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**The political economy of competing
regional images:
the case of Tuscany's brands**

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Introduction

This essay is based on empirical evidence from the case of Tuscany (Italy) and follows previous work on the role and meaning of image in regional development and innovation policies (Bellini, 2004). Discussions about image and branding policies is usually placed in the framework of "place marketing" and marketing literature helps in defining the features, components and main characters of image and of its relationship with local identity. We suggest, however, that managing images is also a political process with significant impact in supporting and shaping the scenario (perceptions and expectations) for innovation policies. In fact this process implies a competition between images in order to "control" the representation of the past, present and future of an area. This competition aims at influencing the policy agenda by manipulating the gap between image and identity. In other words, we suggest that image-related policies should be considered part of the toolbox of a modern innovation policy.

The theory

The lessons form marketing

Place image (the image of a Region, of a city etc.) has come to the attention of both scholars and practitioners mostly within the framework of "area marketing". It is for sure a concept with a long history, but it is marketing that has framed it in a consistent way and, above all, has tried to operationalize it. Place branding has been defined the practice of applying brand strategy and other marketing techniques and disciplines to the economic, social, political and cultural development of cities, regions and countries¹. Marketing has thus provided "a philosophy of place management" (Ashworth and Voogd, 1994, 39) and place branding has attempted to transfer into local economic development not only some communication techniques, but also the identity-building power and the linking value that "post-modern" scholars attach to brands (cf. Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005).

Without doubt, marketing has either strengthened or introduced some serious biases in the way we look at place images. The emphasis on distinctiveness and competitiveness has reflected an obsession with urban and regional "entrepreneurialism" as well as with an easily misconceived "customer orientation". Furthermore marketing implies a competitive, quasi-mercantilist view of regional and local development that is increasingly unrealistic (or at least, partially misleading) in the network-like, co-opetitive scenario of today. Most important of all, branding tends to be seen as a technocratic activity, representing the belief in the virtues of professionalism in public management, as opposed to old-fashioned politics.

¹ This definition was used as reference for the journal "Place Branding".

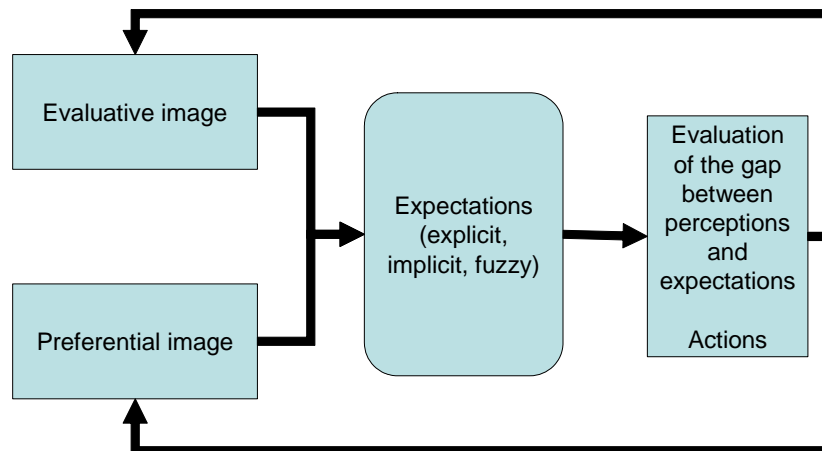
On a more technical side, the dominance of marketing approaches aimed at attracting economic actors, such as tourists and inward investors, has led to emphasize strong, seductive images ("a special place to be"). The new priorities in the "knowledge economy", and especially the attractiveness with regard to certain social groups (such as the "creative class"), imply to re-focus attention not only on the quality of the "ordinary place", but also on the tensions implicit in the co-existence of two aspects of the image of an area: the *evaluative* component which reflects our experiences and what we perceive as real, and the *preferential* component which portrays the desires and motivations, in short, what we wish the area to be like (cfr. Ashworth, Voogd 1995, 77 ff.).

