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The use of sound and film as rebranding strategies in two Danish port cities

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Abstract

Through two Danish case studies, we investigate how the media of sound and film production are used in port city branding and transformation: in the port city of Struer through a somewhat unconventional branding strategy called ‘The City of Sound’; and in the port of Hirtshals, through film productions foregrounding cultural, social, and physical-material aspects of the port. The paper analyses the role of sound and film in place-branding and port city development and discusses the challenges and benefits of these ventures as a port city transformation strategy, and in the building of positive port city narratives.

Keywords

place-making, top-down vs. bottom-up strategy, site-specific branding, authenticity in branding, port city relationships

Introduction

Industrial port cities worldwide are struggling with structural challenges, closure of industrial activities, and identity issues. As port cities often experience distinctive challenges from their implicit industrial and transit-oriented character, these cities may call for extra care in terms of other qualities such as liveability and cultural identity.[1] Port cities can be considered a particular type of city, with similar distinctive local maritime cultures.[2] Many port cities have followed the same development model since ancient times (coined in the Anyport model[3] and the port city interface model[4]). The overall development pattern has been that primitive city ports since the industrial period expanded and led to a detachment between port and city. This development followed external global changes, such

as technological advancements, and since the 1970s a redevelopment of the waterfront has taken place. Subsequently, there has increasingly been focus on renewal of port city links[5] where port cities around the world have undergone significant revitalisation processes focused on transforming the waterfronts. Some port city revitalisation processes have been relatively generic, transforming harbourfronts into anonymous residential areas without consideration for the port's previous and existing structures, materials, and connections. However, there are successful examples such as the inner harbour area in the city of Aalborg, Denmark, where the old industrial harbour has been transformed into a mixed used highly public and accessible harbourfront.[6] One of the features that enabled this success is the combination of art, culture, and education combined with student housing, creating a lively and diverse area that transformed Aalborg from a rough industrial port city to a city of knowledge and culture. This is an example of how waterfront redevelopment focusing on architecture, public spaces, and cultural institutions can help withdraw from a somewhat negative storytelling of the past.[7]

Other examples are Manchester's and Barcelona's old, former industrial harbours where the imaginaries of the industrial port city have been replaced with images of leisure and culture, and thereby created new ties between city, port, and sea.[8] Also, smaller port cities are trying to give life to their harbour areas by physically reshaping and re-connecting port and city and reframing urban narratives. A common approach is to use art and culture in port city branding strategies, as the examples above convey. As we will show in this paper, when it comes to small-sized port cities the aim is often to distinguish themselves, and we see that some port cities find their ways through artistic features such as sound and film.

Hence, in this paper the focus will be on investigating small-sized port cities working with city branding and transformation strategies that include different types of media. We discuss how sound and film are used in port city branding and revitalising strategies in the two Danish port cities of Struer and Hirtshals, and how these strategic measures manifest in the urban fabric. The first case is a port city revitalisation strategy that combines sound business, culture, and urban planning; the second constructs more positive port city narratives by exploiting the photogenic characteristics of the port to attract film production.

The paper comprises five parts; following this introduction, the second section provides a theoretical overview of place branding and how media can play a part herein. The case studies are presented next, as well as the methods used for the empirical study. This is followed by analysis and discussion of the case studies in relation to the theoretical framework, and a final conclusion section.

City branding and port revitalisation strategies

Many cities seek to explore ways of revitalising and re-branding as means to position themselves and have a role in the urban network on a regional, national, and global scale, by defining a city narrative and to strategically form a certain identity. This concerns the development of a selective storytelling through which the city is re-imagined and through which the city is seen in a certain light,[9] working with city branding beyond marketing and business, by focusing on city identity and its formative processes.[10] In this respect, the role of media in shaping certain representations and images of the city is important.[11]

One of the most famous examples and one that many other cities have tried to copy is the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, an effective catalyst in the revitalisation of the waterfront. However, copying attempts like Bilbao might be challenging for small-sized cities. The point is rather to find cultural stories at different levels and empower processes that take points of departure in art and culture to be used in place-based narratives.[12] The desirability of a city can be enhanced by exploiting the authenticity of the local culture and thereby promoting distinction from other (competing) cities.[13] In this respect, port cities – also smaller ones – can build on their inherent particularities of local maritime culture[14] profitably, combined with other distinctive assets and local qualities.

Film tourism and urban identity

Film is a fairly common type of media used in place branding in two main ways; one is under the auspices of film festivals. In this regard, the content of the individual films rarely has anything to do with the city or place where the film festival is held. Rather, the branding value is created by associating the place with positive values such as creativity and glamour. The festival itself attracts film-interested tourists and professionals from the film industry, potentially increasing the vibrancy of the city and enhancing the image and 'profile of the city through media exposure'.[15] The second way to use film for branding is where the place is used as a setting. Here, an economy is generated on site during the periods when filmmakers live in the area (board and lodging, plus other consumption). The branding value of the films in question is however debated depending on which place narratives the film/series portrays.

