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City Image.

The Influence of the Belt and Road Initiative
on Duisburg.

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Foreword

This thesis was written under the supervision of Radboud University and duisport – Duisburger Hafen AG. The process of writing this thesis was not always easy, especially under the challenging circumstances due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, I have learned a lot during this time, and I am very happy that I can finish the master of Economic Geography with this master thesis.

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Executive Summary

This master thesis is motivated by the main research question: *To what extent does the global Belt and Road initiative (BRI) influence Duisburg's image on the local level and how does Duisburg influence the process of image-making in order to attract companies and investors.* The research question is accompanied by the hypothesis that a positive influence of BRI on the image of Duisburg to attract companies and investors is anticipated.

First, image shaping concepts, strategic spatial planning, vision making, framing and branding, were outlined. Secondly, the geopolitical setting is discussed based on the city's role in a global network, including the concepts of connectivity and gateway. Thirdly, the outcome, the city image is illustrated theoretically.

A case study of the BRI-‘ending’ in Duisburg was conducted to test the stated hypothesis. Duisburg is a very interesting case due to the hub function and as the connection was the first to be promoted as BRI. To provide context information, BRI was outlined regarding its aims and developments globally, in relation to Germany and particularly to Duisburg. To investigate BRI's influence on Duisburg's image multiple methods were triangulated. A quantitative and qualitative policy document analysis was used to analyse Duisburg's relation to BRI by emphasising on the visions of the most important stakeholders, China, Duisburg and Duisport, and Duisburg's role for BRI. To investigate Duisburg's image development and BRI's influence on Duisburg's image, a qualitative and quantitative media content analysis was conducted. Further, qualitative expert interviews were used to examine in-depth information about Duisburg's image development, Duisburg's marketing strategies, Duisburg's relation to BRI. The focus of the interviews laid on BRI's influence on Duisburg by identifying the importance of the logistics sector, BRI's influence on image and Duisburg's branding and marketing strategies related to BRI.

The policy document analysis identified major differences of the stakeholders' visions related to Duisburg and BRI, such as the geographical scope, involved actors and the economic focus. Although some differences are based on the different publishing dates and types of documents, the policy document illustrated similarities, like the emphasis on visioning the future of Duisburg and National Development and Reform Commission of the People's Republic of China (NDRC). Duisport and NDRC focus strongly on infrastructure and connectivity. The major similarity of the stakeholders' visions is the focus on promotion rather than establishment, while NDRC strongly emphasises on cooperation.

The media content analysis illustrated the increased popularity of Duisburg as confirmed by the frequency of publications. Further, geographical differences were identified as the publishing countries became more diverse, in line with increased promotion of BRI. Thematical shifts of frames demonstrated that frames about companies declined, while frames about infrastructure and the rail connection to China increased. Particularly, the connection of Chongqing and Duisburg was referred to most as it is the first connection and a role model for BRI. The media analysis showed that frames, categorised as culture, cooperation and promotion, are influenced by BRI.

The interviews highlighted Duisport as a strong and proactive player and Duisburg's strategic location and connectedness as reasons for BRI to ‘end’ in Duisburg and Duisburg's role for BRI is based on the hub function. Although the logistics sector of Duisburg has a long tradition,

the interviews addressed the increased significance as Duisburg is increasingly associated as a port city and logistics hub. A negative internal and external image of Duisburg was identified based on structural changes and negative events in the past. However, the external image differs geographically. Abroad, especially in China, Duisburg is positively and well-known. Further, a stronger association with logistics and China was identified. BRI was illustrated as economically and culturally influencing for Duisburg and its image due to the increased international attention of Duisburg as an important logistics hub. Companies and investors reacted positively to Duisburg being part of BRI. Since positive economic effects are limited to the logistics sector, a skill-over effect is needed. It was highlighted that Duisburg has no defined image. Thus, Duisburg has to position itself and stress BRI stronger in marketing activities. Although Duisburg's political and economic independence was emphasised, dependencies on China, global relations and investments were identified. Similarly, the bad press on China was stated as a challenge for using BRI for branding.

Based on the triangulation of methods, it was concluded that BRI positively influences Duisburg's image as a locational factor to attract companies and investors. The findings proof an important differentiation between the actual and the desired image of Duisburg. The actual image of Duisburg is determined by negative frames of the past remaining in minds, which stresses the importance of framing and promotion with different focuses and scopes. As predicted, the results indicate that BRI's influence on Duisburg's image is based on increased attention and increased connectivity. The findings stressed the geographical differences of Duisburg's popularity, image perception, and the sectoral limitations. This study examined the increased connectivity goes along with the intensified ties between Duisburg and China, especially economically and culturally. In line with the expectations, the results proof an influence of BRI on Duisburg's image based on the strengthened connections and associations of Duisburg with China and logistics. It was confirmed that BRI influences Duisburg's image in terms of connectivity, leading to Duisburg being perceived more internationally with the reputation of the 'Silk Road City'. The findings support the potential of BRI due to the economic relevance and increased popularity of Duisburg's logistics hub. Duisburg's identity and the need to position itself, was identified as the major challenge of Duisburg's image optimisation, generally and in relation to BRI. Finally, the main research objective of this thesis, BRI's influence on Duisburg's image, is determined by BRI being an important factor influencing Duisburg's image and marketing, but only in a contextualised manner.

The most important contribution of the study is the influence of framing on city marketing and city branding to attract companies and investors. This research focuses on connectivity and the logistics sector as a cluster and illustrates that connectivity and internationalisation influence the city's image positively. The study presents a clearer understanding of the centrality of connectivity, vision making branding, brand image and the aim of attracting companies and investors - on different scales and regarding BRI.

Keywords: City image, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Duisburg, connectivity, gateway, economy, transportation infrastructure

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List of Abbreviation

BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CBND	China Business Network Duisburg
CFIE	China Federation of Industrial Economics
CR	China Railways
CRCT	Chinese Rail Container Transport
DB	Deutsche Bahn [German Railway Company]
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GPN	Global Production Network
HP	Hewlett-Packard Company
IHK	Industrie- und Handelskammer [Chamber of Industry and Commerce]
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission of the People's Republic of China
PR	Public Relations
TEU	Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

1. Introduction

This thesis is about the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its influence on Duisburg’s image. In the following, the issue of the global initiative, BRI, and the scope on the local level, Duisburg, is introduced as well as the societal and scientific relevance, leading to the research objectives. Finally, this thesis’ structure is outlined to provide an overview.

1.1 Issue and Scope

The modern economy is strongly characterised by increasing connectivity, a major trend of the 21st-century (World Bank, 2019), represented by BRI. “China’s Belt and Road Initiative is the largest infrastructure scheme in our lifetime, bringing unprecedented geopolitical and economic shifts far larger than previous rising powers.” (Teo et al., 2019, p. 1)

BRI has a major impact on modernity in an economic, political and cultural perspective (Nobis, 2017). In 2013, Xi Jinping, the president of the People’s Republic of China¹, announced the initiative to revive the historical silk route and connect China with Central Asia, Eastern and Western Europe (NDRG, 2015). Six years after the establishment, BRI is a major driver of global connectivity, including roads, railways, ports and other infrastructures. 126 countries and 29 international organisations are involved in BRI, which includes more than 2,600 projects with a combined value of \$3.7 trillion (Refinitiv, 2019). The global extent of the initiative is visualised in the map below.

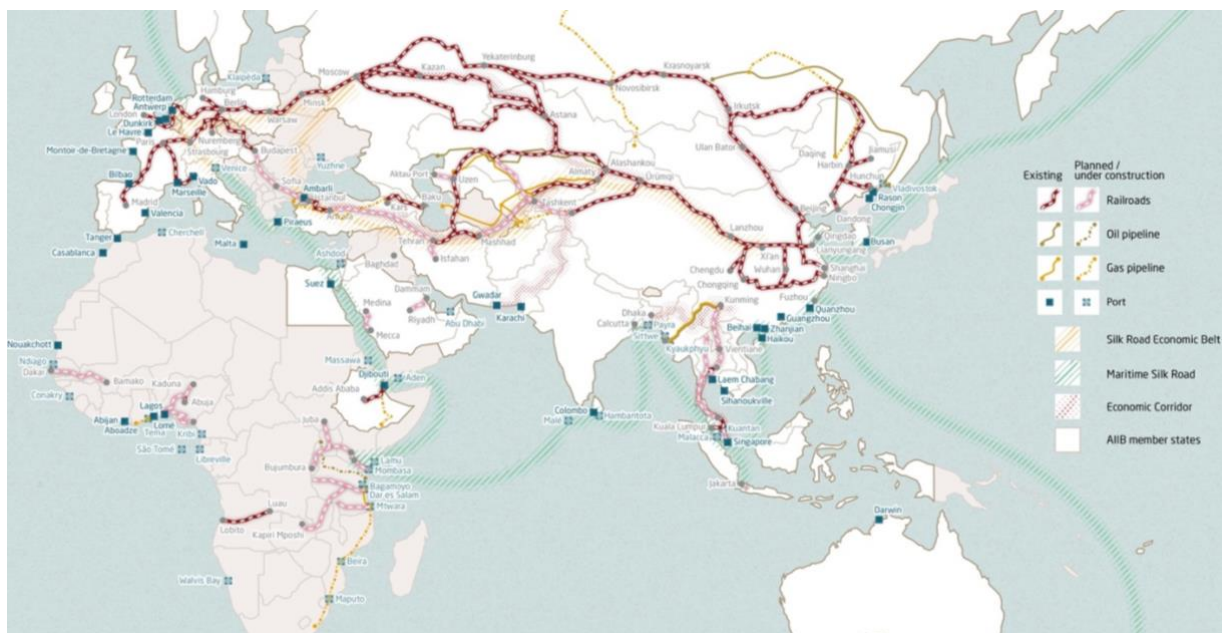


Figure 1: Map of BRI’s Extension in Asia, Africa and Europe
Source: Merics Mercator Institute for Chinese Studies (2018), URL: <https://www.merics.org/en/bri-tracker/mapping-the-belt-and-road-initiative> (12.02.2020)