Marketing lessons are nonetheless fundamental also from a policy perspective. As marketing teaches us, image is bound to have important effects which can be dangerous when they are not monitored or when they are not dealt with. Image:

- reflects and synthesizes the experiences of individuals, from which it derives;
- communicates and shapes expectations with respect to what the area can or should give to individuals. This concerns not only explicit expectations (those which, even though they are not necessarily realistic, clearly define problems and solutions), but also those - much more difficult to manage - which are implicit (taken for granted or which are not subject to discussion), or even fuzzy (as they are schematic, ideological, emotional, and not based on a clear understanding of what should be done concretely and how)²;
- is a filter which influences the perception of the area, the quality of life and services, the level of development and the (individual and collective) expectations about the future. It obviously also filters communication: a positive image reinforces the credibility of messages, whereas a negative image reduces their credibility; a positive image allows to not emphasize minor problems, but can result in underestimating emerging threats, whereas a negative image on the other hand can lead to the dramatization of marginal questions but can also raise attention in time by emphasizing weak signals;
- is self-reinforcing through the activities of actors which conform to the expectations and through their subjective evaluations based on the relationship between perception and expectations (figure 1). When an image has been consolidated, it is likely to be self-fulfilling.

² This typology is drawn from Ojasalo, 1999 and 2001a.

Figure 1 Image, expectations and feedback mechanisms



From marketing to policy

In our view, marketing is no substitute for policy. Still marketing can be functional to policy. This statement requires some explanation.

Local and regional policies of innovation which form an essential part of modern policies of local development are less and less an expression of *government* and increasingly an exercise of *governance*, adopting its philosophy and instruments. By the term "governance" we mean a variety of guidance mechanisms, not necessarily restricted to public actors, whereby social processes are consciously directed in situations of interdependence. The concept that allows best to describe and understand the practical meaning and implications of governance is "policy network". We define policy networks as "(more or less) stable patterns of social relations between interdependent actors, which take shape around policy problems and/or policy programmes" (Kickert et al., 1997). Policy networks are therefore alternative to traditional ways of government (and, to a large extent, also to contemporary approaches of "new" public management).

The management of policy networks can take place at two different levels, using substantially different sets of tools. On the one hand, the structure of the network can be influenced, for example, through the composition, the number of actors, its openness, the internal rules, the introduction of new actors and the exclusion of some of the present actors, etc. On the other hand, at the cognitive level, it is possible to influence the perception, the views and expectations, to anticipate the exclusion of diverging ideas and views, to facilitate interaction and to promote a common language, to induce collective reflection and to prevent cognitive *lock-in* etc. Therefore the toolbox of

industrial and innovation policies also includes a set of “second generation” policy instruments, which impact on the cognitive dimensions of local networks in the attempt to govern their evolution through the formation of perceptions and expectations and which incorporate the management of regional / city images through branding (cf. Bellini and Landabaso, 2007).

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

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

The political relevance of place branding is twofold.

Firstly, the image of an area (region, city) reflects its identity. As such we are not dealing with objective, technical data, but with a social, historical and highly subjective (and sometimes even artificial) construct, which consists of the total of affective and rational images produced by individual actors or by groups of actors. These images show the values which the various groups connect to the area, to its characteristics and its identity. “In defining their discourses of inclusion and exclusion that constitute identity, people call upon an affinity with places or, at least, with representation of places, which, in turn, are used to legitimate their claim to those places” (Ashworth and Graham 2005, 3). It is in this way that groups take possession of a geographic space, synthesizing their view of the area in stereotypes and “labels” and creating “myths” through the selective narration of the social, economic and historic characteristics of the area.

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

Secondly, there may be coherence or incoherence between “image” and “product”. In some cases, the conscious generation of this gap can be justified by the willingness to anticipate a development which has not yet been realized. In other words, image is not used to define a “visible” reality, but to create an ideal situation in a reasonably nearby future, which more or less large social

groups want to strive for: a "better" area (city or region), more livable and/or wealthier and/or more modern than it effectively is. The imagery therefore overlaps the vision that society and local politics envisage and to which they commit.

