

Chapter 7

The Transition to Market Economies and Market Cities*

Gregory J. Ashworth

The last decade of the twentieth century is presenting a unique economic, social, and political challenge to the cities of the world as they attempt to adapt to the new conditions and take advantage of the new opportunities that are being presented. The Europe of competing nations is being replaced by a Europe of competing cities. The increasing globalization of trade, investment, and labor markets is removing many of the protective barriers while increasingly effective transport and communication reduces the frictions of distance. Competition between cities is increasingly freer but fiercer. One aspect of this competition is the image of places held by potential or actual residents, investors or visitors, and one instrument of public place management authorities is the creation or manipulation of such images. This could be dismissed as conventional wisdom that needs no reiteration by urban managers in most cities in Western Europe in the last decade of the twentieth century; however, in the recent past it would have been regarded as heresy in the cities of Central and Eastern Europe.

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This chapter originates in a study (Kozma and Ashworth 1993) that was comparative in both a particular and a more general sense. It is a “tale of two cities” comparing existing and projected images of Groningen (Netherlands) and Debrecen (Hungary) and the goals and nature of the organizations projecting them. More generally, however, it is a comparison of two economic and political systems or, more optimistically, of two stages in the development of a single system.

The Idea of Selling Cities

The idea of selling places as if they were marketable commodities received growing attention from public planners in the 1980s and became an accepted function of public place management (Ashworth and Voogd 1988). In practice, this has been conducted mainly by means of promotion (i.e., the shaping of a favorable place-image among actual or potential users, treated as customers, and transmitting this image efficiently to them). Many if not most authorities attempted to promote their town in its most advantageous light, to dispel prejudicial ideas about it, and to cast doubts on the claim of competitors (Burgess 1982). The explanation of the development of this activity by public authorities is complex but can be related to two main factors, one economic and the other philosophical, explored at greater length in Ashworth and Voogd (1990a).

On one hand, the changing economic and political climate in many Western European countries put local authorities in a situation of coping with new sets of goals and expectations. These were in part a result of increasing competition between locations, decreasing financial resources, and decreasing confidence in the effectiveness of the traditional approaches of land-use planning. It became apparent that the passive function of public service provision in reaction to perceived needs was inadequate and that they needed to play a more active role in the development process. Controlling development was no longer enough: local authorities had to initiate it. A market-oriented approach to urban development was therefore attractive. The most obvious symptom of this was the popularity of city marketing, simply described

as the way cities can improve their competitive positions in markets. The aim is to create a close contact between the urban activities and the demands of targeted customers in order to maximize the efficient social and economic functioning of the area according to the goals of the instituting authority. One part of this broader marketing activity is promotion.

For these reasons, local authorities started to pay more attention to creating attractive images. This seemingly simple shift in attention was complicated by two inadequacies. First, the methods developed in traditional marketing science for the selling of goods and services by commercial firms was unsuitable for the selling of places, which required a more complicated form of management. Second, public authorities often had neither the expertise nor the suitable operating structures for adopting marketing approaches.

From Marketing to Place Marketing

There are some significant differences between city marketing and the marketing of most other commodities that relate to the product being marketed: The product as a place differs quite simply from the goods and services for which marketing science was developed. In the case of places, on one hand, the same physical space must be sold simultaneously to quite different customers for quite different purposes (Ashworth and Voogd 1988). On the other hand, the place is an aggregate of public and private goods. The product as a place aggregates various mixes of these elements, which although logically producing a range of quite different products, all occupy the same physical space.

There are other differences that relate to the selling process itself. The selling of the city can be distinguished from a simple commercial market transaction where a product or a service is exchanged for a price. It does not involve either an exchange between seller and buyer of ownership nor even, on most occasions, a purchase or hire of any exclusive rights of use. The simple point is that place marketing is a distinct sort of marketing, requiring a distinctive set of techniques of which place promotion is one.

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The Protection of Place-Images within Place Marketing

If an important, if not decisive, role in the whole marketing process is played by the manipulation of place-images, then the nature of these images and the more exact nature of this role must be investigated.