¹ From here on only referred to as China

The railway from Chongqing, China, to Duisburg, Germany, was the first rail connection promoted as part of BRI (Li, Bolton & Westphal, 2016). The connection has an extent of 11,179 km, starting in Chongqing, passing Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland and ‘ending’² in Duisburg, Germany. The importance of this rail connection increases as the number of trains travelling between China and Duisburg increased from four trains a week in 2014 to 40 in 2018 (Duisport, 2019a). Duisburg does not only function as the end of the connection: it is the distribution centre for other European countries (Li et al., 2016). Duisburg, strategically located in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), hosts the world’s largest inland container port (Arbuthnot Latham & Co, 2019) and developed into a major logistics hub.

This master thesis’s scope is Duisburg, focussing on the issue of the city’s image. In mid 20th-century Duisburg used to be one of Germany’s richest cities (Hanisch, 2016). Today, Duisburg is challenged by the decline of steel and coal, which resulted in a negative city image. Duisburg points out the negative external perception of the city and highlights the unused potential regarding internal and external image. However, Duisburg emphasises the logistics sector, particularly the port, as an exception. The port illustrates connectivity and is therefore seen as the major source for supra-regional growth (Niederrheinische IHK & Unternehmerverbandsgruppe, 2017). The goal of the thesis is to analyse to what extent the global infrastructure project, BRI, affects the local level, particularly Duisburg regarding the city’s image.

1.2 Societal Relevance

The societal relevance lays upon the influence of globalisation defined as increased connectivity between people worldwide, driven by technological innovations, from information technologies to shipping (Scholte, 2005). Zheng (2017) states that a new phase of globalisation started with BRI. Previously, trade was mainly maritime based, whereas BRI integrates inland and maritime economies. BRI is one of the most discussed and debated topics in the world due to its extensive scale as stated by the global relevance of BRI - not only for academics and policymakers (Shahriar, 2018) - is evident by several researchers predicting the “new (silk) world order” (Peyrouse et al., in: Nobis, 2017). Kamrany (2017) states the establishment of BRI as “a new international economic and political order [is] being born”. Molavi (2017, both in: Nobis, 2017) identifies a fundamental transformation of the world. The society is impacted by media and the social discussions on BRI in Germany, focussing on the economic dimensions and the concerns about Chinese debt traps and China’s neo-colonial ambitions. These concerns are caused by the great diplomatic effort, the high volume of expenses and media propaganda of the Chinese government (Taube & Hmaid, 2019).

The focus on the city level, particularly on Duisburg, is relevant due to the city’s importance in modern economy. Cities are major drivers of economic growth (Clark et al., 2018) due to their important role in the circulation of people and capital. Besides, related economic and social elements are embedded in a local context (Sassen, 2006; Smith, 2002). The importance of the

² Actually, the route does not ‘end’ in Duisburg since goods are distributed further from and to Duisburg, which is outlined in Chapter 4. However, since Duisburg is framed as the ‘endpoint’, this terminology will be used in this thesis.

city's embeddedness in large-scale networks increased (Taylor, 2003). Thus presently, urban connectivity is more influential for urban performance than urban size (McCann & Acs, 2011).

The focus on the image is particularly relevant for Duisburg. As part of the Ruhr region, Duisburg was associated with “smoking chimneys, a grey landscape” (Hospers & Wetterau, 2018, p. 4). Since 1960 efforts have been made to reimagine the region to attract especially investors, young professionals and students (Hospers & Wetterau, 2018). Duisburg was not only challenged by the lost source of wealth after the decline of the coal and steel industry. Duisburg’s public image was negatively influenced by the association of two major events. Firstly, since 1981 one of the most popular German TV series, ‘Tatort’ (‘Crime scene’) has been shot in Duisburg, which lead to associations with crimes in the city (Schmidt-Thomé & Niemenmaa, 2013). Secondly, Duisburg gained further negative public attention from the Love Parade disaster³ in 2010 (Klüpfel, 2014). The German city ranking of 2019 reflects Duisburg’s socially and economically challenging position by rank 68 out of 71 (IW Consult, ImmobilienScout24 & WirtschaftsWoche, 2019). The city of Duisburg (2013) points out the need for economic development and image improvement in its integrated concept of action in the vision for 2027. Additionally, the importance of the city’s image and BRI are highlighted in Duisburg’s economic development (Niederrheinische IHK & Unternehmerverbandsgruppe, 2017).

On the societal level, this thesis is relevant based on two major distinctions. Primarily, the societal relevance of a city’s image is manifested in the potential social and economic impact of interventions, majorly for the residents of the city and region. Strategic spatial planning is used to tackle structural challenges and to improve places socially and economically (Albrechts, 2013). Also, branding cities affects society in the way the city is shaped according to Ooi (2011). Secondly, the societal relevance is objected by the influence on individual and societal behaviour. According to Sims (2002), reputation majorly drives people’s attitudes and behaviours regarding a particular object. Besides, a city’s reputation can be influential in decisions regarding investments, residential locations and tourism (Braun, Esthuis, Klijn & Zenker, 2017). Beyond that, branding influences locals and non-residents’ interpretation of the location, particularly the imagination and experience of the place (Ooi, 2007; Prentice & Andersen, 2007).

1.3 Scientific Relevance

Scientifically, the geopolitical setting is based on the city’s role in the global network. Image-making development tools, strategic spatial planning, vision making, framing and (cluster-) branding are used to investigate the influence on the city’s image. This influence involves a potential impact on the region’s development and the population socially and economically. Based on an extensive literature review, research gaps regarding the city’s image, branding and cluster branding. Further, the scientific relevance of the city in a global network, connectivity and gateway as well as the need to research on are discussed.

³ The Love Parade disaster refers to an incident at the Love Parade festival in Duisburg on 24th July 2010. Due to a crowd crush, 21 persons died, and many were injured (Klüpfel, 2014).

Academic research on place image and branding extends across a wide range of academic areas (Hankinson, 2001) and has grown considerably as researchers have witnessed that places, including nations, compete intensively for tourists, foreign direct investment (FDI) and exports (Balakrishnan, 2009; Che-Ha, Nguyen, Yahya, Melewar & Chen, 2016). Although a lot of research has been conducted on city marketing and branding, some critiques and need for further research have been identified. Vuignier (2016) criticises that literature on branding is “disconnected from the political and institutional aspects of locations, although this context is important when it comes to public management” (p. 39). Further critique includes a lack of conceptual clarity (Berglund & Olsson, 2010; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Niedomysl & Jonasson, 2012) and theoretical foundation (Florek & Kavaratzis, 2014). However, “Today branding is a core activity of capitalism, so must be included in any serious attempt to understand contemporary society and politics. Yet, despite its social significance, branding has rarely been subject to concerted empirical examination and theoretical development outside of business schools.” (Holt, 2006, p. 300) Research gaps are pointed out regarding the effects of marketing activities focusing on attracting newcomers (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008; Niedomysl, 2007; Hospers, 2009). Additionally, research on place branding typically focuses on big cities, such as London and New York (Andersson, 2015), resulting in a research gap on small and medium scaled cities.

Similar research gaps are found regarding gateways and connectivity due to a strong focus on world cities. Although there is a lot of research on place branding, clusters are not the focus of research. Since clusters gain importance in the global economy, there is a research gap on the branding of clusters (Mauroner & Zorn, 2017). Although the World Bank (2009) refers to cities as drivers of growth, recent research has examined the ‘dark sides’ of Global Production Networks (GPN) (Phelps, Atienza & Arias, 2018). This resulted in the assumption of gateway cities sometimes uniting in economic activities, which negatively impacts other places (Breul & Diez, 2018; Scholvin et al., 2017). Several urban studies focus on the city's embeddedness within large-scale networks of either firms, capital, knowledge, people or goods for its performance (Taylor, 2003; Bel & Fageda, 2008; Neal, 2013), while there is a research gap on how increased connectivity influences the city's image. Moreover, Clark, Harrison and Miguelez (2018) point out the uncertainty about the changing role and the social and spatial functions of cities, which again stresses the need for further research on cities and their connectivity. Further research is needed on how cities are conceptualised regarding their role within economic processes according to Scholvin, Breul and Diez (2019). While Neal (2011) assessed the relationship between network connectivity and the city's economic performance and came to the conclusion that “a city's economic fortunes are closely tied to its position in networks of interurban exchanges” (Neal, 2011, p. 167). Pain, Van Hamme, Vinciguerra and David (2016) point out that there is no scientific proof for network connectivity and internationalisation in cities positively impacting the economic performance. The local impact of connectivity needs to be further researched on.