A gap between image and reality can also emerge because a place is going through a phase of change which has not yet been completed and, therefore, its significance cannot yet be fully perceived. As a consequence the area's evolution is misunderstood. In other words, situations of political and cognitive lock-in in "post-paradigmatic" areas (for example in several Italian industrial districts) can generate stereotypical images referring to historic production structures which are outdated and - which is worse - can hamper innovative dynamics which are taking place. The latter will not be recognized or will be dismissed as transitional, non credible and non reliable phenomena. To sum up, by manipulating the possible gaps between image and identity, the expectations, perceptions and eventually performance of economic actors can be influenced.

The image of Tuscany

Features and components

By all standards Tuscany has a strong, high-profile and widely recognized image. According to a recent survey (Cavaliere, 2001), more than 90% of German consumers know the brands "Toscana" and "Firenze". "Firenze" is also known by 75% of consumers in US and Japan, while the recognition of "Toscana" is lower, but still relevant (more than 40%). In some countries the familiarity with Tuscany identifies social and even political groups. In British and American literature (as also reminded by movies such as "A Room with a View", "The English Patient" and "Stealing Beauty") Tuscany is a sort of exotic dreamland where the beauty of landscape and art takes away inhibitions and frees the souls, so that visitors discover their own feelings, emotions and sensuality³. In German political jargon the expression "*Toskana-fraktion*" is used to indicate a number of left-wing intellectuals, sharing a custom of spending holidays in Tuscan countryside and therefore suspected of mixing revolutionary ideals and hedonistic behavior⁴.

Tuscany's image⁵ is primarily linked to tourism. The touristic image of Tuscany is an unparalleled blend of intellectual and emotional components. History, Culture, Past shape the region's image from the Etruscan Coast to the Medieval villages and the Renaissance cities. Thanks to its glorious past, a sense of nobility, greatness and magnificence is conveyed to the visitors: "*Tuscany: noble and great region*"⁶. Cities like Siena define themselves as a "*strip of land*

³ Also the superb adaptation of Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing" by Kenneth Branagh sets this classical tale about the revelation of inner feelings in a postcard-like Tuscan setting rather than in Messina (Sicily), as suggested by the author and faithfully repeated in the script!

⁴ See: <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toskana-Fraktion> and www.toskanafraktion.de

⁵ The analysis of image features and components is based partially on an original survey by the authors of promotional materials and in particular of Internet websites.

⁶ www.toscanapromozione.it

rich in coat of arms and nobility" and their distinctiveness is described as *"aristocratic exclusiveness"*⁷.

The reference to art is obvious, due to the extraordinary, internationally recognizable assets inherited from history with "brands" such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Giotto, Brunelleschi, Piero della Francesca etc. Tuscany's streets are "Houses of the Memory"⁸ of eminent figures in the history of knowledge, such as Dante Alighieri.

Complement to history is Nature, that perfect symbiosis man-nature that is detectable in the famous Tuscan landscape: *"The ideal place to spend your holiday time"*⁹. The mix of nature and history makes Tuscany "genuine": *"A glow of genuineness that surrounds everything what perfumes of Tuscany"*¹⁰.

Within this overall "Green Tourism" approach, man – nature interactions are varied. They are related to sport and to the availability of biking and walking itineraries, allowing for *"Slow Tourism"*. So, e.g., the White Streets in Siena are presented as the icon of the tourism in Tuscany, because they are streets without cars, where people walk for hours. More recently promotion placed new emphasis on thermal baths, as connected with relax and health: *"Tuscany: the region of wellbeing"*¹¹.