The Place-Image

Places are aggregates of many different facilities and characteristics, and thus it is impossible for either buyer or seller to be aware of all but a fraction of these attributes (Ashworth and Voogd 1990b). Places can only be sold through a rigorous selection of its features in a place-image. Accordingly, the place-image is composed of “an individual’s beliefs, impressions, ideas and evaluations of different parts of the country” (Burgess 1982). It is the learned and stable mental conceptions that summarize an individual’s environmental knowledge, evaluation, and preference.

The factors influencing the formation of place-images can be aggregated into two main groups:

1. factors relating to the individual’s mental constructs, for example, socio-economic and psychological characteristics and previous life experiences;
2. factors originating elsewhere, such as intended promotion together with other sources contributing to unintended images.

Previous experience exerts a major impact on place-images. Almost all users of places have an enormous existing store of information, feelings, and expectations whether they have physically visited the place or not. Consequently, image promotion is very rarely the creation of a new image (Ashworth and Voogd 1990a), and most conscious promotion operates on an existing information set, attempting to reinforce the favorable images already in the minds of the potential users and endeavoring to challenge and expunge the negative or contradictory impressions. Thus, an awareness of the nature and strength of preexisting images is critical.

On the supply side, the projected image can be considered in two parts: (1) the intentional image, i.e., promotional activity, and (2) the unintentional image, i.e., information from other sources. The second is almost always the more important both quantitatively and in terms of its impact on behavior. The latter means that potential users are receiving information, besides conscious goal-directed advertising, continuously from a wide variety of other sources. It is in practice important to stress that local authorities can usually do little to directly influence this unintentional image, and their activities therefore focus on the intentional image.

The Intentional Image

In promotion, local authorities have to cope with the important question, “How can a negative prejudice toward the place be overcome?” or, in the case of positive previous experience, “How it can be exploited and reinforced?” In the first case, people need a good reason to discount their prejudice, and it is generally insufficient only to contradict their image. The agencies have to operate with care because the promotional campaign reflects not only the character of the place itself but also the nature of its promoters. A well-written and well-presented publication creates an impression that the producers of it are responsible and organized, but chaotic or scrappy leaflets raise doubts about the efficiency of their organization (Burgess 1982). The medium is, in a real sense, an important part of the message.

The content of promotional messages. In selecting the content of messages for promotion, the agencies have to answer several questions. These include the information/persuasion dilemma (i.e., the decision to either publish a useful list of attributes and services in the belief that some may be important or to use eye-catching colored brochures and arresting language endeavoring to catch attention rather than inform). There is also the choice between “strength” and “weakness” strategies (i.e., stressing the already accepted attractive features or endeavoring to counter the existing negative elements in the image). These and more,

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such as the choice between advertising the general or specific characteristics of the place, are discussed at length in Ashworth and Voogd (1990a).

In addition, one must consider the cognitive stage in the behavior of purchasers and the need to relate the appropriate message to the particular stage. In the early stages when the promotional exercise is directed at a widely dispersed market within which the potential users are heavily diluted by noncustomers and when the people targeted by promotion know nothing, or very little, about the place, the agencies have to capture attention and focus it especially on the general and distinctive characteristics of the place, pursuing a strength strategy and using persuasive techniques. In these early stages, the most essential task is to call attention to the place and establish it as an alternative to others, often through spectacular promotion of its general and favorable features. Conveying specific information is inappropriate, and the application of a weakness strategy would be dangerous in these stages because negative elements may be established, which will prove difficult to counter later.

In the later stages, when more of the characteristic features are known, the comparison with other places, explicitly or implicitly, can begin, and detailed relevant information must be transmitted. In these cases, much more attention must be paid to the specific characteristics, and in turn the weakness strategy can be used. People comparing and selecting the potential places need more detailed information, and in this case the negation can attract more attention than the assertion. But the most important thing is that the final decision needs to be legitimized by more personal sources, whether firsthand through an exploratory visit or an exhibition or, if this is not feasible, through personal contacts, whether acquaintances or professional intermediaries (Ashworth and Voogd 1990a).