Due to BRI's still recent establishment, there is need for further research for a better understanding of the unknown issues (Shahriar, 2018). Nobis (2017) points out the need for interdisciplinary research with a wide range of topics across a variety of geographical and historical settings. Furthermore, there is a gap of research on a local level, focusing on impacts, especially regarding image and branding. Gaspers (2016) points out, Germany is mostly

affected by rebranding old railway operation projects and framing them as new BRI initiatives. However, issues on the local level and on effects of these branding and framing projects have not been studied yet.

This thesis contributes to the scientific debate on how framing and branding influences the image of a city and to the discourse about city marketing focusing on attracting companies. Furthermore, it contributes to the gap of research regarding local effects of BRI. The insights of this specific case are valuable for the region's and the city's development regarding economics, logistics, marketing and policymaking.

1.4 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The overall research objective is BRI's influence on Duisburg's image from the perspective of companies and investors. Thus, the main research question is: *To what extent does the global initiative BRI influence Duisburg's image on the local level and how does Duisburg influence the process of image-making in order to attract companies and investors?*

These research questions are elaborated by the following sub-questions:

1. *How and why did Duisburg's image develop?*
2. *What are Duisburg's marketing strategies?*
3. *How is Duisburg related to BRI?*
 - A. *How is BRI envisioned in relation to Duisburg?*
 - B. *What is Duisburg's role for BRI and how does BRI influence Duisburg's development?*
4. *How does BRI influence Duisburg's image?*
 - A. *How and why did the importance of the logistics sector for Duisburg's image change after 2014?*
 - B. *Why and in what way does BRI influence Duisburg's image?*
 - C. *How does Duisburg use BRI for its branding to attract companies and investors?*

All in all, a positive influence of BRI on the image of Duisburg as a locational factor to attract companies and investors is anticipated. Firstly, the related hypothesis suggests that structural change and negative events in the past still influence Duisburg negatively and sustainably. Secondly, the predicted outcome of the analysis is that city marketing mainly aims at attracting companies and investors and thus, marketing strategies involve diverse industries. Thirdly, an indication that framing of visions is an important factor with different focuses of involved stakeholders, shown for BRI's vision and ongoing development, is assumed. It is expected that Duisburg is framed as the 'endpoint' of BRI and functions as a distribution centre for Europe based on the strategic location. Fourthly, it is assumed that the importance of the logistic sector increased especially after the establishment of BRI since Duisburg gained international attention. Further, it is anticipated that BRI influences the image of Duisburg positively mainly due to increased attention. As the logistics sector illustrates the city's connectivity and

international relations, Duisburg's image is positively influenced for companies and investors. Thus, the increasing importance of the logistics sector and the increased international attention are assumed to be reasons for the improved city image. Additionally, it is assumed that the importance of BRI for Duisburg's branding and particularly for attracting companies and investors is stressed as a major source of growth and improvement. This question focuses more on Duisburg and its proactive and strategic participation.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

First of all, relevant development tools to shape image, strategic spatial planning, vision making, (cluster-) branding and framing, are outlined. Secondly, the geopolitical setting of the city in a global network is illustrated regarding the city's role, connectivity and gateway. Thirdly, the outcome, the city image, is explained by influencing factors and the process of image optimisation.

For the methodology, the general research strategy of this case study, the operationalisation of concepts and methodology is explained. Further, the methods of data collection, policy document analysis, media content analysis and expert interviews, are outlined in particular.

The descriptive and empirical chapter about BRI and Duisburg provides background information on BRI, regarding the introduction, aims and developments, implications for Germany and particularly the rail connection from Chongqing to Duisburg. Also, background information about the city of Duisburg and the relation to BRI are described.

Three chapters refer to descriptive results indicating the influence of BRI on Duisburg. Chapter 5 includes the empirical findings of the policy document analysis from Duisburg, Duisport and China. These findings are concluded in a comparison of the main stakeholders' visions. In chapter 6, the descriptive results of the media analysis emphasise the frequency of publications, the publishing countries and the thematical categorisation of frames about Duisburg. Additionally, the descriptive findings of the expert interviews are illustrated thematically and summed up as main findings in chapter 7.

Based on the outlined theories, these descriptive findings are discussed in chapter 8. A conclusion is drawn according to the topics of Duisburg's image development, marketing and branding strategies, visions related to BRI and Duisburg, Duisburg's role for BRI, the logistics sector, BRI's influence on Duisburg's image and branding strategies related to BRI. The conclusion is accompanied by a reflection of this research, covering limitations as well as relevance and contribution of this research, and recommendations for further research and practical actions.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework results from an extensive literature review. The concepts of strategic spatial planning, vision making, (cluster-) branding and framing are outlined as tools to shape the image (2.1). These concepts are the basis for examining plans and visions related to BRI and particularly to Duisburg's development and marketing. The geopolitical setting is demonstrated by the city in a global network, gateway and connectivity (2.2). This is the

theoretical foundation for the local effects of BRI, regarding connectivity and Duisburg’s gateway function. Finally, the city image is discussed by influencing factors and the process of image optimisation (2.3) to analyse Duisburg’s image development, influenced by BRI.

2.1 Development Tools to Shape the Image

In the following, development tools to shape the image are emphasised. The concepts of strategic spatial planning and vision making are outlined to examine the visions related to BRI and Duisburg’s image. The concepts of branding and cluster branding refer particularly to Duisburg and the logistics sector. The theory about framing serves to analyse Duisburg’s medial image development.

2.1.1 Strategic Spatial Planning

BRI’s development is based on strategic spatial planning, which is defined as “[...] a set of policies and tools of intervention at different levels and for different horizontal dates, designing to assist the management of strategic change taking place within territories, their economies and societies, directed largely [but not exclusively] by the public sector.” (Dimitriou, 2007, p. 46). *Strategic planning* is seen as a systematic and integrated approach to policy making, considering context, resources and long term (Dimitriou & Thompson, 2007).

Strategic spatial planning became popular in the 1990s (Albrechts, 2013), since traditional spatial planning became insufficient for concretising strategies (Balducci, Fedeli & Pasqui, 2011; Albrechts & Balducci, 2013). Albrechts (2013), one of the main scholars on planning, defines strategic spatial planning as “[...] a transformative and integrative public sector, co-productive, socio-spatial process through which visions or frames of reference, the justification for coherent actions and the means for implementation are produced. These shape, frame and reframe what a place is and what it might become” (p. 52). In contrast to traditional planning, “Strategic plans are defined as frameworks for action.” (Albrechts, 2004, p. 747) Strategic spatial planning include concepts, procedures and tools (Albrechts, 2004) aiming to influence future spatial distribution of activities (Albrechts, 2004; Dimitriou & Thompson, 2007). Strategic spatial planning deals with social, economic and spatial challenges (Albrechts, 2015) and future major spatial development on different geographical scales (Faludi, 2000).

As the adjective ‘*strategic*’ has various meanings, the best way to define is by the opposite of operational. As shown in the table 1, earlier, planning functioned operationally by reacting, responding and mitigating to spatial challenges. Managerial planning is concerned about present challenges and typical actions are managing, adapting and anticipating. In contrary, strategic planning is about creating a future (Couclelis, 2005). In line with this, Albrechts (2004) states that strategic spatial planning is an innovative and creative tool

Time	Planning actions	Planning functions
Past	React	<i>Operational</i>
↓	Respond	
	Mitigate	
	Control	
	Manage	
Present	Adapt	<i>Managerial</i>
↓	Anticipate	
	Prepare	
	Change	
	Shape	
Future	Create	<i>Strategic</i>

*Table 1: Development of Planning Actions and Functions
According to Couclelis (2005, p. 1357)*

focusing on selected main issues to create a better future for a place in short- and long-term actions. Healey (2007) goes further by highlighting that spatial planning “is not just about the articulation of strategic ideas, but about persuading and inspiring many different actors, in different positions in a governance landscape.” (p. 182)

Finally, four elements are needed to shape the environment (Albrechts, 2004):

- a dynamic, integrated and indicative long-term vision (frame)
- a plan for short-term and long-term actions
- a budget
- a strategy for implementation

Further, stakeholder play a fundamental role in the planning process, referable to the major stakeholders related to BRI and Duisburg. Mandates and responsibilities of all involved actors have to be clearly defined. Actors should be aware of the unequal power structures between different actors and balance them. Thus, strategic spatial planning requires stakeholders actively solving policy problems and share information and knowledge (Albrechts, 2004). Due to the increased transparency and democracy and thus, complexity increased, so that the agreement takes longer due to the increased number of involved stakeholders (Dimitriou, 2007). The process can either lead to consensus or (partial) disagreement between key actors (Albrechts, 2004).