A fundamental field of interaction between man and nature is food. In Tuscany there is an obvious link between green, slow tourism, on one hand, and wine and food, on the other. Along Tuscany's "Wine Roads", innumerable opportunities to "taste local culture" are available to the educated gourmet: *"About a territory, as ours is, we can say that's sufficient shaking it to make good food and products fall down...if you shake it a little more, you make theatre fall down"*¹². Wine is *"the flag bearer of Tuscany in the world"*, *"the faithful image of Tuscan culture and tradition"*¹³.

Nature, food, art, a human dimension of living distant from stressful contemporary world make up for a sweet life, the *"dolce vita"* (an expression usually kept in the original Italian) (Cavaliere, 2001, 35).

Moreover, Tuscany does not change. In some cases "timeless images" are proposed, but more often the reference to key phases of the Tuscan history is explicit. The preservation of the "real Tuscany" through centuries is presented as a fundamental value: *"Time seems to have stopped"*¹⁴. Visiting Tuscany is experiencing history. In the case of Siena, the rite of the "Palio" game brings history in the real life: *"Siena is an itinerary that joins past and future"*; *"A scrap of history that shows up in the present"*¹⁵. Food and wine also show their deep historic roots, as they are connected with traditional know-how of rural

⁷ www.terresiena.it

⁸ www.cultura.toscana.it/musei/case_della_memoria/index.shtml

⁹ www.toscanapromozione.it

¹⁰ www.primapagina.regione.toscana.it

¹¹ www.toscanapromozione.it

¹² www.toscanapromozione.it

¹³ www.investintuscany.com

¹⁴ www.italia.it

¹⁵ www.terre-siena.com

areas: "Oil production goes back to 7th century BC"¹⁶; Sangiovese was the grapevine of the Etruscan people; etc. Food and wine speak about history.

The weaknesses of a strong image

The Tuscan case gives proof of the "weaknesses of strong images". Tuscany's images can be confused and ambiguous as much as they are obvious and stereotypical. This is clearly shown by the many "missing links" between different brands. Many Italians have experienced doubtful replies to questions such as: is Florence in Tuscany? is Florence the same as Tuscany? where is the leaning tower of Pisa¹⁷?

Tuscany's identity runs serious risks of "commodification" (cf. Simon, 2005, 32 f.). A quite interesting phenomenon, in fact, is the emergence of alternative tourist locations labeled as "the new Tuscany".

According to the New York Times, the Italian Region Le Marche may be "the next Tuscany", with advantages compared to the real one such as being less crowded, not yet discovered ("secret"), quiet and unused to tourism, while offering similar postcard features (converted farmhouses, small and picturesque Italian towns, traditional products and wines, rolling vineyard, hills, golden grain fields topped by crumbling castles, simple people rooted in the territory, rural life, lavender and sunflower fields etc.). It is suggested that this is an "Authentic Italy that's vanishing from other parts of his homeland". It is "what Tuscany was": "This is what Tuscany must have felt like 10 or 20 years ago, before it was discovered by tour groups and their omnipresent buses, carrying thousands and thousands of travellers who flock there each year to try to recreate the pleasure of 'Under the Tuscan Sun'. One Tuscany so crowded with British expatriates and second-home owners that that country's press calls it Chiantishire... Tuscany is an increasingly challenging place to have an intimate encounter with true Italy"¹⁸.

Significant challenges come from other countries. Again the New York Times finds "The Tuscan Life" in Croatia and its cheaper second-home market. According to this report, "the government would like the region to resemble a mix of Tuscany and Provence... somehow more honest and much more user-friendly. (...) We heard this was the New Tuscany. But you can't get places in Tuscany like this any more"¹⁹. In Bulgaria (namely in Veliko Tarnovo Region, Gabrovo Region and Lovech Region), a growing real estate market, rurality, nature, a unique culture in vibrant old towns, exquisite landscape, rural traditions, timber-and-stone houses legitimate an active real estate agency to be named "The New Tuscany Ltd"²⁰. Also in Alentejo (Portugal)²¹ and Priorat

¹⁶ www.italia.it

¹⁷ To add confusion, the word "Pisa" (to be pronounced with a hard "s") sounds very similar to the possibly best-known Italian word: "pizza"!