In both cases Filipov argues that they

contribute to the place brand by generating awareness of the place and showcasing its ability to successfully stage events. They become a fertile ground for city brand storytelling.[16]

Literature on both types of film branding exemplifies both qualities and conflicts. One example traced and discussed by D'Allesandro et al is Naples, where film was used strategically in city branding for decades.[17] However, Naples was also a setting for a popular television series (*Gomorra*, 2014-2021) displaying some less idyllic parts of the city, which led to local conflicts. According to D'Allesandro et al 'it is not possible to identify – except in rare cases – a cause-effect relationship between the production of certain cinematic images and the increase/decrease of tourist flows'.[18] Empirical evidence is missing and though some authors argue that 'negative' images lead to negative branding and tourism decrease, others have pointed to the potential of 'dark tourism', referring 'to the "poetry" generated by the dark and noir'.[19]

The edited book *Filmbyer*[20] (*Film Cities*) propounds that there are many ways a city can be comprehended as a 'film city' – e.g., a place of major film studios like Hollywood; or a film studio like Cinecittà outside Rome. The book, however, discusses in particular film cities understood as

concrete city, i.e. as a backdrop/setting [...as] the cities we see and hear on film. The cities that films construct and represent.[21]

In this paper, we understand these as 'front-end' film cities, as opposed to 'back-end' film cities for production.

Troelsen discusses 'Urban space as cinematic scenography' and how it can play different roles as a setting: 'The city can be careful to convey historical local colouring, be a more anonymous background for the acting persons [...] - but it can also push in as a co-player, perhaps even claim the leading role.'[22] In this respect, port cities with either idyllic waterfronts or rough industrial environments are effectful settings rich in semantics and inherent metaphors. They are places that people are often drawn to, through media and as touristic destinations.

Film-induced tourism has been academically scrutinised from many angles, often through extreme cases like *Lord of the Rings*,[23] *Game of Thrones*,[24] and *Sound of Music*. [25] Less has been written about smaller productions and their spill-over effect in attracting visitors to the filmed locations. Although it has not been studied exhaustively, the significance of location in films seems to have effects on tourism.[26] In his research on collaboration between the film and tourism industries, Hudson finds that 'most tourism organizations and film commissions have been slow to tap the potential benefits of film tourism, [though] partnerships between the two industries can be mutually beneficial', and that, 'If leveraged well, film tourism can have large economic gains for countries and regions.'[27] While portraying a particular place and to some extent its inherent identity, the film mutually affects that identity. Mennel writes with reference to Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined community', suggesting that 'film, too, has played a particularly pivotal role in the

ongoing development of national identities’.[28] This suggests that films not only generate economic development, but also take part in identity development of place and community, concurrently with the place-branding effects towards potential residents and tourists.

Sound in place branding

Place branding is usually realised through visual engagements, whereas sound is somewhat overlooked as a branding medium. Medway, however, argues for including the senses of smell, taste, touch, and sound in branding activities, in a holistic approach, ‘likely to deliver a more enriching experience for the recipient of place branding effort and, ultimately, the place consumer’.[29] In the built environment, sound is often perceived merely as a ‘place pollutant’[30] and though this has brought attention to sound-related aspects of urban environments, ‘sound is still rather seen as an unresolvable problem in urban planning and design’.[31] As Graakjær and Bonde argue, ‘Noise reduction is also a concern in architecture and acoustic ecology studies encompassing aspects of “city branding”, such as strategic uses of urban soundscapes.’[32]

Porteous covers the term of Soundscapes, comprising ‘the entire continuum of sound’ and used ‘as an analogy to landscape, to denote the overall sonic environment of a designated area, from a room to a region’.[33] As such, it is established as a critique and a more holistic equivalent to that of ‘noisescape’.[34] While sound levels of cities apparently increase in decibels,[35] the Five Village Soundscapes project found ‘a degeneracy in the variety and complexity of community sounds and a breakdown in the balance of forces that once organized the community’.[36] Thus, suggesting that sound is (or traditionally was) a primary way of sensing our surrounding world, soundscapes should be given more attention in academia as well as in practice.[37] Urban designers increasingly understand the role of sound in individual and collective wellbeing: ‘The surfaces, materials, architectures, and landscapes – as well as the ways in which different people activate these forms – play a decisive role in contributing to the sound and the identity of the city.’[38]

Research documented a positive effect ‘of the sound of birdsongs in public places that people otherwise tend to perceive as unsafe when they are alone, such as car parks and metro stations’.[39] Further it is demonstrated that real estate values are higher where the average sound level is lower,[40] hence strategic work with soundscapes in urban areas, including ports where noise and sounds in general can be high, seem relevant. Medway suggests, however, that the ‘difficulty in pinning sound down as something that is spatially delineated’[41] might be a reason why research within the ‘sound-place nexus’ is sparse. However, effort has been done to categorise and classify different types of sound in the physical environment.[42] Sound-based branding efforts include various hotbeds around

the world of musical genres or famous artists, from classical to contemporary music, or national parks using sounds of roaring animals or waterfalls in their advertising targeting tourists. According to Medway,

sound and hearing already play an important role in place branding effort, particularly in terms of the direct and indirect manmade sounds of music. The opportunity to develop place branding around natural sounds also exists and in some cases is being explored, but it would seem there is further scope for development here.[43]