2.1.2 Vision Making

Strategic visions can be created through strategic planning as stakeholders envision their plans related to BRI and Duisburg. Visions are based on shared futures and includes the development and promotion of common assets and poses a created future, which has to be contextualised economically, socially, politically and regarding power structures. The process is rooted in the setting – including place, time, historical background, specific issues and involved actors (Albrechts, 2004). Strategic spatial planning has numerous driving forces, including political ambitions regarding competitive urban areas and promoting investments (Albrechts, Healey & Kunzmann, 2003). Referring to the policy documents related to BRI and Duisburg, spatial concepts are fundamental for spatial planning since they function as guidelines for actions (Zonneveld, 2000). Based on the concepts, it is possible to name and frame planning issues and innovations in one word or image. That reduces the complexity of spatial planning to a single storyline or metaphor (Van Duinen, 2013). A design of a spatial concept is needed, so that it can function as a frame or label for the spatial vision. Therefore, a symbolic representation of an urban area is of major importance, either in the form of an icon, diagram or map (Dühr, 2007; Zonneveld, 2000).

The planning process involves the creation of imagined futures, including actors, sites and events, leading to an ‘invented’ future (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand & Lampel, 1998), illustrated by BRI. This process determines the degree of stability of visions about the transformation of places. The fact that only some of the visions are finally realised, stresses the high political influence (Hopkins, 2001). Moreover, the process is influenced by the rhetorical qualities of visions (Eames & McDowall, 2010). Introducing a new spatial vision or concept has to be timed “worth the effort.” (Healey, 2009, p. 443) The success of a spatial vision depends on a temporal

and spatial opportunity to mobilise support and becoming involved in the governance infrastructure (Healey, 2009). Healey (1997) highlights the relation of social context with planning, since planning “represents a continual effort to interrelate conceptions of the qualities and social dynamics of places with notions of the social process of ‘shaping places’ through the articulation and implementation of policies.” (p. 7) Planning concerns visions for the future in the presence and issues concerning future issues become present challenges (Raco et al., 2008).

2.1.3 Branding

Marketing and branding are essential for image optimisation and accordingly for Duisburg’s image. City marketing dates back to the 19th century (Ward, 1998). However, only in the 1970s, marketing strategies went beyond tourism promotion and researchers analysed the strategy (Kavaratzis, 2004; Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015). City marketing is about promoting and communicating the competitive and comparative strength, advantages and forces of attraction to achieve economic and welfare objectives (Piskóti, Dankó & Schupler, 2002). Place branding is a complex marketing task (Zenker & Braun, 2010) and a very broad governance strategy, managing image and perceptions (Eshuis & Klijin, 2012). The main scholars of the branding theory, like Anholt (2006), Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005), Hankinson (2004) and Abimbola, Trueman, Cornelius and Wallace (2004) agree on a shift from city marketing to branding. According to Kavaratzis (2008), city branding is “a new application of city marketing.” (p. 11) The focus shifted from rational marketing strategies to include emotional and psychological associations, while the reason for practising remains in the competition of cities regarding tourists, businesses, residents and other groups (Medway & Warnaby, 2008; Zenker, 2009). So, the key goal of regional branding is a positive image in the minds of the relevant target audiences (Foroudi, Melewar & Gupta, 2014). The concept of place branding creates increasing awareness and is applied to different geographical scales – countries (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002), regions (Kavaratzis, Warnaby & Ashworth, 2015) and cities (Babey & Giauque, 2009). Many previous studies have focused on a strategy and the process and less on brand image. Image is mostly tourism-related concerned with destination branding (Vuignier, 2016). Concepts differ in their focus on the brand. For example, Keller (2003) emphasise brand equity, Quelch and Jocz (2005) brand positioning, Nandan (2005) brand identity and Sjodin and Torn (2006) brand image. Recent research shows a focus on stakeholder participation in city development and strategies (Eshuis, Klijin & Braun, 2014; Kalandides & Kavaratzis, 2012; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015; Zenker & Erfgen, 2014).

In reference to Duisburg’s structural change, branding of cities is needed due to increased competition as Ward (1998) links the post-industrial city with the decline of economic functions. To react to increased competition and the lost source of wealth, cities use marketing strategies for urban regeneration. Johansson and Kociatkiewicz (2011) and Cleveland, Laroche and Takahashi (2015) highlight the increased competition between contemporary cities and the need to distinguish themselves. While Johansson and Kociatkiewicz (2011) stress the goal of gaining more attention by using a symbolic economy to present attractions. Cleveland et al. (2015) emphasise the stakeholders aiming for the city to remain perceptible and visible in the global village. Due to the increased competition, cities aim for attracting inward investments and creating a new image. Based on a comparison of a country and a company, Kotler and

Gertner (2002) conclude the need for places to develop a unique brand image to empower investments and tourism attraction capabilities. Besides, the focus lays on communicating identity to improve the competitiveness of a place (Akotia, 2005).

Furthermore, scholars emphasise effects of branding, which is related to Duisburg's branding and finally, BRI's influence on Duisburg's image. Focusing on communication, several marketing interventions regarding the landscape, infrastructure, organisation, behaviour and promotion are used. To attract private investment, businesses and tourists, regions require a strong identity and need to understand their main strengths, assets and vision for the future (Askegaard & Kjeldgaard, 2007). The key aim of regional branding is a positive image in the minds of specific and relevant target audiences (Foroudi et al., 2014). Some cities have established semi-autonomous organisations for marketing and branding to improve the regional identity and the image of the city (Hankinson, 2001; Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008). Economic growth is also influenced by the reputation of a place, which also stresses the economic value of branding and urban entrepreneurialism (Delgado-García, de Quevedo-Puente & Blanco-Mazagatos, 2017). Hospers (2010) distinguishes between cold and warm city marketing. Cold city marketing focuses on attracting citizens and companies from outside the city. Whereas warm city marketing addresses actors, who are socio-economically or emotionally related to the city. Although attracting new business activities and residents is the top priority in urban development (Jansson & Power, 2006; Cassel, 2008), Hospers (2010) proposes a shift from cold towards warm city marketing, since investing in existing residents and firms is more effective.

According to Tasci and Kozak (2006), diverse stakeholders increase the value of place branding, including foreign investors, local businesses, citizens and tourists. Bornhorst, Ritchie and Sheehan (2010) and Garcia, Rico and Collade (2012) add that image perceptions of a place differ for each stakeholder. Therefore, a wide variety of stakeholders can be a challenge for places using branding as a tool for image improvement. Image creation is a multidimensional process, driven by a variety of sources, such as media, events and individual experiences. Moreover, a key factor in the success or failure of city branding strategies is the identification of stakeholders and their accompaniment in the representation and formulation of a brand, which leads to an increased sense of ownership and sustainability of the brand (Dinnie, 2010). Kortler (1999) emphasises communication tools, delivering messages to a target audience of companies or institutions for promotion. Brand identity is needed for the communication of the branded city. The core concept is about a visualisation for the customer in the form of a slogan or logo (Anholt, 2007). Thus, how stakeholders' cities want the brand to be perceived by the consumer is called brand identity (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005).

As illustrated in the figures 2 and 3, according to Kavaratzis (2009), city branding is based on eight dimensions. Kavaratzis (2004) illustrates the city branding process through six fundamental subjects. The dimensions and subjects are used to evaluate Duisburg's stage of branding.

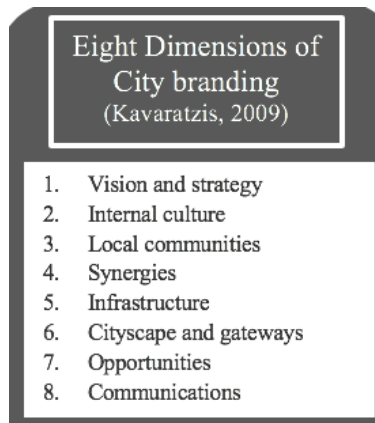


Figure 2: Eight dimensions of City Branding According to Kavaratzis (2009)

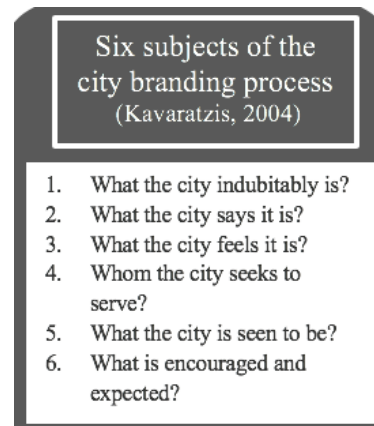


Figure 3: Six subjects of City Branding Process According to Kavaratzis (2004)

2.1.4 Cluster Branding

Cluster branding is a specific form of place branding, emphasising communication and behaviour rather than marketing communication (Andersson, Solitander & Ekman, 2012), which is related to logistics hubs and particularly to Duisburg. Andersson et al. (2012), the main scholars on cluster branding, define cluster brand management as “the way a cluster manages its reputation and achieves a distinct position based on its identity and what it does most effectively”. (p. 33) Cluster brands are shaped by the key features and the unique value proposition of the cluster, as well as by the communicative ties between internal actors and between internal and external actors. Thus, the cluster brand constitutes a holistic bundle of benefits with specific differences (Burmann, Jost-Benz & Riley, 2009). Cluster brands merge the brand concepts of the cluster actors to a common formal, cooperative and collective marketing strategy for the cluster (Kaminski, 2009). Kasabov and Sundaram (2011) emphasise the similarity of cluster and place branding based on ownership and therefore the non-existence of organisational boundaries as a reason for a more complex branding complex in contrary to corporate branding.