¹⁸ Solomon S., "Is Le Marche the next Tuscany?" May 22, 2005, www.nytimes.com

¹⁹ Corbin B., "The Tuscany Life, in Croatia", May 25, 2007, www.nytimes.com

²⁰ www.newtuscan.net

²¹ Snijder B., "Alentejo Region in Portugal is called the New Tuscany", June 21, 2007 in www.ecademy.com/node.php?id=86094

(Catalonia)²² being "like Tuscany" is a positive element to be emphasized in area marketing.

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

Tuscanies

"Tuscany" is also unable to represent the different "Tuscanies"²³. The variety of landscapes and societies that make up the Region of Tuscany is hardly reflected in the "strong image" that is known worldwide. Thus we often find the need to define or brand parts of the region as the "other Tuscany".

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

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

One case of "other" Tuscany is provided by Lunigiana, an area in the North of the Region, actually a land strip between neighbor Emilia and Liguria regions. Lunigiana is a border area on a mountain landscape, with closed valleys, a crossing point of ancient pathways and roads leading to Rome, with a beautiful non-Tuscan landscape made of mountains, medieval castles, fortresses, watch-towers, city walls, forests, sheep pastures etc. Culturally it is *"a little Tuscan, a little Ligurian, and so neither Tuscan nor Ligurian": "Its history has shaped a separate personality, with diverse dialects and cultures, mixed in a peculiar tradition, which prevented the birth of a local culture with a strong identity"*²⁴.

²² "Priorat: Spain's new Tuscany" in

www.expatica.com/actual/article.asp?subchalle_id=85&story_id=22053

²³ The realization of the difficult relationship between a strong image and intra-regional diversity has been emphasized especially since the end of the 1990s as a guideline for regional economic planning (Cavaliere, 1999).

²⁴ www.vacanzetinerari.it/schede/lunigiana_tra_toscana_e_liguria_sc_5712.htm

Although with specific problems (mostly related to industrial change) and recriminations against the "distant" government in Florence, Lunigiana and the whole northern province of Massa and Carrara seem able to balance their marginality with the ability to exploit proximity and integration with the neighboring areas²⁵.

Grosseto, in the southern part of the region, is an even better example of a Tuscan city that does not "belong to Tuscany". Its image is shaped by the wide, intact, rural spaces of Maremma, the area surrounding the city. "*This is a land where man has lived in respectful admiration for centuries*"²⁶, a land where nature has "dominated" man, rather than the other way. The icon is provided by the "*buttero*", a local cowboy bravely facing wild nature. Wide spaces are also offered as an opportunity to investors. Nature, however, is not an asset nurtured by history and consciously shaped in accordance to a specific identity. Rather it is the result of a limited industrial development in the past.

A very powerful image of the area derives from a novel written in the Sixties by a local writer, Luciano Bianciardi²⁷. In the novel a young American visitor suggests that Grosseto looks very much like his own town, Kansas City, a town "open to the wind and to the foreigners". The image has been very successful²⁸, although one can hardly figure out anything more distant from the standard Tuscan stereotype. Grosseto/Kansas City is a borderline town, with an uncertain, open identity and a strong feeling of being (and being treated as) a "periphery". Grosseto, like Kansas City and unlike the "great Tuscany", is a "cowtown": simple, small, isolated, unsophisticated. Grosseto, like Kansas City and unlike the "noble Tuscany", forgets its past and concentrates on recent history, when its city status was recognized. Grosseto, like Kansas City, is an open city, meaning the lack of "owners" of its identity²⁹.

IRPET, the regional research institute for economic planning, openly stressed this diversity in an official report entitled "*La Provincia di Grosseto: l'altra Toscana?*" (Grosseto Province: the other Tuscany?)³⁰. In the report Grosseto's "otherness" is based on sound economic grounds: a development model different from the "classic" model followed by the rest of Tuscany ("*pre-industrial ..., or rather non industrial*"; statistical economic indexes (population, employment rate, income...) that are consistently lower than the rest of the region; distance from the core of regional development (the Arno valley axis), emphasized by the lack of adequate infrastructures.