The body of literature thus shows that sound (be it natural sounds, music, or other) can be distinctly attached to a specific place and act as a marker for identity. For port cities this may include seagull calls, boat engines chugging, metal banging, wind shrieking/howling in sails, ferries hooting, and so on. Soundscapes can be as place-specific as a visual representation, and Porteous argues they are ‘important in making up the multisensory character of place’.[44]

Based on the above theoretical insights, we suggest a classification of different uses of sound and film in place branding (Figure 1), subdivided on the basis of their direct/indirect representation of place (inspired by Medway) and whether the media activity is considered as back-end (production of media) or front-end (final media product). The model highlights different approaches and ways of engaging with the city, the local culture, and communities in it. We suggest that it can be used to clarify and discuss how place-branding efforts using different media manifest in a city.

	Indirect representation of place	Direct representation of place
Back-end media activities (production)	Production of 'hardware' not related to the place/city (e.g. film studios; record labels; media hardware)	Production of 'software' taking place in the city/at the place (e.g. film settings; sound recordings)
Front-end media activities (expression)	Promotion/performance/events and products not related to the place/city but shown in the city/place (e.g. festivals)	Performance taking place in the city/ at the place (e.g. art-installations; stage performances) or Product (e.g. film or song) taking place in the city/at the place

Fig. 1: Different uses of sound and film in place branding (illustration made by the authors).

Case studies and methodology

This section introduces the two Danish port cities of Hirtshals and Struer, which have been used in a comparative case study[45] to analyse how film and sound can be used as branding strategies (Figure 2). Both cities can be characterised as small-sized cities within the Danish context and are situated in the more secluded parts away from the urbanised growth regions (Figure 3). Both are affected by global connections and local realities [46] and their ways of coping concerns using their own local strongholds to create positive place narratives.

	STRUER	HIRTSHALS
NUMBER OF INHABITANTS	10129 inhabitants in 2022	5532 inhabitants in 2022
MUNICIPALITY	Municipality of Struer	Municipality of Hjørring (before national municipal merger in 2007 it was its own municipality)
FOCI OF MUNICIPAL STRATEGY	City of Sound	Municipality of Nature
OTHER LOCAL ASSETS PRESENT IN MUNICIPAL STRATEGY	Nature and technology	Infrastructure, cultural heritage and tourism
TYPE OF MEDIA WITH SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE PORT-CITY BRANDING	Sound <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Audio production- Hardware production- Art installations and cultural experiences based on sound	Film and TV production <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Documentaries- Feature films- Nordic Christmas calendar
MEDIA PRESENCE IN MUNICIPAL STRATEGY	Yes	No
MAIN FOCUS LOCAL MARITIME CULTURE	Tourism and leisure	Business
SIGNIFICANCE OF MARITIME CULTURE IN MUNICIPAL/CITY STRATEGY	Medium	High
SIGNIFICANCE OF MARITIME CULTURE IN MEDIA USE	Low	High
LEVEL OF INTEGRATION BETWEEN MEDIA AND MARITIME CULTURE	Low	High
TRANSFORMATION OF PORT	From business port to leisure port with settlement	From fishery to business and transport hub
SETTLEMENT AT THE PORT	Yes	No

Fig. 2: Fact sheet providing an overview of the cases (illustration made by the authors).



Fig. 3: Cases in the context of the Danish urban territory (illustration by authors).

Hirtshals – Portraying the authentic port on screen

In the port city of Hirtshals flows of goods and people move in and out through the highly industrial port, whilst the city itself is declining and has trouble maintaining a stable population. Today, Hirtshals has approximately 5,500 inhabitants and is the second largest city in the municipality of Hjørring. The port city has been dependent on fishery for most of its history, and although fisheries still play an important economic role, the port's continuous growth relies on ventures related to infrastructural systems that connect important North-South axes in Europe with the Port of Hirtshals, promoting themselves as 'a unique geographical turntable'.^[47]

This development has on the positive side led to new business undertakings and consequently to the demand for more highly skilled workers. On the negative side the need for unskilled workers in the fishing industry has declined, which has led to unemployment amongst locals. Furthermore, the enhancement of infrastructural systems has encouraged some people working in Hirtshals to move elsewhere and commute to work. The dilemma for local authorities has been to balance the benefits of being an important economic driver for the region and the negative consequences for the local community.

As a response, the municipality and other stakeholders have recently worked on changing the somewhat negative image of the city. Instead of 'selling' the port city as an industrial node and transit hub,[48] a strategic urban development process was launched by the municipality in 2016 with the aim to rebalance and reconnect port and city. In parallel, the Municipality agreed on branding itself as a Nature Municipality, with an annual public People's Festival of Nature helping to give the city a new more diverse identity.