Scholars highlight the importance of stakeholder’s participation. Kaminski (2009) highlights the importance of active inclusion and participation as major drivers for the success of cluster branding. Andersson et al. (2012) point out that the cluster brand is a public good and benefits a variety of different stakeholders from private and public sector with many different purposes. The variety of stakeholders is a major challenge. Therefore, cluster branding requires an accurate assessment of how to deal with conflicts and disagreements between different stakeholders (Kasabov & Sundaram, 2011). The internal target groups consist of all involved cluster actors who are actively involved in the brand design. Whereas the cluster image is created by the external target group from the perspective of actors not involved in the cluster. Conformity of the internal identity with the externally perceived image determines the success of the cluster brands (Blinda, 2007).

2.1.5 Framing

Framing is a fundamental part of vision and image-making, which is why it is outlined in reference to Duisburg's image and visions in relation to BRI. Framing originates from the discipline of social psychology (Bartlett, 1932) and is nowadays used in many disciplines. Goffman (1974) first introduced frames as "schemata of interpretation" that enable people "to locate, perceive, identify and label" (p. 21) incidents. According to Reese, Gandy and Grant (2001), framing is related to how a particular topic or issue is represented in media and public. Thus, framing is a communication tool that decides which elements are selected and how they are positioned (Entman, 1993). In other words, framing is a process of creating a message, which is in some way manipulative (Van Gorp, 2007). The purpose of framing is to define and solve problems and to shape public opinion (Knight, 1999). According to Rettie (2004), frames are socially shared and culturally specific so that frames provide a context for people to interpret events. Additionally, framing can increase the meaning of events and organise action – both individually and collectively (Snow, Rochford, Worden & Benford, 1986).

There are different types of frames. Previous research has mostly focused on the conflict frame, which "emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). Conflict framing increases seriousness and the value of an event (Burscher et al., 2014). Another common frame in the news is an economic frame, about an event, problem or issue with economic consequences for individuals, groups, organisations or regions (Neuman, Just & Crigler, 1992). Moreover, regarding media frames, most research is focused on public policy issues. However, framing research has the potential to identify the strategic messages in public relations (PR) (Hallahan, 1999).

For framing messages, a topic needs to relate to a notion, which is part of the 'common ground' of a culture, including values and shared narratives (Clarke, 2006). The dynamics of the frames depend on the individual mind and each association with a subject provides a different view. Thus, frames are rather limited within a culture by people's minds (Polletta, 2004). Framing is typically done by organisations and communication managers to influence the audience's interpretation of a brand (Hallahan, 1999). Innovations in strategic spatial planning and branding often emerge from the rearrangement and coupling of existing elements in new ways. As Healey (2007) remarks, strategic spatial planning often involves renaming and framing strategies. In this case, it is about the framing of the spatial vision in attracting support (Healey, 2007). The name of a spatial vision influences the opinion of planning actors in the area and the framing incorporates strategic guidance for improvements (Olesen, 2017).

2.2 City in the Global Network

In the following the role of the city in a global network is outlined to examine the local perspective of a global initiative, referring to Duisburg. Globally, cities have a very important role, which can be seen through the trend of urbanisation. Urbanisation rate has reached 55% (in 2018) globally, which means that the majority of people are living in cities. In Europe, the share is even higher, with 74% of people living in urban areas (UN, 2019). Glaeser (2011) highlights the importance of cities by calling them "our species' greatest invention" (p. 6).

Urban research scientists agree on a shift of the city's role from classical 'central place-theory' (Christaller, 1993) to the central role in global networks (Derudder & Taylor, 2017; Addie, 2017) and an increased focus on the city's role in the global economy (Sassen, 2006; Anttiroiko, 2009; Chien, 2008). According to Delgado-García et al. (2017), traditional agglomeration economies were replaced by networks to facilitate sharing, matching and learning. Since 1950, the global economy is mainly characterised by two main elements: (1) increased volatility of aggregate economic growth and (2) growing interconnectedness, in terms of trade flow, between places. The development of increased interconnectedness underlays three dimensions: (1) faster growth of trade than output, (2) faster growth of FDI than trade and (3) structural imbalances in world economy (Dicken, 2015).

“Globalization and city networks are two faces of the same coin.” (Pain et al., 2016) While economies increasingly integrate globally, 'global cities' became increasingly dominant as economically competitive nodes in the economic global network (Sassen, 1991). Economic globalisation reshapes the spatial pattern of the economy and emphasise the major advantages of the most connected places through different types of networks, like transport (Pain et al., 2016).

Networks are sets of interconnected nodes, which can be persons, firms, cities, countries or other spatial entities. Thus, connectivity is a major attribute of networks (World Bank, 2019). GPNs “incorporate all kinds of network relationships [and] encompass all relevant sets of actors” (Coe, Dicken & Hess 2008, p. 272), focussing on a specific process of production and commercialisation and organise the global economy. GPNs are one of the primarily used approaches in Economic Geography (Scholvin et al., 2017). Scholars agree on the centrality of cities in worldwide transportation networks (air, rail, marine) (Burghouwt, 2005; Jacobs, Ducruet & De Langen, 2010) and also regarding innovation, technology and economic growth, increasing importance for regional studies and economic development (Clark et al., 2018). The European Union (EU) highlights the importance of metropolitan areas as they “play an important role in sustaining the EU's global competitiveness” (European Commission, 2011, p. 16). Local-scaled urban policies in Europe increasingly emphasise the international position of cities for improving competitiveness (Pain et al., 2016).

The achievements in information technologies have not eliminated the relevance of massive concentrations of material resources. Indeed, it has transformed the interaction of capital fixity and hypermobility. The competitive advantage of cities is based on the complex management of this interaction of capital fixity and hypermobility. Over the centuries, the intensity, complexity and global span of these networks has increased and majorly influenced cities. Due to cities and urban regions being increasingly traversed by non-local, 'local' appears to be manifested by the localisation of global processes (Sassen, 2010). Hence, global cities function as “basing points” of global capital (Friedmann, 1986, p. 69) and “highly concentrated command points” for controlling global economic processes (Sassen 2001, p. 3). In this case, Duisburg is the localisation of the global processes around BRI. Cities borrow size through their embeddedness in (inter)national networks (Meijers, Burger & Hoogerbrugge, 2015) and function as a strategic site for global corporate capital (Bartlett, 2007; Nashashibi, 2007).

2.2.1 Connectivity

As connectivity increases globally and as it is the main aim of BRI, this concept has to be stressed regarding Duisburg's role and effects. Increased connectivity is a major characteristic of globalisation (Scholte, 2005) and the modern economy (World Bank, 2019). Global connectivity is a major driver for the growth rates of cities. The rising relevance of connectivity leads to a shift from the old paradigm of territories and nation-states to a new paradigm of places, flows and networks (Neal, 2011; Ma & Timberlake, 2013). Clark et al. (2018) point out that the interconnectivity of cities and networks arises through flows of capital, labour and knowledge. The importance of logistics and transport increases through the geographical and functional separation of production processes. Logistics enables the transportation of flows by emphasising different kind of transportation due to the cost of distance (Roy, 2016).

Connectivity is multidimensional and includes politics, facility, trade, finance and culture (NDRC, 2015) on different scales: local, regional and global (World Bank, 2019), which is evident in the effects of connectivity, like in Duisburg. Nowadays, urban connectivity is considered more influential than urban size and local factors for urban performance (McCann & Acs, 2011). Connectivity is about how well connected a place is, including the costs of access and reliability. Conversely, it is about quality, particularly the strength of interaction in networks (Derudder, Liu & Kunaka, 2018). International connectivity enables the "capability of individuals, firms, organizations and institutions to interact, engage, take initiatives and make decisions across different locations and within networks" (Iammarino & McCann, 2013, p. 318). Increased connectivity typically leads to increased interactions, productivity, competitions and market opportunities between cities (Straub, Vellutini & Wartlers, 2008). These relations illustrate the interdependence of multiple economies (World Bank, 2019). However, the impact of the embeddedness in a network depends on the scale, while the impact of network connectivity is positive on an international and national scale. The embeddedness on the regional level does not evidently lead to an increased metropolitan function (Meijer et al., 2015).