In other words, "otherness" means being different (and negatively so), being separate, possibly – however – also an alternative. Thus the question mark

²⁵ At the end of War World II, there was even a plan to detach Lunigiana from Tuscany and "re-join" it to the northern region of Emilia.

²⁶ www.lamaremmafabene.it

²⁷ The novel's title is "La vita agra" (1962; English translation: *It's Hard Life*, 1965).

²⁸ Grosseto now even hosts a Kansas City Festival!

²⁹ Unsurprisingly many inhabitants of Grosseto reject (sometimes angrily) the analogy with Kansas City, unfortunately missing also the positive aspects of this analogy.

³⁰ published 2003; downloadable from

http://www.provincia.grosseto.it/se/conferenzaeconomica/altra_toscana.pdf

suggests that differences may also reveal a new, positive and dynamic development model based on a greater weight of rural environment and therefore on a new tourism relying on *"a network of environment, natural resources, rural dimension, rural and artisan products of high quality"*. Therefore classic Tuscany would offer cities of art, noisy and inattentive crowd of tourists, glittering outlets, the most celebrated monuments, "sophisticated genuineness"; while "the other" Tuscany would offer un-congested landscape, rural values, high quality environment, naturalistic and historical values: in other words, a different, greater authenticity.

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

Future Tuscany and the forgotten Past

Tuscany is a strong brand in tourism, not for industry and not even for the food industry. The "region-of-origin" effect is weak. According to the above quoted survey, only 60% of German consumers link some food product to Tuscany (mostly wine and oil); among American and Japanese consumers this share drops to 7%. As far as the fashion industry is concerned, only 12% of German consumers and 3% of consumers in the US and Japan know some Tuscan *griffe*. By far the brand that is most clearly identified as Tuscan is Gucci. Prada and Ferragamo are recognized as Tuscan only by a small minority. Moreover, among the brands that are mentioned as Tuscan there are also non-Tuscan brands such as Armani and Benetton, showing how the Tuscan image easily disappears into the stronger "made in Italy" brand. No connection emerges between other major brands (e.g. the *Vespa* motorcycle) and the region.

Even when we move from general consumers to professional buyers, only 60% of the sample recognize a positive value in a "made in Tuscany product compared to a "made in Italy" product. Also many of the positive factors attached to the Tuscan origin of the product are mere repetition of the traditional factors characterizing "made in Italy" products (Cavaliere, 2001, 19 ff. and 28 ff.). To some tourists (like the Japanese), rather than a place of origin of prestigious products, Tuscany is an excellent location for shopping (Cavaliere, 2001, 36). The Tuscan economy, therefore, seems to be able to exploit the high visibility of the Tuscany brand only in a very limited measure.

Can a strong image give a substantial contribution to cognitive, social and political lock-ins? The case of Tuscany seems to suggest that this is possible. The touristic image of Tuscany is intimately consistent with a popular vision of the future development of the Tuscan economy that assumes the exit from the manufacturing sector as unavoidable and – in fact – desirable. According to this post-industrial vision, tourism, services, agri-food industries and other environmentally sustainable should substitute manufactures in creating value and sustaining income levels.

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

Both industrialist visions had images of Tuscany that could be conveyed to the general public. On the one hand, the industrial district vision built a powerful intellectual myth of an alternative economic model, mixing cooperation and competition, capitalist growth and social stability. Only in one case, i.e. the city of Prato, one has openly made reference to and emphasized the role of manufacturing tradition as a constituent part of the image of the city. More recently, due to the ups and downs of the economy, the general perception of industrial districts has been more frequently linked to crisis and de-industrialization rather than to success and growth. On the other hand, the neo-industrial vision has developed its own brand, "Arnovalley"³¹, that enjoyed some success in the national press, had some modest attempts to gain wider audience also through Internet, but eventually was delegitimized by the "new economy" crisis. Also due to the weak perception of the need to "brand" industrial Tuscany and to the inability to sustain a "dissonant" discourse on regional heritage (cf. Turnbridge and Ashworth, 1996), the strength of the traditional image succeeded in preventing the emergence of new ones, that could reflect the vision of more dynamic industries and social groups.