From cultural heritage to film-setting

Simultaneously, other municipal initiatives have resulted in Hirtshals becoming a recurring setting for film productions. In 2006, Hjørring and three other municipalities were appointed as a 'cultural heritage municipality' and worked intensely to identify their distinctive cultural heritage. From this work grew the idea to create an international blockbuster around a true, historical character named Styggekrumpen (1485-1551, Danish Bishop). The municipality was inspired by the effects the film adaptation of Jan Guillou's novels have created for Västra Götaland, Sweden. Hjørring Municipality dreamed of combining a similar blockbuster with urban development, tourism, and settlement, but they did not succeed in attracting investors. Nevertheless, they continued to work with a film vision and around 2009 the idea arose to create a traditional family Christmas television calendar[49] combining the story of Styggekrumpen with historical settings and interesting places within the municipality. The municipality joined the West Danish Film Fund (WDFF) in 2009 and the process of script development began. In December 2011 the series was broadcast and became a huge success with more than 1.2 million views a day. Two years later, a second family Christmas television calendar was made, this time with Hirtshals Lighthouse as a main setting. In 2013, the municipality set up a miniature lighthouse on the square in Hirtshals, drawing attention and local activity.

As a result of the municipality joining WDFF, they experienced an increase in inquiries about film projects within the municipality and especially in Hirtshals: first, Klumpfisken, a low-budget film adaptation of a theater performance at the Oceanarium [Aquarium] in Hirtshals; later, director Frederikke Aspöck got the opportunity to pitch her idea to the municipality, where she convinced the mayor to invest in her film. Around 2013/2014 the municipality made a more determined film venture, forming a facilitation team, anchored in the 'Team Culture and Events' under the 'Technology and Environment' department, with the purpose of, for instance, helping educational institutions to visit the set during filming or to find extras and amateur actors when needed. At present the municipality works in a so-called Cultural Alliance with Frederikshavn Municipality to foster more North Jutland film

potentials. At the time of writing, they were organising writers workshops targeted at North Jutland film development.

In total, four feature films, one television series, and two documentary productions have been recorded in and around the port of Hirtshals over the past ten years (Figure 4). Three of the films have their main storyline focused on different challenges related to a tradition-bound fishing community (Figure 5). One of the documentaries explores the diversification of the port, and the other documentary is not focused on the port, but on Hjørring Municipality’s effort to realise their brand as a nature municipality. The fourth movie and the television series have other foci but use the setting of the port, including the historic lighthouse and the ferry terminals as atmosphere-creating backdrops.

Hirtshals - film & TV productions					
Year	Title	Type / Duration	Production	Financial support	Setting
2007	Lasse Lasse Hirtshals	Documentary / 38 minutes	Director Klaus Kjeldsen Production company: Cosmo Film		Portrait of 2 young boys living in Hirtshals
2013	Tvillingerne og Julemanden (The twins & Santa)	Christmas Calendar in 24 episodes / 30minutes	TV2 (national television) and Deluca Film	Aalborg Mun., Hjørring Mun., Visit North Jutland, Spar Nord Fund, WDOFF	Hirtshals harbour and Hirtshals Light House
2014	Klumpfisken (Sunfish – Mola Mola)	Feature film / 100 minutes	Director: Søren Balie Production company: Film Maker	New Danish Screen, Fæø Lighthouse Projects	The harbor and the fishery environment
2015	Rosta	Feature film / 92 minutes	Director: Frederikke Aspöck Production company: Nordisk Film	The Danish Film Institute, WDOFF, Hjørring Mun.	The city and port of Hirtshals
2017	Far til Fire – på toppen (Farther of Four – at the top)	Feature film / 88 minutes	Director: Martin Miehe-Renard Production company: ASA Film Production	The Danish Film Institute, the Media Foundation Zefyr	The ferry terminal and harbour area
2020	Giv os naturen tilbage (Give us the nature back)	Documentary in 4 episodes / 59 minutes	DR1 (national television) by Impact TV		The municipality of Hjørring - particular areas related to biodiversity and nature
2023	Havnen (The Port)	Documentary in 6 episodes / 20 minutes	TV2 Nord (regional television)		The commercial and public port of Hirtshals
2024	Synkefri (Unsinkable)	Feature film	Director: Christian Andersen Production company: Wasabi Films	Hjørring Mun., WDOFF	The fishing harbour and the fishery environment in the city

Fig. 4: Overview of film and TV productions filmed in Hirtshals (own production).



Fig. 5: Shooting the film *Synkefri* (Unsinkable) at the port of Hirtshals (photo: Wasabi Film).

Struer – ‘The city of sound’

Struer has approximately 10,000 inhabitants and is the capital city in the municipality. An important catalyst for the development of the city was the opening of the river Limfjord[50] to the North Sea in 1825, which made way for the establishment of the harbour. Another important catalyst of change was the connection to the railway system in 1865, which subsequently made Struer an important infrastructural and administrative hub in North-Western Denmark throughout the twentieth century.[51] These catalysts enabled the industrialisation of the city and in 1925 the globally well-known and internationally-oriented company Bang & Olufsen (B&O) was founded. B&O has particularly influenced the city’s identity and is still an important driver for the city. However, the city’s growth peaked in the 1970s, whereafter it has struggled with decline in both population and economic activity. This also includes the industrial harbour of Struer which over the years has declined and today the unexploited harbour areas are part of a redevelopment project.