The problems of a promotional campaign. The agencies concerned with place promotion have to cope with a range of different problems. Among these, and of interest in a spatial context, is the so-called shadow effect (Ashworth and Voogd 1990a), which means that the image of one place overshadows the images of neighboring places. This may be

positive (i.e., a place can reap the benefit of the attractive image and promotional activity of its neighbor) or negative (i.e., it is possible that the poor image of a place is disadvantageous to its neighbor). Promoters try to benefit from favorable shadows and distance themselves from unfavorable ones. Such shadowing can occur between different levels in the spatial hierarchy as well as within them. There is also the obvious problem that many places are simultaneously engaged in conducting promotional campaigns focusing attention on the same messages, and hence it is necessary to find a distinct enough message.

It is very important to bring into harmony the place as a product and its spatial scale. On one hand, the place exists at a particular spatial scale, and an effective promotional campaign needs agreement between the promotional measures pursued by different agencies belonging to the distinctive hierarchical levels, whether national, regional, or local. On the other hand, this may cause some difficulties if the spatial scale and the delimitation of the product purchased by the consumer do not correspond to that marketed by the producer (Ashworth and Voogd 1990b). This means that the place promotion by public authorities is in practice constrained by the actual jurisdictional bounds of the areas for which they are responsible, and there is no guarantee that such boundaries will correspond to those of the place-image held by users.

The Targeted Groups

The choice of the targeted groups is important in influencing the content of the message and depicting the nature of the agencies operating the promotional campaign. Some general characteristics of the main groups are listed below, but each of these can be subdivided. Furthermore, each subgroup may need a distinctive approach.

Residents. The creation of a favorable image among residents is critical because only this can establish the local self-confidence needed as a basis for further successful activity. But existing residents are in a special situation because they have their own firsthand experiences and expectations, which primarily focus on ubiquitous characteristics (for example, shopping opportunities and transportation networks). Agencies

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need to stimulate a civic consciousness among the existing inhabitants by organizing programs (such as exhibitions or festivals) that reinforce a sense of not only identity but also empowerment.

Entrepreneurs. Local development agencies engage in promotion to commercial entrepreneurs and investors in order to profit directly or indirectly from the establishment of new firms in the local economy. The uncertainty threshold of the high risk of failure needs compensating. This is essentially an exercise to boost self-confidence in which new firms are associated with successful existing enterprises (Burgess and Wood 1988). The aim of these activities is to stimulate further inquiry and establish contact with decision-making executives. Personal contact is critical especially in the final stages of decision making, not least to deflect possible prejudices about the suitability of a place. Such contacts can be broadly called public relations.

Tourists. The holiday purchase is peculiar in a number of ways. The site visit is rarely an integral part of the search process, and the previous experiences of the holidaymaker or his or her acquaintances are a poor predictor of future satisfaction because the conditions determining success are specific in time and space (Goodall 1988). Consequently, potential tourists have to choose between a wide range of alternative destinations on the basis of extremely limited information. For this reason, the choice between honesty and hyperbole in the message plays a very important role during the promotional campaign. The existence of bias is inherent in the purposes of competitive promotion and probably expected by recipients, but a gap between the expectations evoked by advertising and the reality of the holiday that is too wide can lead to postpurchase dissatisfaction and a lack of repeat orders (Stabler 1988).

The tourist product is assembled from the variety of services and experiences obtainable in the place, but this is conducted principally by the consumer not the producer. Therefore, the place is marketed by destination agencies without any clear idea of the nature of the individual product being consumed. In addition, those responsible for the promotion of the product are unlikely to be the same as those concerned with the production and operation of individual components. This fragmentation is also complicated by the existence of both private

and public sector enterprises at different points in the production and marketing process. Finally, tourism areas evolve over time through a hypothetical cycle of product evolution. The promotional campaign must consider that the particular phase of the area as the objective of promotion at each stage will be quite different.

The Projected Place-Images of Groningen and Debrecen

The Nature of Groningen and Debrecen

A comparison between a city in the Netherlands and one in Hungary has more obvious contrasts than similarities. The Netherlands is a westward-oriented trading economy, which combines a high social wage with considerable export success and is managed through a highly developed market economy in a mature pluralist democratic system. Hungary in contrast is emerging from the forty-year experience of the command economies of the Soviet economic and political system and is a landlocked country oriented toward Central Europe.

