton

1 Information on the data that will be collected or created produced by the research project

1.1 What kind(s) of data will you collect or create?

➤Personal data: Only the names and email ids of participants will be collected in order to maintain contact with the participants to share the research results. At the end of the research, personal contact details will be destroyed.

➤Research data: Qualitative data will be collected via 4 focus groups. The focus groups will be audio recorded. Audio recordings will be stored in WAV format. These will be transcribed and stored in Word documents. Notes taken during the interview will be recorded in a paper notebook and later typed into word document. These will be the primary data sources for my research.

2 Data storage and back-up

2.1 How will data be stored and backed up during the research?

➤Codes will be assigned to each participant such as CSH_01. For the duration of the project, this data will only be shared with the supervisory team in face to face meetings.

➤Research data in the form of transcriptions and notes will be anonymised as much as possible and pseudonyms will be used. Research data will be stored in separate folders from personal data on TUNDRA2. Backups will be created on the University R: drive. For the duration of the project, this data will only be shared with the supervisory team in face to face meetings.

➤Physical documents (such as consent forms) will be stored on the university grounds at the PGR office (Senate building) for the duration of the research. Scanned copies will be stored on TUNDRA2. This will be destroyed at the end of the research.

2.2 How will you manage data security and access during the project?

➤All data will be stored on University's secure password-protected servers, and encrypted password-protected folders using PeaZip, as recommended by UoN IT team. Passwords will only be known to me.

3 Documentation and metadata

3.1 What documentation and metadata will accompany the data?

➤In preparation for archiving the data, research record will be maintained in a coherent way. A 'read-me' file will have the metadata necessary for others to make sense of the data archived. This file will have information relating to:

➤The researcher and the research project (title and background information)
➤Research Design
➤Methods of data collection and analysis
➤Key notes relating to interpretation of the qualitative data
➤Name of the software package and its version number (I am currently using NVivo 12) and

➢Any abbreviations (such as CSH) used in the data or to name the files.

| **4** | **Data sharing** |

4.1   How will you share the data? Expected difficulties in data sharing, along with causes and possible measures to overcome these difficulties.
> ➢Only anonymised transcripts will be made available via open-access repositories 12 months after completion of the study. Where it is not possible to remove all personal identifiers from the transcripts, this data will not be made available. The following repositories are under consideration: UK Data Archive, Figshare, Zenodo, Pure.

| **5** | **Data preservation and archiving** |

5.1   Which data are of long-term value and should be retained, shared and/or preserved?
> ➢The anonymised transcripts will contain views of the people of Northamptonshire about the place and its development during a specific period in history. This may be of interest to future social science researchers and in research about the county.

5.2   What is the long-term strategy for maintaining, curating and archiving the data?
> ➢Anonymised transcripts will be made available via open-access repositories 12 months after completion of the study. The following repositories are under consideration: UK Data Archive, Figshare, Zenodo, Pure. Data will be archived for 10 years or longer. Data will be made available for academic and research purposes upon request from me.

| **6** | **Ethical and legal issues** |

6.1   How will you manage any ethical issues relating to data management?
> ➢The key ethical consideration is upholding participants right to anonymity. After the research is concluded, only anonymised transcripts will be made available outside the supervisory team. Where anonymisation is not possible or if transcripts indicate personal identifying information about the participants, data will not be made available on open source repositories.

6.2   How will you manage any copyright and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues?
> ➢Not applicable.

| **7** | **Responsibilities for data management** |

7.1   Who will be responsible for data management?
> ➢I, the researcher will have lead responsibility for enacting the data management plan.

Risk Assessment

University of Northampton

Activity:	Data collection for PhD thesis. Focus Groups with Community stakeholders. Researcher: Shalini Bisani, FBL PhD Student	Reference No:	
		Assessed By:	Shalini Bisani
		Approved By:	Marcella Daye
Location:	County of Northamptonshire, UK Focus group Locations: University of Northampton and Community centres	Issue Date:	
		Revision Due:	

Hazard	Who might be harmed and how	Existing Control Measures (What are you already doing already to manage the risks?)	Risk Level
Travel-related incident	The researcher may sustain injuries during the travel within the county of Northamptonshire while conducting focus groups.	• Use public transport and taxi as the main method to commute as I do not drive in the UK. • Always ensure that my schedule and travel plans are known to my friends, supervisors, and family members. • Carry mobile phone with contact numbers of supervisory team and close to kin in the UK. • Be safety conscious at all times. • Travel plan and risk assessment will conform to University of Northampton policy	1x2
Violence and aggression	The views of the researcher may differ from the participants and they may enter into verbal dispute or argument	• I will only facilitate discussions and not express my personal opinions to the participants, since they are irrelevant to the research. • Ensure clear and regular communication with the participants before and during the focus groups. • Avoid using aggressive words in communication and arguing with the participants. I will always be sensitive in my line of questioning and to their response. Focus	1x2

Hazard	Who might be harmed and how	Existing Control Measures (What are you already doing already to manage the risks?)	Risk Level
		Group schedule will have been approved by REC. •Clarify if anything has been misheard or misinterpreted by me. Verifying the same with the participants by judging their change in expression, body language and tone of voice if they appear hurt or confused or aggressive in their response.	
Mental stress	The researcher may be affected emotionally	•Regular contact with the supervision team will be maintained and wellbeing and support needs will be discussed as appropriate. •Frequently attending FBL and Graduate schools events and workshops will also enable me to maintain connections with peers and staff; and seek peer support in time of distress. •I am a member of the University's student-run Meditation Society so I am conscious about my mental health and wellbeing.	1x2
Physical locations for meetings	Risk of harm to the researcher or participants	•I will carry my university ID card to evidence my identity to the participants. •I will hold a mobile telephone in case of emergency. •Focus groups will be conducted in meeting/conference rooms on UoN grounds or community centres.	1x2
Use of computer	The researcher	•I will moderate time spent in front of screen, taking periodic breaks.	1x1
Unexpected medical issues	The researcher	•I am covered under the NHS in the UK.	1x1
Fatigue / sickness	The researcher may be affected by travel time or length of the focus group	•I will carry a first aid kit and over the counter medicines for motion sickness and headache. •Packaged refreshments will be available on the day for the researcher and participants. taking a break for There will be time for hydrating and snacking.	1x1
Weather	The focus groups are expected to occur between November 2019 and January 2020 across the county of Northamptonshire. This means having safety checks in place for Frosty Winters to protect the	•I have no season allergies / or related to weather change. •All focus groups will be conducted indoors in safe premises with working heating/air conditioning. •Weather will also be evaluated in a pre-emptive manner at the time of setting the	1x2

Hazard	Who might be harmed and how	Existing Control Measures (What are you already doing already to manage the risks?)	Risk Level
	researcher and participants.	focus group and then at a time nearing the focus group (1-3 days). Travel and focus group plans will be changed if there are any weather warnings and participants will be informed.	

Name of Assessor	Marcella Daye	Signature of Assessor	*Marcella Daye*	Date actions passed to individuals for action:	05/10/2019

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