2.2.2 Gateway

To examine Duisburg's role in BRI and the effect of increased connectivity, the gateway characteristics are outlined to characterise Duisburg in relation to BRI.

Scholars define gateway cities on the basis of different characteristics. Burghardt defines gateway cities as "an entrance into some area" (1971, p. 269) before research on world cities began. The author highlights the city's control over economic processes by adding that "the [gateway] city is in command of the connections between the tributary area and the outside world" (Burghardt, 1971, p. 269). Cities are characterised as gateway cities based on the city-hinterland relation and their connections to global flows. The types of connections vary from migration to air and maritime transport (Lee & Ducruet, 2009; Notteboom, 2007; Ordóñez, Juan & García, 2010). Scholvin et al. (2019) add the characteristic of a high concentration of corporate services and also technical services (Scholvin et al., 2019). Additionally, providers of corporate services also establish regional headquarters in gateway cities. Bryson, Daniels and Warf (2004) point out the need for support of service for places to integrate into GPNs due

to the diverse setting. This means that service providers have to maintain a global network of local affiliates themselves (Daniels, 2007; Dicken, 2015). Cities connect regional production and extra-regional marketing, which makes them gateways. For example, port cities provide physical infrastructure, but more importantly, they also provide specialised corporate service providers managing maritime transport (Jacobs et al., 2010). Gateway cities generate knowledge by linking their global and local appliance, which reinforces when firms engage with transnational companies to joint ventures to apply their partners' technologies locally (Scholvin et al., 2019).

Scholvin et al. (2019) state five features of gateway-cities: logistics and transport, industrial processing, corporate control, service provision and knowledge generation. The features are not additive, which means that gateway cities can be described and characterised by the features and their combination. Logistics and transportation are fundamental for GPNs due to the current geographical and functional division of the production process and commercialisation (Coe, 2014). Logistics is the intermediate between buyer and seller, including the physical movement of products and the transmission of information. The three dominant criteria for logistics are speed, flexibility and reliability, whereas physical conditions and political boundaries are seen as major barriers (Dicken, 2015). Logistics is an essential and also big industry since about 10-15% of the final production costs are spent on logistics, including transportation, warehousing, inventory holdings (Coe, 2014). Physical infrastructures, such as harbours, makes the gateway city a crucial node in the GPNs (Scholvin et al., 2019). Firstly, gateway cities process global products and supply their hinterlands. Secondly, they process regional sourced products to insert them into GPNs. Strategic decision making and management of major companies is aligned to gateway cities. Transaction costs are caused by the dispersion of economic activity (Scholvin et al., 2019). They can be reduced by establishing a network of headquarters with regional specialisation (Enright, 2005; Poon, 2000).

2.3 City Image

As the process of strengthening a city's reputation illustrated the main elements of the city image in its development, this concept is used as the basis for examining Duisburg's image.

Figure 4 illustrates the process of strengthening a city's reputation and shows important elements of the city image based on the city's identity, image, brand and finally, reputation.

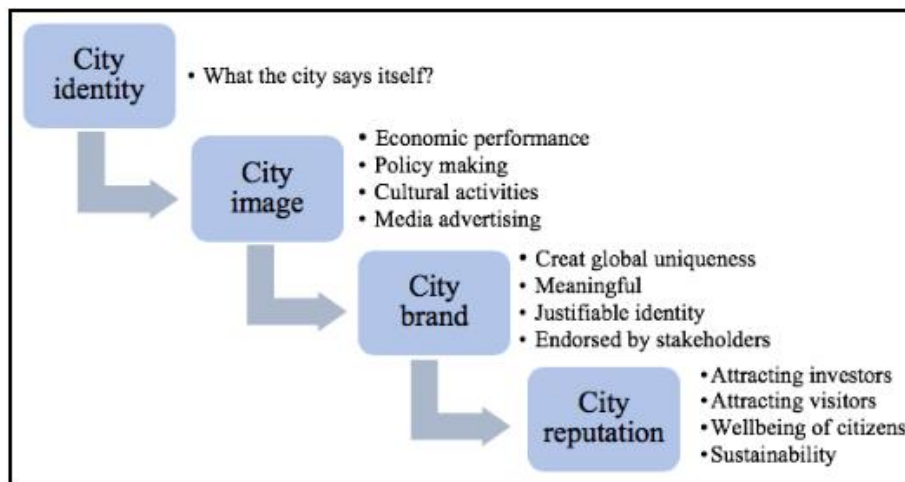


Figure 4: The Process of Strengthening the City's Reputation
According to: Shirvani Dastgerdi & De Luca (2019)

The *city's identity* is about the self-image of the city (Shirvani Dastgerdi & De Luca, 2019). Brand identity is needed for the communication of the branded city. The core concept is about a visualisation for the customer in form of a slogan or logo (Anholt, 2007). Thus, how stakeholders' cities want the brand to be perceived by the consumer is called brand identity (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). Askegaard and Kjeldgaard (2007) relate the regions identity to unique experiences, which cannot be copied. Shaping places and the identity of the place are based on the specific type of people, the place attracts. The place identity is based on a consistent element mix by image building (Wagner & Peters, 2009; Fan, 2010). The *city's image* "[...] depends on both identity and alterity construction, and has many constructors: politicians and officials, tourists and citizens, writers and filmmakers, architects and media people. It is impossible to show the whole of it, even in a fleeting moment, but it is possible to show fragments of its continuous construction. It is also possible to make some simplifications, rendering the picture more comprehensible. Yet, this picture is made even more complex by setting it in motion: these processes do not take their turns in time or place, but happen simultaneously, in connection, possibly, within one and the same organisational practice." (Czarniawska, 2002, p. 15) "Images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place. They are a product of the mind trying to process and frame huge amounts of data about a place into a small set of manageable ideas." (Gertner & Kotler, 2004, p. 50)

Four main components of the city image are economic performance, policy making, cultural activities and media advertising. The *city brand* needs to create global uniqueness and be meaningful, based on a justifiable identity and endorsed by stakeholders (Shirvani Dastgerdi & De Luca, 2019). Although scholars disagree whether places have brands or are brands (Boisen, 2015), place brand is defined as "[...] a network of associations in the consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place and its' stakeholders. These associations differ in their influence within the network and in importance for the place consumers' attitude and behaviour." (Zenker & Braun, 2017, p. 275) Brands already exist in

the minds of consumers' according to Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002). However, beliefs and characteristics of local culture seem to be represented in certain stereotypes (Brioschi, 2006). Representations, reputation and imagery result from all diverse elements around a place's name. Collective image perceptions of local products and services, created by residents, outsiders and visitors are considered in the branding process (Campelo, 2017).

Concludingly, *brand image* includes the perception of the brand in the minds of the people, in particular, what people think about brands, their beliefs, expectations and emotions (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). Therefore, image refers to non-observable constructions in people's minds, containing a set of associations with a specific place, while image only refers to recent perceptions. Reputation is a rather stable indicator for performance, based on multiple images (Fombrun & van Riel, 1997). The *reputation of a city* is about attracting investors and visitors, the wellbeing of citizens and sustainability (Shirvani Dastgerdi & De Luca, 2019). While image must be contextualised to be considered positive or negative, reputation is based on the sum of long-term normative opinions about the place, leading to immediate judgment and/or emotional response (Sharp, 2010). Again, in contrary to the image, reputation develops over time through effective communication and reveals a value assessment of the qualities of the city (Gray & Balmer, 1998).

2.4 Conceptual Model

According to the literature review, the conceptual framework is primarily based on development tools to shape image, such as strategic planning, vision making, (cluster-) branding and framing. The city in the global network, connectivity and gateway illustrate the geopolitical setting. Firstly, the concepts of strategic spatial planning and vision making and the geopolitical setting, refer to plans and visions related to BRI and plans for Duisburg's development and image improvement. Secondly, the concepts of city branding and framing are used for the strategic level of the city's image. The concept of branding is highlighted to examine Duisburg's marketing and branding strategies. Framing is fundamental for analysing the medial image of Duisburg and the different stakeholders' visions for BRI. Branding and framing are strongly related, as framing can be seen as part of branding. The city in the global network is based on the function as a gateway and the city's role regarding connectivity, also influencing the city's image. The gateway function and the connectivity are firstly related to Duisburg, embedded in the global initiative of BRI and secondly to Duisburg's image. As the gateway function resulting from connectivity, these concepts are strongly linked theoretically and applied onto Duisburg. All these concepts are interrelated, as illustrated in figure 5, since gateway and connectivity are frames and used for branding. All these approaches are related to the concept of city image, the scope of this research. These theoretical approaches build the foundation of this research.