However, both are compact European states with relatively small populations, and each is a small cultural area maintaining a distinction in the face of a culturally and economically dominant neighbor. Equally, the economic and political differences can be overemphasized. Hungary passed through a period of rapid, if partial, capitalist economic transformation in the second half of the nineteenth century and again after the adaptation of the new economic management plans after 1968; since this time, it has acquired considerable experience in the operation of free-market enterprises. It also has a skilled and largely industrial labor force, a notable reputation for innovation, and an ethnically homogeneous population.

Both cities lie between 180 to 200 kilometers from the economic and political core areas of their countries, which, although not far in many respects, can be a decisive factor in many aspects of economic and social life. Both are the largest settlements in their region. Groningen has about 170,000 inhabitants in its core agglomeration but has an

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extensive area that requires its services. Debrecen has about 220,000 inhabitants, is the second largest city in Hungary after Budapest, and again has no rival in eastern Hungary.

Both towns are official administrative centers of Groningen province and Hajdú-Bihar county, respectively. This fact means that the offices that serve the administrative needs for political, commercial, cultural, educational, and tourism functions are concentrated in these cities. Both settlements have for historical reasons become the unchallenged center of a wider region (the northern area of the Netherlands and the territory east of the Tisza river). It is appropriate to single out one set of such institutions: namely, those in higher education, particularly the Rijksuniversiteit, Groningen, and the Kossuth Lajos University, Debrecen. The possession of such higher education complexes of national and international significance is an apt reflection of their important functions.

The tertiary and quaternary sectors dominate employment in both cities (80 percent in Groningen and 50 percent in Debrecen), and both have rates of unemployment notably higher than the national average (between 15 to 20 percent in Groningen province and between 11 to 12 percent in Hajdú-Bihar county). The peripheral nature of each city both exacerbates the economic problem but again in each case contributes to solutions. Cultural distinctiveness, a strong sense of regional identity, and a historic reputation for fortitude are characteristics of both the northern part of the Netherlands and eastern Hungary. These attributes power much of the determination to lessen dependency on the central regions and project something of this self-confidence outward to new markets.

The Existing Images

The importance of existing images provides a logical starting point for this analysis. A major difference between the situations in Groningen and Debrecen is that in the former, unlike the latter, a substantial amount of scientific work has been done that support promotional campaigns.

The images held by entrepreneurs has been investigated (Pellenbarg and Meester 1984; Pellenbarg 1989; ter Hark 1989; Pellenbarg et al. 1991). A sample of 388 firms and a national telephone inquiry examined Groningen as a commercial location in comparison with other locations. The research concluded that the city does not have a favorable image: 75 percent of those asked would not have selected the province as a place of residence, and the entrepreneurs ranked Groningen fifty-seventh among seventy national locations.

The explanation for this unfavorable image lies in the perceived peripherality of its location with respect to clients and suppliers (Pellenbarg 1989) and lumping the city in the image of the northern region as a whole. Thus, the city suffers a negative shadow effect from the province and from the region. Whether the reverse is also true and the province gains a positive shadow effect from the city is not known. Third, there are problems that are derived from the ready acceptance of false information about the city.

An example of this situation with potentially serious implications is that 27 percent of respondents in 1988 supposed that the distance between Groningen and Amsterdam was more than 200 kilometer—it is only 185 kilometers (Pellenbarg et al. 1991). Thirty-four percent supposed that Groningen was ranked as the eighth most populous Dutch city (it is sixth), and the average opinion was that the number of inhabitants in Groningen was 120,000 (it is 170,000). The assumptions that Groningen is smaller and further away from the western part of the Netherlands than it actually is could be a serious drawback for many activities. Fourth, many of the companies located in the province appeared to be little known elsewhere or, if known, were not especially associated with Groningen. The image of the provincial economy was still strongly defined by agriculture and the petrochemical industry (Hark 1989).

There were also favorable elements in the Groningen image. Dutch entrepreneurs regarded the strongest points of the province as the mentality of the people (a vague conglomerate of general attitudes and work ethics), the favorable quality of life (composed of such elements as low property prices, low crime rates, and good outdoor recreational and

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entertainment opportunities), and finally the availability of various subsidies. Most noticeable was the high value placed on Groningen as a city of art, culture, and education. There was also a general impression that the city served as a bridge to northern Germany and Scandinavia.