From acoustic company to city branding

The idea of naming Struer the 'City of Sound' arose in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis, which had a big toll on Struer. Because of the challenges the municipality was facing, it decided to redefine and rebrand Struer in order to secure workplaces, services, and settlements by utilising existing strongholds. They identified their strongholds to be the industrial heritage and legacy of the many sound-related businesses in the city, coined perhaps mostly in the legacy of B&O, and since 2011 Struer has branded itself as the 'City of Sound'. The goal with the strategy is to use sound as an overarching unique identity for Struer and through the concept of sound to create a combined business and city development strategy, developing the sound industry in the city, but also working with sound as a strong concept in the city's cultural and urban development and thus creating one united narrative (Figure 6).

Today several sound businesses are already situated in Struer, and the ambition is to attract and develop new sound-related businesses. One of them is Sound Hub Denmark, founded in 2018 and aiming to attract audio entrepreneurs and creative industries from all over the world to a coworking environment focused on sound and acoustics. In 2020, Sound Hub Denmark in Struer was appointed by the Minister for Higher Education and Science as the headquarters for the Danish Sound Cluster, one out of 14 business clusters seeking to combine local business with national knowledge institutions.

In relation to the urban development aspects, sound is today part of the urban fabric and the art and culture of the city, trying 'to activate sound in the development of community, identity and liveability'.^[52] Towards the end of 2019, the first part of the development plan for the city centre was initiated and here sound is evident as both artistic elements in the city (e.g. the art piece *Amplified Views* [Figure 7] which is different art works situated in and around the city), in the naming of places throughout the city (e.g. the Sound Garden), and in the development of public spaces in the city (e.g. the Tuning Fork square).^[53] A sound manual for municipal planners was developed and sound is also present in welfare work with the elderly and people with dementia. Further, a biannual sound art festival Struer Tracks has been established that gathers sound artists from all over the world to display concerts, sound installations, events, and workshops.^[54]

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Struer - sound installations and initiatives			
Year	Title	Type	Description
1930 -	Struer Museum	Cultural institution	Permanent exhibition on the history of B&O and since 2016 a permanent exhibition on sound.
2011	City of Sound Strategy	Policy document	In 2008 the idea emerges and in 2011 Struer launches the 'City of Sound' strategy.
2014	Struer City Center and Harbour	Planning document	Feasibility study connecting City Centre & Harbour by Gehl Architects.
2015 -	Run to the beat	Event	Yearly running event with B&O as main sponsor. An international concept from London combining running and sound.
2017 -	Struer Tracks	Event	The biannual sound art festival is established.
2018-	Sound Hub Denmark	Business co-operative	The færch Foundation owns 80%, Bim Foundation owns 20% and the municipality covers the running costs.
2018	Sound Bench art installation	Art installation	A living soundscape performed in a bench in the Sound Garden between harbour and city center.
2018	Sound Manual	Planning document	A sound manual to be used by municipal planners.
2018	The sound city - Struer	Planning document	Plan for the city center developed by landscape architecture firm Schanher.
2018	Regelbau 411	Art installation	Voluntary association created an art hall out of two bunkers, where sound, light and video art is exhibited.
2019	Amplified Views	Art installation	Sound art installation by artist Ursula Nistrup in collaboration with B&O placed at the harbourfront.
2019	The Sound of Struer Walk App	App	Interactive audiowalk.
2020	Tuning Fork Square	Public space	Redesign of central plaza with interactive tuning fork art installation.
2020	Amplified Views	Art installation	The second art installation in the Amplified Views series by Ursula Nistrup is placed in Klosterheden Plantation.
2020	Developmentplan for Struer Harbour	Planning document	The urban design office Grandville develops a plan for transforming harbour brownfield into new residential area.
2020 -	Danish Sound Cluster	Business initiative	Appointed headquarter for the Danish Sound Cluster as part of BusinessHub Denmark by the government.
2023	Sounding City Summerschool	Event	Sounding City Summerschool co-organized by Aarhus University.

Fig. 6: Overview of different sound installations and initiatives in Struer (own production).



Fig. 7: Sound sculpture *Amplified Views* at the port of Struer (photo by authors).

To understand how branding strategies can influence development and the construction of port city identities, the researchers carried out semi-structured expert interviews[55] with four local actors working with port city branding and development. In Struer, interviews have been conducted with the program leader for port development and the director of Sound Hub, giving insights on the 'City of Sound' branding strategy, the role of the port, and the relation to business development. In Hirtshals, the marketing manager at the port of Hirtshals and the communications and development consultant at the department of Culture and Event at Hjørring Municipality have shared their knowledge and experiences with film as a branding product in Hirtshals.

The purpose of the interviews was to understand how these actors work with port city development. From a phenomenological perspective,[56] experiences by these experts give insights into how rationalities unfold in practice and how media are used more or less deliberately as branding for port city development. Throughout the interviews questions on place-specific themes as well as more general questions on subjects like identities, geographical orientation, visibility, development, and narratives have been asked to clarify the strategic measures and use of media, how it has unfolded up until now, and which visible and hidden effects it has on port city development.