The role of cultural heritage here comes into play, showing how different images and visions are build upon (very) selective narration of the region's history and shared values³². The emphasis on a romantic, anti-modern, "natural" image of Tuscany, the obsession with "preserving the past" and the stubborn reluctance to modern additions has been clearly instrumental to the post-industrial vision of regional economic development.

The interpretation of culture as "entertainment for tourists" (Sacco, 2005) is based on forgetting. When nature is indicated as the strategic resource of future Tuscany it is easily forgotten how little of the Tuscan landscape is "natural" and how often it is, on the contrary, a classical case of "*Kulturlandschaft*", with man-shaped hills, lines of cypresses and pine forests along the coast. When authenticity is based on history (i.e. the longer its history, the greater the authenticity), it is easily forgotten the huge amount of process and product innovations that are supporting the quality and competitiveness of the local "authentic" food industry³³.

³¹ The obvious reference to Silicon Valley is here combined with the fact of the geographic concentration of high tech activities in the area between Florence and Pisa, along the river Arno.

³² "(...) heritage is concerned with the ways in which very selective material artefacts, mythologies, memories and traditions become resources for the present" (Ashworth and Graham, 2005, 4).

³³ An excellent example is wine. Like (and more than) other food products, the link to the geographical origin is essential. As mentioned before, in Tuscany this has also a historic dimension: being rooted in history makes the product

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

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

The strength of this collective mood is reflected in Florence, a "high culture district" (cf. Lazzeretti, 2003) with a dramatic inability to express and communicate innovation. As one inhabitant once put it in a private conversation, "we should expect to be ordered to go out dressed up in Medieval costume". The most modern landmark in the city is the Santa Maria Novella railroad station, a masterwork of modernist architecture, built in the 1930s and actually "imposed on" the city by the Fascist regime. With the exception of some occasional linkages to modern creativity, mostly in the field of fashion, Florence is today a frozen city, in clear contrast with the opinion according to which "the most successful heritage cities are those of sufficient size to offer numerous amenities, including heritage, but not dominated by it" (Graham, 2002, 1014). The recent debate about the new entrance to the Uffizi Museum and the innovative proposal by Arata Isozaki (finally cancelled in 2004) has led the distinguished art historian Irving Lavin to comment about "the bitter irony that is behind the conservative mood that dominates in Florence – right in Florence! – and suffocates the spirit of adventure and innovation that created the city we all love and admire, where the notion itself of modernity was born. The Cathedral itself, and especially Brunelleschi's dome, would be surely prohibited today (...) Florence has become a stone-made Disneyland"³⁴.

Unsurprisingly, Tuscany shows a great difficulty to manage umbrella brands, as serious inconsistencies easily emerge in messages conveyed to different targets (e.g. tourists vs. foreign investors). Inward investment attraction needs to communicate an image that is substantially different from the

and the experience connected to it more "authentic". Of course, marketing suggests that wine-making science has evolved and therefore concedes that production processes are updated. But not all Tuscan wines have an history. Outstanding wines with spectacular commercial success are in fact "new products" and have created "new" wine areas, in no way more "noble" than wine areas are in Northern California or other extra-European regions. The best known case is the Sassicaia wine, produced in Bolgheri since the 1960s. Producers in areas like Bolgheri itself, Val di Cornia or the Pisan Hills have been constantly innovating production technologies, introducing new grapes and varieties, exploiting new lands, bringing in non-Tuscan entrepreneurship and capitals and even "scandalous" winery architecture. Interestingly, also marketing emphasizes innovation, but, whenever possible, reference is made to some available historic antecedents (including Romans and Etruscans).