A recent national survey of the images of Dutch regions held by tourists has sketched a similar pattern, although the elements are evaluated differently. Peripherality, for example, may be seen positively rather than negatively. Only 2 percent of Dutch holidaymakers considered Groningen province as a potential holiday destination, but they saw the province as having an attractive, peaceful landscape and hospitable people. Historic cities, museums, and cultural life in general were all positively valued. However, Groningen was competing unsuccessfully with provinces with similar images such as Limburg and Friesland. The contrasting rural and urban images present special problems of promotion (NBT 1992).

In Debrecen, a different approach is required because over the last forty years marketing science was not politically acceptable, and thus local authorities rarely undertook marketing surveys or pursued promotional policies. Markets of various sorts did of course exist, most notably after the economic management reforms of the 1970s, and many public services were conscious of the images of them held by actual and potential clients. However, the published image research of the sort described for Groningen was not freely accessible or undertaken by public authorities, which explains the almost total lack of academic interest in the existing image of Hungarian cities. Thus after the collapse of the centrally directed economic system and resulting decrease in central subsidies, the cities were not equipped to exploit the possibilities of a market-oriented approach to urban development. This makes it difficult to be as authoritative about the existing image of Debrecen as for Groningen.

Footloose indigenous capital is scarce or missing, and thus substantial Hungarian investment is not to be expected in the short term. Therefore, the city has to target foreign investors and promote a favorable impression to them. In foreign promotion, however, the image of Debrecen cannot be separated from that of the country. Hungary has

long had a few strong elements among its image held by foreign entrepreneurs. These include skilled labor and the experience of more economic and political freedom than other communist countries, stable political conditions, and reasonably satisfactory infrastructure. But Debrecen and the eastern part of the country could not benefit until recently from these advantages because Budapest dominated the foreign perception of Hungary. However, this situation changed gradually after 1991. The collapse of the communist system in Eastern Europe opened up new markets, chiefly in Ukraine, for Western European firms who presently see eastern Hungary as a point of entry for trade directed at these neighboring areas.

Foreign tourists see Debrecen as part of a region of considerable natural resources and historical and ethnographic interest; as embodied in the Great Plain, to which Debrecen is the closest large city. Hungarians react differently to Debrecen: They especially associate it with historical and cultural elements. Debrecen is perceived as the most important economic and cultural center east of the Tisza, but it is also seen as inhabited by obstinate people.

The Early Stages of Image Promotion

The results of existing surveys that revealed deficiencies made the work of the local authority in Groningen easier. It set itself the task to suggest that Groningen is a large city, situated not far from other parts of the country. It also attempted to reinforce the favorable elements of its image. There are many participating agencies in Groningen, and each department of the local authority has some promotional responsibility and a central promotional department to coordinate their work. There are other relevant agencies such as the Provincial Tourism Promotion Office; Groningen City Promotion; and the Bureau Studentendecanen, which has the responsibility of attracting students to Groningen.

To improve the image of both the province and the city, an intensive promotional campaign began in 1989 in which the province, the city, eight other neighboring local authorities, many companies (for example, AKZO Delfzijl, PTT Nederland, and NMB Bank), and institutions (for example, the chamber of commerce) participate. The main purpose of

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the campaign was to alert people to important aspects of the city. Press advertisements and television commercials used the slogans: "There is nothing above Groningen" or "Groningen—Top of Holland." These slogans use the northern location to suggest that superiority also applies to other aspects of urban life, such as education, culture, entertainment, and recreation. The advertisements highlight the favorable elements of the province, such as the investment climate, the low prices of land, the mentality of the people, and the cooperative nature of the government.

The city has its own campaign, in addition to participating in that of the province. In its campaign, the size of the city is central in order to contradict the idea that Groningen is a small provincial town. Cultural, economic, sportive, scientific, and recreational facilities are stressed. In addition, the VVV often organizes exhibitions (especially in the main tourism markets of Germany, Scandinavia, and Britain). The university and the three colleges also have a promotional campaign partly subsidized by the city. This operation uses an eye-catching multicolored publication and radio commercial, in which former students speak about experiences in Groningen. This publication focuses attention on the sporting and entertainment elements of student life. These institutions also maintain relations with the schools through intermediaries who spread information. The aim of these activities is to provide information about Groningen and the university and to stimulate further inquiry in order to attract potential students to the spring and autumn information days.