Analysis and discussion

The ways media are used as place branding in the two cases offer almost opposite stories. In Struer, 'sound' is the all-encompassing city brand which is articulated through a top-down strategy developed by the municipality and relevant stakeholders. The strategy is multi-tiered with a focus that combines business, culture, tourism, and welfare, and sound is used as a brand in all aspects. As the strategy is well-established, it inevitably becomes part of the port revitalisation in Struer. The port is transforming from being an industrial port to a port of leisure and settlement, where although not physically visible yet (besides a sound art installation at the harbourfront), there will be room for sound in the future port district.

Contrary to the top-down strategy in Struer, the film strategy in Hirtshals is more of a minor sub-strategy running parallel to the main strategy of exploiting nature and cultural heritage.[57] The cultural consultant in Hjørring Municipality articulates that it is important that film initiatives develop from outside and bottom-up, which have been the case for all activities apart from the Christmas Calendar. If we return to the model of different uses of sound and film in place branding developed in our theory section, we are supported by the fact that our two cases differ from one another (Figure 8). In Hirtshals the use of film focuses on the direct representation of the city. The back-end activity of filming on location attracts local attention and regional publicity as well as generating a local economy and revenue. The

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products – the films and series – act as front-end cultural expressions that, shown in cinemas and on television, perform as direct representations of Hirtshals.

Whereas Hirtshals solely makes use of the direct representation, Struer covers the full plate, however more strongly in the indirect representation side of the model. In accordance with the source of the City of Sound-brand, the sound industry is key in representing and reproducing the intrinsic logic[58] of Struer. City of Sound seems like a unique brand, and we suggest that ‘audio production’ in Struer could be added to Medway’s table 13.1 for ‘Ways music can represent place’.[59] The director of Sound Hub describes an international awareness of the brand, receiving ‘great credibility’ as ‘Denmark is from the outside seen as a hotspot for sound, because we have some world-renowned and leading companies.’ However, as the back-end activities merely represent Struer indirectly, the revitalisation strategy deliberately operates towards more front-end sound activities. The program leader for port development expresses that ‘out in the world’ the industry knows that Struer is the City of Sound, but there seems to be a lack of knowledge and understanding of what that entails in practice.

The sound festival provides a platform for exogenous sound performances, which, like a film festival, perform sound experiences from other places of the world rather than necessarily the host city. The different sound installations within the city are attempts to create some material representations of the otherwise immaterial concept of sound. Hence, the accentuation of the atmospheric and artistic aspects of sound both permanently and ephemerally seeks to contribute to the manifestation of sound in Struer, which then visitors and local citizens can experience, hopefully mentally connecting sound to Struer.

	Indirect representation of place	Direct representation of place
Back-end media activities (production)	<i>Struer</i> : Sound products by the sound industry such as loudspeakers, sound equipment, industrial sounds	<i>Hirtshals</i> : Film production in authentic harbor setting
Front-end media activities (expression)	<i>Struer</i> : Run to the Beat (event), Struer Tracks (festival), Sounding City Summerschool	<i>Struer</i> : Sound of Struer Walk app, different sound installations in the city <i>Hirtshals</i> : The final films/series (documentary as well as fictitious)

Fig. 8: Case-specific uses of sound and film in place branding (illustration made by the authors).

The less explicit presence of film as a strategic element for Hjørring Municipality, compared to sound in Struer Municipality, may be a reason why film is not a part of the strategy of the Port of Hirtshals. The municipality has only acted as a facilitator to bring film producers and the Port of Hirtshals into contact. As the city is primarily characterised by port-related business, the marketing manager believes that film can contribute to showing what else the port city has to offer. This is probably also why the port's marketing manager has been part of getting the latest documentary about the port up and running, as it exposes the many different jobs and activities in and around the port and captures 'the special atmosphere and mentality'.

The port city seems to have difficulty changing people's conception of its possibilities, and films could contribute to changing this perception. *Klumpfisken* (2014), *Rosita* (2015), and the new feature film *Synkefri* all emphasise Hirtshals as a fishing town. The producer of *Synkefri* has roots in Hirtshals and is in fact the son of the main character, a woman who lost her first husband in a lifeboat catastrophe in 1981. As this took place in Hirtshals, the film could not be filmed elsewhere. This local and private initiative by the film producer is a clear expression of a strategy building on bottom-up initiatives, with roots in the local community. On the other hand, it would not have been realised without financial support directly from the municipality and from the WDFF, which Hjørring Municipality is part of. The port marketing manager is in doubt as to what significance it has for Hirtshals, but 'you like to get that kind of branding regardless'. In fact, it has been documented that investing in WDFF pays back six times 'as regional revenue',^[60] but locally the informants express that it is more important to focus on gaining local support from the citizens, since it is such a sensitive subject and 'local ownership' is crucial.

Under the topic of film-induced tourism, scholars have discussed authenticity of locations and differences between the 'location shown vs location portrayed'^[61] or 'setting vs location'.^[62] Whereas many big productions seem to be filmed elsewhere from where the fictional storyline plays out, we can see from the productions in Hirtshals that they merge setting and location. This brings a high authenticity to the representation of the port city. Regardless of the overall quality of the film as narrative and production, the honesty within the town as setting can be considered a quality on its own. The town is used as setting because of the special, characteristic port environment, closely linked to the social and cultural port city milieu – the cultural port city identity^[63] that forms the intrinsic logic of Hirtshals. Although Hirtshals does not hold production facilities, and although it does not brand itself directly with film, we would argue that it is a film city.