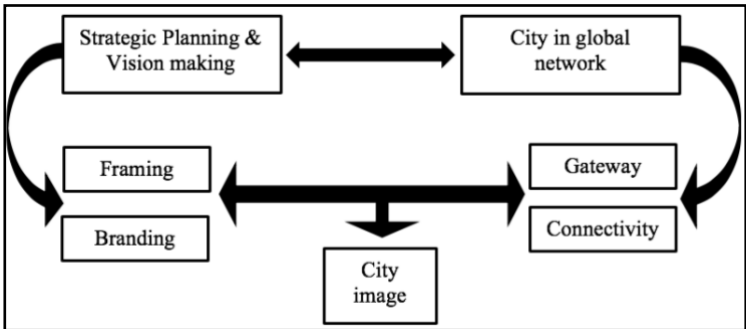


Figure 5: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

For the methodology, the general research strategy and methods as well as the operationalisation of methods and concepts are outlined first. Followed by illustrations of the particular methods, policy document analysis, media content analysis and analysis of interviews to examine the research question.

3.1 Research Strategy and Methods

The research framework (fig. 6) illustrates how the before explained concepts were operationalised. The concepts of strategic planning and vision making, branding, framing as well as the city in the global network, connectivity and gateway and finally, the city image, were applied to the case of the BRI-‘ending’ in Duisburg. Hence, it is about a global project affecting the city locally. The analysis focused on the research objective – BRI influencing Duisburg’s image. The results contribute to a better understanding of the influence of city branding and framing and particularly, insights on BRI’s influence on Duisburg’s image.

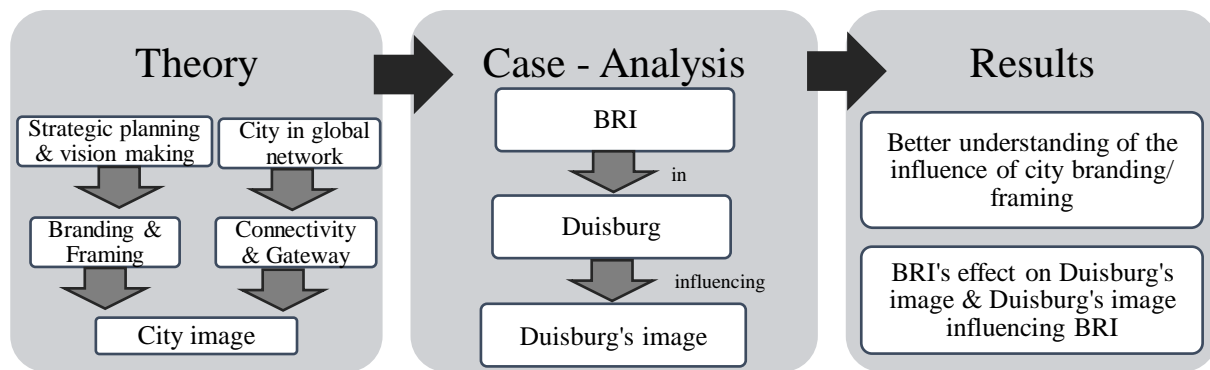


Figure 6: Research Framework

This research focuses on Duisburg and according to the research question, there is need for an in depth-approach. Case studies are used to examine contemporary phenomena by keeping the context to gain in-depth knowledge (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Duisburg is a very interesting case regarding BRI and city image. Firstly, regarding BRI, Duisburg has a special role due to the gateway-function and since it was the first connection promoted as BRI, which makes Duisburg a pioneer case. Secondly, as pointed out earlier, Duisburg’s image is perceived negatively. Although the focus on a particular case limits the generalisation of this research, the local effects in Duisburg can be used as a basis for comparison with other cities, involved in BRI. This research aims to provide detailed and descriptive information about a specific context, BRI, in a specific place, Duisburg. The combination of different approaches ensures validity of case study research (Johansson, 2003). Thus, triangulation is essential for data collection regarding sources and methods. In this research the methods of quantitative and qualitative policy analysis, quantitative and qualitative media content analysis as well as qualitative expert interviews are triangulated (fig. 7).

According to Neuman (1997) content analysis is a key non-intrusive research methodology and “a technique for gathering and analysing the content of the text. The ‘content’ refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated.” (p. 272) The collected primary data served to answer the sub-questions first and finally, to answer

the main research question. This method was used for the policy analysis (3.3) and analysis of the interviews (3.5). The media content analysis (3.4) is based on the method of discourse analysis, originated from the fields of linguistics, anthropology and philosophy (Schiffrin et. al, 2001).

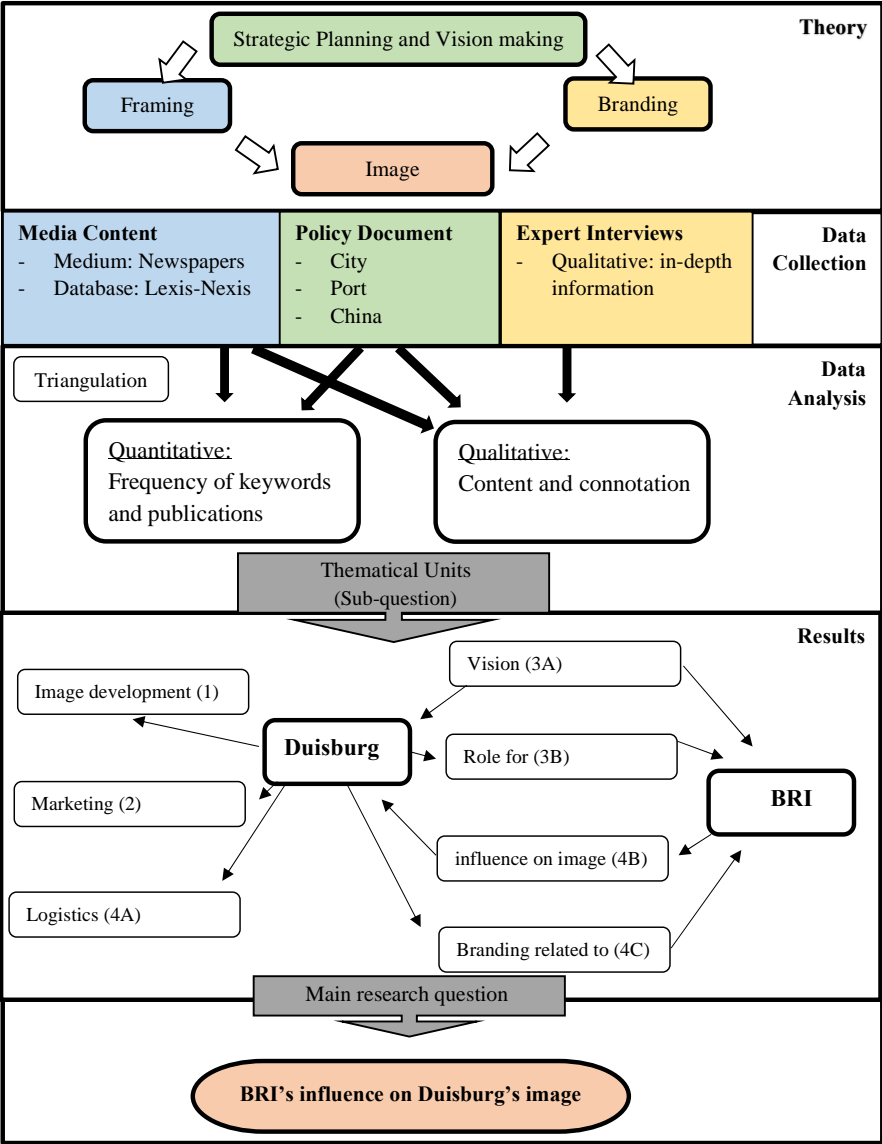


Figure 7: Methodology - Data Collection and Analysis

3.2 Operationalisation

As visualised in table 2, the first sub-question, about Duisburg’s image development, is theoretically related to framing and city image, especially to the process of strengthening the city’s image. Through the media content analysis, Duisburg’s image represented in foreign media was researched in a temporal comparison. Nexis Uni⁴ was very useful for this approach to access articles released about Duisburg and China from different countries. The policy documents are official and hence, publicly accessible, allowing to examine the city’s image.

⁴ Nexis Uni is an electronic database to access articles.

Additionally, the deep knowledge of the development of Duisburg's image was generated by expert interviews.

The second sub-question, about Duisburg's marketing strategies, is theoretically based on branding. Based on the policy document of Duisburg, the city's strategy for improving the image was investigated. Deeper and more specific branding and marketing strategies were examined by the interviews. The third sub-question, about visions of Duisburg in relation to BRI and Duisburg's role for BRI, is theoretically based on vision making and strategic spatial planning. The policy document analysis was used to analyse the strategy and vision of the three major stakeholders. The documents were published by Duisburg, Duisport and the National Development and Reform Commission of the People's Republic of China (NDRC). Besides, the interview with Duisport and Duisburg generated in-depth knowledge about Duisburg's role for BRI. The fourth sub-question focuses on BRI's influence on Duisburg's image, including the importance of the logistics sector, BRI's influence on the image and Duisburg using BRI for branding. The role of Duisburg's logistics sector for the image and its development as well as BRI's influence on Duisburg, relates theoretically to the city as a global network, connectivity and the city image. Methodologically, the medial representation of Duisburg's logistics sector was examined by the media content analysis. The policy analysis was used to analyse the role of logistics for the vision related to BRI and the strategy to improve the city image. Duisburg using BRI for its branding focuses on the active part. To examine branding and marketing strategies of Duisburg related to BRI, expert knowledge was contributed by the interviews with Kranki, Petry, Stolle, Pflug and Simons.