The local authority and other agencies try to alert both foreigners and Hungarians to Debrecen in different ways. First, the local authority publishes a newspaper advertisement in some Western European economic trade journals. This stresses the favorable geographical location of the city; the citizens' enterprising spirit and the business mentality, which earlier made it an important center of East-West trade; the excellent educational system, which goes back to the early seventeenth century; and the diversified economic structure.

This advertisement also promotes the most impressive monuments in Debrecen, such as the Calvinist college, the university, and the BIOGAL pharmaceutical factory (the most advanced in Debrecen). Second, the

local authority fosters closer contact between Debrecen and other cities, especially the twin cities of New Brunswick in the United States and Paderborn in Germany where the city organizes exhibitions to inform inquirers about available opportunities. Similarly, delegations from these cities are contacted about the possibilities of closer collaboration in fields such as commerce, culture, or tourism. Third, the county tourism office (Hajdútourist) together with other agencies participate in exhibitions organized in Hungary (such as Journey 91) and abroad (recently in Essen, Frankfurt, and Antwerp). It also organizes visits for foreign (especially American, German, and Finnish) journalists and guidebook writers. However, the university feels it has a traditional student market and a near regional monopoly.

The purpose of these operations is to create and promote a favorable impression of Groningen and Debrecen. Different but not necessarily exclusive groups are identified (entrepreneurs, holidaymakers, and students). The most important task of these activities is to create awareness, knowledge, and preference, i.e., they attempt to influence the early stages of the purchaser's behavior and to create further inquiry.

The Later Stages of Image Promotion

The final purchase decision of potential customers needs more detailed and comparative information. Various agencies have the task in the later stages to encourage preference, conviction, and ultimately purchase.

The entrepreneurs as a targeted group. In Groningen, potential entrepreneurs can receive information from the city's Department of Economic Affairs, through brochures providing general information about the city. These focus attention chiefly on three elements:

1. Communications—to counter the prejudice about isolation with actual travel times;
2. Economic development—to highlight existing companies. This demonstrates that the town can accommodate high-tech organizations. Similarly, attention is drawn to the high-quality educational and research institutions providing skilled labor and technological support;

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3. Quality of life—to present housing conditions and shopping, cultural, and recreational opportunities in the city.

To aid the final comparative decision, the brochures publish details of the existing costs, availability, and accessibility of industrial and office space. In addition, the opinions of named local companies are used to convince other entrepreneurs and to counter possible objections to investment and respond to existing prejudices. The city also offers various subsidies to potential entrepreneurs, such as a 20 percent investment rebate, and distributes local news information to existing companies. This department also organizes a company contact day for managers of businesses to contact each other, their suppliers, and city representatives. The city also distributes enterprise awards and organizes seminars.

In Debrecen's program for promoting investment, the most significant disadvantage is a lack of appropriate printed information on the economic opportunities available. There is at present no agency distributing information to potential investors on available industrial or office space and assisting in the establishment of new enterprises. The collapse of the Communist system and the 1990 local elections led to a new management whose first task was the adequate operation of the city's services, not promotion, which was hampered by both a lack of previous experience and finance constraints. The city does apply for various financial subsidies offered to small enterprises by foreign governments, and it participates in a regional economic development foundation whose goal is to help new enterprises through credits, foreign trade offices, industrial parks, and incubator sites.

The weakness of the local authority favors other agencies more attuned to helping entrepreneurs. The most important is the North Alföld Regional Chamber of Commerce whose commission is very ambitious in facilitating contact between local and foreign firms. It helps the flow of information and organizes skills courses for managers. There is also another important organization that advises and influences the local authority and helps them solve accounting, taxation, and various technical problems.

The tourists as a targeted group. In promoting these cities to potential tourists, a close relationship exists between the cities and their surroundings. Both Groningen and Debrecen can offer tourism facilities to satisfy visitors for only up to 2–3 days, and to extend this period they must include the endowment of their surroundings. Therefore, both cities have to create an image stressing both an attractive city and a gateway for their surroundings.