Manifestations in the urban fabric of different branding strategies using sound and film

Literally sound is materialised in the form of artistic sound installations in Struer. In addition, different temporary initiatives unfold in the streets of Struer, as also shown in Figure 6. Furthermore, the industrial sound hub is a significant manifestation of the brand. In Hirtshals, there are no such clear, direct materialisations in the urban fabric, but the very shooting of the films can be seen as temporary manifestations.

Butler argues that 'The importance of the location to any particular film depends to varying degrees on the genre of film, the inclination of the director, budget of the film, and the plot or story line of the film.' [64] In the case of Hirtshals, these parameters vary, and especially in the more socio-realist dramas as well as the documentaries, the port appears as much more than mere backdrop. It becomes a lead character, where the 'intrinsic logic' [65] of the port city is key to the storyline.

As observed by Troelsen, 'conspicuously many films that let the city occupy a foreground place in their universe use a tourist or traveller/visitor as a focal figure'. [66] This is the case in the dramas set in Hirtshals. Although the town is presented in a positive way, the marketing manager at the port of Hirtshals is concerned that the character in Klumpfiskens leaving can feed into prejudices that people are moving away from cities like this. On the other hand, the cultural consultant from the municipality argues that it is more essential that the story is not diminishing. Furthermore, the film must be authentic and identifiable for the locals to be able to both feel pride and at the same time perceive it with both 'great self-irony and sarcasm'. This relates to the discussions in D'Allesandro et al about authenticity as embracing both 'positive and negative elements' [67] and that, perhaps, the gloomier aspects of a city image can also generate some kind of 'dark tourism'. Films can incontrovertibly create a visibility around the life that exists and show what a city has to offer:

Making a film has such a great auto-communicative effect because all analyses show that there is local pride. You simply become, if you weren't already, a local patriot when you see your own place and can recognize it on the big screen. People get so excited about their own place. (cultural consultant in Hjørring Municipality)

For the future development of the port in Struer, sound should also act as a buttress. Collaboration with local cultural associations and others must unfold the possibilities at the commercial port. Both natural and constructed sounds belonging to the port can be used as conscious elements in the port city development. In this regard, Struer seems to be leading the way in working with the potentials of soundscape – going beyond noise reduction by

trying innovatively to create sound-awareness among locals and visitors through art installations and soundwalks. A soundscape approach is an interesting take on a whole city – heightening the sound qualities of the urban environment and offering more ways of experiencing the local areas through sound. Some of the installations might be a bit unimaginative, but they serve the purpose of manifesting the strategy in physical measures, hard to miss when living in or visiting the city.

It can be difficult to understand sound as a brand if you have not been in Struer. As stated by Ooi & Pedersen, ‘branding a city goes beyond attracting tourists; it also means attracting investments, skilled workers, and trade’.[68] In Struer, the sound festival attracts 400 people from the sound field and ‘Run to the beat’ attracts several thousand visitors. The director of Sound Hub states that sound is the city’s DNA in contrast to a generic marketing strategy. However, it takes time to manifest and prove the brand everywhere:

The realization that we are sound, and we must stick to that, and we can do something, and we can do more than many other cities, that pride and that realization is coming now. It is something that has started to happen within the last 2 to 3 years and the city of sound started in 2012. (director of Sound Hub)

Both cases are clearly working with their local assets and notions of place. Formulated by Troelsen,

The conception of a particular city, its “myth”, is not something simply added, an appendage to the city. In a sense it is the city, as much as it is a tangible cluster of houses and streets that bear its name.[69]

With the different manifestations of sound and film strategies in our case studies, we see how the use of media helps to strengthen city brands, internally and externally.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated how sound and film production are used on different strategic levels in port city branding in a Danish context. In one case, the concept of sound acts as an all-infusing brand for the city, and the strategy unfolds this brand into sound as a medium, a product, and a business venture. Film, in the other case, is not a brand per se, but a medium through which to brand the local area.

We have suggested a model of different uses of sound and film in place branding which would most likely also apply for other types of media (e.g. literature). With the model, we

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emphasise how the use of media can engage more or less explicitly within the city through direct or indirect representations. Further, the aim of the activities may vary. As a business-oriented strategy it can be fine to focus on back-end media activities, whereas strategies for tourism and settlement could benefit more from front-end activities.

As a top-down strategy, the municipality of Struer uses the 'The City of Sound' brand as an unconventional strategy. As in many other port cities, brownfield areas are left open for future port regeneration projects. This paper shows how the well-established strategy and city-brand of sound permeates all layers of development initiatives within the city and thus becomes a set assignment for the strategic development of the port. The rather immaterial concept of sound is showing in several corporate initiatives and materialises in the urban transformation of the port city through concrete art installations and more intangible audio-based concepts and visions for the future of Struer.