³⁴ Speech in the occasion of the awarding of the Galileo Prize 2005 in Pisa. (Author's translation from the official Italian text, downloadable from <http://www3.humnet.unipi.it/galileo/fondazione/Home/home.htm>)

touristic one: a society with a strong productive tradition; a diffused entrepreneurial culture; the network of institutional partners for guidance, support, assistance; the pervasiveness of infrastructures, its accessibility also due to the importance of regional airports; the excellence of its universities and research centers.

Even speaking of "quality of life" may be difficult. To tourists it is related to relaxation, "stopping time", isolation, silence, break with modernity (from cars to e-mails). To investors and their workers it obviously relates to accessibility, connections, urban excitement, progress and modernity.

Tensions emerge. The emphasis on history clashes with the need to communicate an orientation to the future. While some industries (like textile, clothing, shoe-making and other fashion-related manufactures) may more easily make reference to the past, this is perceived as difficult for modern industries, like the automotive, electronics, biotech or chemical industry. Contrasts are then dramatized. The *"New Deal of the Tuscan System"*, from traditional manufactures to high-tech, looks more like a jump forward, a surprising outcome rather than an obvious bridge between past and future: *"The time runs unexpected roads. In Tuscany"*.

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

An additional, even more dramatic tension exists between industrial landscapes and the Tuscan landscapes as communicated to tourists. As it is often the case with advertising, communication reveals rather than downplays these tensions. E.g., playing on the double meaning of the word "natural" (related to nature, on the one hand, and right, ideal, obvious, on the other) place marketing suggests that Tuscany is *"The natural choice of your business location"*.

More evocative analogies are sometimes attempted. E.g. (see following picture), a group of cypresses should portray the quality of local social capital and the attitude to networking among economic actors (like in the "industrial district").



In the end, high quality and excellence seem to be the only truly horizontal features of Tuscany that are able to support umbrella brands effectively³⁵.

³⁵ Siena is probably the city most able to communicate the "acceptance of modernity", through a "new rurality" approach that guarantees both loyalty to the past and an appropriate environment for innovation and future. A major

Quality and excellence concern lifestyle, society, landscape, education, food and wine, environment, traditional products (fashion, jewellery, textile), new products. Ironically, *"also an imperfection may make one extraordinary. In Tuscany"* (see following image³⁶).



Again, due to the strength of tourism's stereotypes, important features of the Region, such as the presence of a high-tech industry, need also to be labeled as the "other Tuscany", suggesting a problematic relationship with the identity of the Region.

The President of the Region, visiting Japan in early 2007, referred to Research and Technology in Tuscany as "the other face" of the Region, an unknown face, to many an unexpected one ("Tuscany as you didn't expect"), that deserves to be "re-discovered" (*"Leonardo was a great scientist too and we want to demonstrate that still today we are an advanced technology and research land, not only of style, wine and tourism"*).

Themes for research

This paper has emphasized the many weaknesses inherent in Tuscany's strong image. Branding Tuscany is a technically challenging task not only because of the inertia of the many stereotypes, but also because of the many policy implications that are "hidden" behind brands. In particular we notice that a strong brand can be as effective in linking and including as it is in excluding social groups and regional sub-areas. The stronger the collective image, the greater should the attention to branding, as a way to legitimize new social groups, emerging industries and alternative models of development.

Further research can be developed, starting from this preliminary work:

- on the one hand, it is worth to further clarify the connection between image and the "second generation" toolbox, both theoretically (by better defining the nature of policies based on cognitive dimensions) and operationally (when and how image is or should be a priority for policy-makers);

factor shaping this attitude is of course the role that a few important and specialized economic activities (the banking sector and the pharmaceutical industry) play in the governance of the city.

³⁶ Source: www.intuscany.it

- on the other hand, a systematic analysis should yield a better understanding of the influence of area image on entrepreneurs, social and institutional actors etc. and of the nature of the gap between image and reality.

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