In the Dutch city, promotion concentrates especially on the city center and projects a positive impression as a historic city, a shopping center, and a location of various events. The selling of the past to the present is one of the most profitable parts of the tourism industry (Ashworth 1988). In Groningen, this promotion rests on the products of its 950-year official existence and depends on including various museums, historical buildings, and spatially clustered conserved areas, which are linked by a town trail. The local authority also reinforces this facet of the city in its 1988 inner city policy, in which a number of tourist circulation routes were identified. The city is presented as a shopping center to its suburban population and to visitors. The local authority and Groningen City Promotion, an organization of entrepreneurs in the city's center, exploit the fact that Groningen offers competitive shopping opportunities compared to the large cities of northern Germany, and unlike the German situation shops are open on Saturday afternoons. The city offers a varied program of events including the Bloemenmarkt, the Landenweek, and a jazz festival.

Groningen promotes the benefits offered by its pleasant surrounding countryside and profiles itself as a center of tours in the province through brochures referring to sites in the province (including twenty-five walking and 100 cycle routes, many lakes, and the Pieterburen seal sanctuary). An important promotional activity intended to shape a favorable image of both the city and the province is the advertisement of the Green Coast Road, which is a holiday route between Scandinavia and Western Europe that is routed through the province (Bergsma 1988).

Debrecen promotes historical, cultural, and natural attractions largely to domestic markets stressing the association with Calvinism, Bartók, the thermal spa, and the forest setting. The city is promoted to foreigners

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as a high-amenity location for study tourism and a gateway to the Great Plains, a storehouse of natural and ethnographic attractions. Neither city is thus a specialized tourism center: both promote a varied image to fragmented markets.

Students as a Targeted Group. The university and colleges in Groningen and the three universities in Debrecen use similar promotional methods. In Groningen, the most important is the personal visit during the spring and the autumn information days. In Debrecen, there is an autumn open day, and, as in Groningen, faculties distribute information to the secondary schools.

The Residents as a Targeted Group. Both cities attempt to improve their image among their own citizens, important because both populations underestimate the size and significance of their own city and both perceive themselves as victims of an unfair national image and a discriminatory national development strategy. Local authorities cannot totally expunge these negative impressions, but they can mitigate their impacts. Since especially focus their attention on ubiquitous characteristics, such as shopping or transportation, promotion concentrates on these facilities. Second, the presence of tourists and the organization of events mainly for tourists confirms the residents' belief that they live in important towns. In addition, local authorities try to reinforce the civic loyalty of citizens by involving them in significant and symbolic local decision making.

Assessment

The obvious contrast between city promotion in the two cities is simply that it is better organized and more far reaching in Groningen. Debrecen has no coordinating body within the local authority to oversee promotion and has little understanding of the strong and weak elements of its image. In the early stages, in particular, promotional activities in Groningen are more spectacular in their use of a variety of marketing channels, including advertising through television, radio, newspapers, and posters. The widest differences exist in the quantity of detailed information conveyed to potential entrepreneurs. Debrecen has no

informative brochures and no facilitating institution for entrepreneurs seeking premises. Promotion to holidaymakers, students, and citizens is very similar, both towns using the same methods and the same information for the same purposes.

In terms of improvement, Groningen's hyperbole promises much that its infrastructure cannot in fact deliver, such as its function as a bridge with northern Germany and Scandinavia. In Debrecen, the need is to recognize the existence of its market context and adjust its service provision accordingly. This is a matter of attitude and selection. The city's traditional function as a bridge for trade in Eastern European markets, the tourism potential of the health spa, and the intellectual resource of the university offer obvious underexploited potential.

However, achieving these objectives requires the precondition of winning central government support, especially for transportation, and a successful competition with, in the case of Debrecen, Miskolc and Nyíregyháza, which have similar locational and facility endowments. Both cities require more effective promotion in three areas. First, joint product marketing through new institutions is needed. Second, city lobbying within the national governments for considerable financial assistance and development of infrastructure needs to be improved. Third, nothing will be possible without the active cooperation of citizens themselves, and it is this civic consciousness that may prove the most difficult to develop if only because of its absence in the past.

Thus, city promotion is both a major instrument of the transition to market economies and a symbolic reflection of progress in that direction. Groningen represents a future that for Debrecen is still distant but not unattainable.

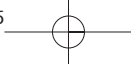
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Gregory J. Ashworth