In the case of Hirtshals, film manifests itself as a sub-strategy, relying mostly on bottom-up initiatives from film producers. Following municipal investments in a regional film fund, the port city has repeatedly been used as a setting for different film and television productions where cultural, social, and physical-material aspects of the port are foregrounded. Although not part of the port strategy, this paper finds that the marketing division of the port is alert to filming and welcoming the initiatives in the conviction that they bring positive branding value to the district, just through publicity. Thus, film has become part of a local branding and city development strategy, seeking to create positive port city narratives with a high degree of authenticity.

In terms of branding possibilities, it is obvious that context and scale is different in these small-scaled port cities than those of big cities and/or big productions. This paper shows, however, that media also apply as branding strategies in smaller cities. In Hirtshals, the film representations of the city help to communicate the port city in more cultural, aesthetic, vibrant, and experiential ways than being an industrial and transit-oriented port alone. In Struer, the pervasive strategy links everything from business strategy to city development.

This paper has unfolded the role of media in place-branding and port city development and discussed the challenges and benefits of these ventures – in the Struer case as a port city revitalisation strategy with an international outreach, and in the Hirtshals case in the construction of positive place-narratives and a brand-value of a more local and national reach, as Danish films have a limited international audience. Both cases seem to benefit from a close affiliation between brand and place; in other words, site-specific rather than generic brands in both port cities.

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Notes

- [1] Lange 2020; Lange 2021; Lange & Ounanian 2020.
- [2] Warsewa (2017, p. 151) describe four universal qualities of port cities, identifying them as: (1) specialised systems of functions; (2) risk communities, (3) hubs of flows, and (4) centre and periphery.
- [3] Bird 1963, chapter 1.

- [4] Hoyle 1988, p. 7
- [5] Ibid., p. 47
- [6] Amongst others, recognised by the EU funded programme ESPON 2019.
- [7] Cudny et al 2020.
- [8] Tommarchi 2022.
- [9] Jensen 2007.
- [10] Bonakdar & Audirac 2020.
- [11] Jensen 2007.
- [12] Ibid.
- [13] Bonakdar & Audirac 2020.
- [14] Warsewa 2017.
- [15] Ooi & Pedersen 2010, p. 329.
- [16] Filipov 2021, pp. 141-142.
- [17] D'Allesandro et al 2015.
- [18] Ibid., p. 187.
- [19] Ibid., p. 189.
- [20] Lauridsen 1998.
- [21] Ibid., p. 7 (translated).
- [22] Troelsen 1998, p. 139 (translated).
- [23] e.g. Buchmann et al 2010.
- [24] e.g. Li et.al 2021.
- [25] e.g. Graml 2004.
- [26] Butler 2011, p. 93.
- [27] Hudson 2011, p. 165.
- [28] Mennel 2008, p. 10.
- [29] Medway 2015, p. 191.
- [30] Ibid., p. 197.
- [31] Maag 2021, p. 108.
- [32] Graakjær & Bonde 2018, p. 1511.
- [33] Porteous 1990, pp. 48, 50
- [34] Ibid., p. 49.
- [35] Ibid., p. 63.
- [36] Schafer in Porteous 1990, p. 53.
- [37] Porteous 1990, p. 62.
- [38] Maag 2007, p. 107.
- [39] Graakjær & Bonde 2018, p. 1511.
- [40] Porteous 1990, p. 62.

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- [41] Medway 2015, p. 197.
- [42] Examples of classifications are found in e.g. Medway 2015, p. 197; Graakjær & Bonde 2018, p. 1508; Porteous 1990, pp. 54, 57)
- [43] Ibid., p. 201.
- [44] Porteous 1990, p. 51.
- [45] Andersen et al 2012.
- [46] Laursen & Lange, forthcoming in 2023.
- [47] <https://www.portofhirtshals.com/The-port/Profile/Map-and-geographical-location> (accessed on 8 February 2023).
- [48] Lange 2020; Lange 2021; Lange et al 2022.
- [49] A Nordic Christmas calendar is a traditional 24 episodic radio or television calendar, broadcasting one episode a day ending on Christmas Eve. See more at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nordic_Christmas_calendar.
- [50] Limfjorden is a big stream dividing North Jutlandic Island from the rest of the Jutlandic Peninsula.
- [51] Mikkelsen et al. 2019.
- [52] Kreutzfeldt et al. 2019, p. 1.
- [53] <https://lydensby.dk/om-lydens-by/> (accessed 27 April 2023).
- [54] <https://www.struertracks.dk/> (accessed 27 April 2023).
- [55] Kvale & Brinkmann 2015.
- [56] Brinkmann & Tanggaard 2015.
- [57] <https://hjorring.viewer.dkplan.niras.dk/plan/72#/26034>
- [58] Löw 2013.
- [59] Medway 2015, p. 199.
- [60] Seismonaut 2021, p. 11 (translated from Danish).
- [61] Butler 2011.
- [62] Frost 2009.
- [63] Warsewa 2017, section 3.1.
- [64] Butler 2011, p. 94.
- [65] Löw 2013.
- [66] Troelsen 1998, pp. 163-164 (translated).
- [67] D'Allesandro et al 2015, p. 190.
- [68] Ooi & Pedersen 2010, p. 323.
- [69] Troelsen 1998, pp. 139-140 (translated).