Research objective (Sub-question)	Theory	Method	Data source	Analysis
Duisburg's image development (1)	Framing (2.1.5) City image (2.3)	Media content analysis	Nexis Uni	Duisburg's image represented in media in temporal comparison
		Interviews	Treppte, Taube, Kranki, Petry, Stolle, Pflug, Simons	Deep knowledge about the development of Duisburg's image
		Policy document analysis	Accessed online from: municipality	City image
Duisburg's marketing strategies (2)	Branding (2.1.3)	Interviews	Taube, Kranki, Petry, Stolle, Pflug, Simons	To examine branding and marketing strategies of the city related to BRI
		Policy document analysis	Accessed online from: municipality	Strategy to improve the city image
Duisburg related to BRI (3) Vision (A) Duisburg's role for BRI and BRI's influence on Duisburg's development (B)	Vision making (2.1.2) Strategic spatial planning (2.1.1)	Policy document analysis	Accessed online from: Duisport, NDRC, municipality	The vision and strategy of major stakeholders
		Interviews	Treppte, Taube, Kranki, Petry, Stolle, Pflug, Simons	In-depth information about Duisburg's role for BRI and effects
BRI's influence on Duisburg's image (4) Importance of logistics sector (A) BRI's influence on image (B) Duisburg using BRI for branding (C)	City in global network (2.2) City image (2.3) (Cluster-) Branding (2.1.3/4)	Media content analysis	Nexis Uni	The medial representation of Duisburg's logistics sector in temporal change
		Interviews	Treppte, Taube, Kranki, Petry, Stolle, Pflug, Simons	Expert knowledge on the importance of Duisburg's logistics sector and to examine branding and marketing strategies of the city related to BRI
		Policy document analysis	Accessed online from: municipality	The role of logistics for the vision related to BRI and the strategy to improve the city image

Table 2: Overview of Research Objectives, Theory, Method, Data Source and Analysis

3.3 Policy Document Analysis

Primary data of official policy papers were used to analyse the strategy, vision and intentions on different scopes. Duisburg's regional development strategy is manifested in the 'Master Plan Economy for Duisburg. For growth and employment' (Niederrheinische IHK & Unternehmerverbandsgruppe, 2017). Logistics and port development are found in the annual report of duisport (2019a) and the Chinese intentions regarding BRI are based on the English version of the 'Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road' (NDRC, 2015). Since the policy documents focus more on strategy and vision and less on the image particularly, three documents are sufficient to illustrate the underlying vision of the major stakeholders, the city itself, the port and China.

For the policy document analysis qualitative and quantitative data was triangulated. Quantitatively, the corpus-based discourse analysis is based on the frequency of the partial text corpus, such as keywords (Glasze et. al., 2013). Firstly, the documents were analysed quantitatively by using the word-cruncher tool of atlas.ti⁵. For each document, a list of words is sorted by their frequency. Since the masterplan is only published in German, the words were categorised in German and the table was translated into English at the end. Secondly, these lists were reduced by keywords, which had a proportion of less than 0,1% of the whole document and according to their contextual relevance. Thus, irrelevant words, such as fillers, pronouns, prepositions, numbers and single characters, were excluded from the lists. Thirdly, the keywords were inductively combined into conceptual categories of thematical units. These categories include locations, actors, vision, geographical scope, economic, education, sector and industry, promotion, labour, values, infrastructure and connectivity, cooperation, establishment and management. Fourthly, the percentage of a category in relation to the total number of words in the document was added to ensure the comparability between the documents.

The analysis of word frequencies regarding the categories were conducted individually for each document and comparably for the three documents, illustrated in a radar plot. The quantitative data was triangulated with qualitative data about the content of the categories to include the function. Although a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods was used, the main approach is quantitative to increase objectivity (Babbie, 2010).

3.4 Media Content Analysis

A media content analysis was conducted as Holloway and Hubbard (2001) highlight media representation as a very important element for the image of places and Garcia et al. (2012) link media as a major source for image creation with place branding. Scholars, like Hansen et al. (1998) and Shoemaker and Reese (1996), stress a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis is necessary to fully understand the meanings and possible impacts of medial impact. A method triangulation between quantitative and qualitative methods was used to show not only the discourse elements within the space but also the materially anchored, or empirically tangible elements, referring to boundaries that are not apparent from the mere analysis of a

⁵ Atlas.ti is a software for quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

public discourse. Frames in the news can be selected and analysed by “the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments.” (Entman, 1993, p. 52) Shah et al. (2002) emphasise relevant information, language and particularly, quotations. Qualitatively, the discursive negotiation of the city’s image created by framing and branding by examining the period before and after the establishment was determined. The qualitative focus laid on the expressions and characterisations used to describe Duisburg in relation to BRI in temporal comparison of before and after March 2014. The frames of each category were analysed regarding the content regarding temporal change and the relations between the elements. Quantitatively, discourse analysis is based on the frequency of the partial text corpus (Glasze et. al, 2013). Through the collocation of words and their frequency, image is discursively measurable. That means, findings of positive frames about Duisburg as the BRI-‘ending’ and related locational elements, such as logistics, investments and business, in the discourse indicate an improved city image.

As visualised in table 3, the articles were sampled according to different criteria. Nexis Uni was used to access and collect primary data. Articles were included by the keywords “Duisburg” and “China”, to avoid the terminological issue due to the multiple renaming’s of BRI. Hence, China and Duisburg are depending variables and BRI is the independent variable. Only English articles were sampled, meaning that Duisburg’s image was mainly examined from a foreign perspective, allowing geographical comparisons. Since BRI is globally relevant and companies and investors, especially in the logistics sector, operate internationally, a foreign perspective offers a clearer view on Duisburg and its framing related to BRI. Especially since connectivity is a central element for Duisburg’s image and BRI’s influence, it is interesting to include the geographical scope. For the frequency of publication, referring to the popularity, the medial interest of Germany was illustrated comparatively. The medial focus was on magazines and journals based on the target group of companies and investors. As mentioned before and detailed in chapter 4, China’s president Xi Jinping visited Duisburg in March 2014 to welcome the first block train arriving from Chongqing to Duisburg, under the umbrella of BRI (Van der Putten et al., 2016). The president’s visit caused media attention (Gaspers, 2016), which is why March 2014 is the temporal sampling criteria. Two periods of the same duration are required to examine the temporal development. The empirical focus is on the six years from March 2014 to March 2020. The period from March 2008 to March 2014 serves as a comparison of the development.

Sampling-Criteria	Selection
Database	Nexis Uni
Keywords	Duisburg & China
Language	English
Publication type	Magazines & Journals
Time scale	01/03/2008 – 01/02/2020 (12 years) 1.) 01/03/2008 – 01(03/2014 (6 years) 2.) 01/03/2014 – 01(03/2020 (6 years)
Excluded	Duplicates, keywords not mentioned in main body text

Table 3: Articles - Sampling Criteria

Based on the before outlined sampling criteria, 86 articles were sampled and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively to include the connotation and the content of the message (Macnamara, 2005). Firstly, the articles were listed in a table with a label, title, publication, country and date of publication, topic/industry, word count and the connotation (positive, negative or neutral). Secondly, frames about Duisburg were selected as the units of analysis. The frames were coded inductively into different categories and the connotation was determined. Quantitatively, the frequency of categories and keywords as well as their collocation in the articles were analysed longitudinally and compared by the time frames of before and after March 2014. The quantitative data contribute to the qualitative data on the categories of the role of the logistics sector for Duisburg and Duisburg's role for BRI were examined by also focusing on a foreign perspective.

3.5 Expert-Interviews

Since interviews are very useful for in-depth information around these topics (McNamara, 1999), primary data on context information data was collected through systematic expert interviews. Semi-structured interviews employ a series of open-ended questions regarding the topic areas aimed to be covered and provide opportunities for various themes or sub-topics to develop. Individual, in depth-interviews are an effective tool to make people speak openly (Anastas, 1988). The qualitative expert interviews were conducted according to an interview guide (app. A), allowing comparability of the interviews. The questions were contingent on the research questions focussing on the branding strategy of Duisburg and how the city actively uses BRI for their branding and image improvement to attract companies and investors. The main topics of the interviews were Duisburg's role for BRI and the process, the role of the logistics sector for Duisburg's image, the framing of the Duisburg's image and Duisburg's actively using BRI for its marketing and branding strategies. The interviewed experts (app. B) include Sascha Treppte (I1), the head of business development and strategy, who is responsible for Duisport's China strategy amongst other things and Prof. Dr. Markus Taube (I2), the Chair holder of the East Asian Economics Institute and Co-director of the *Konfuzius Institut Metropole Ruhr*, a German Chinese institution for cultural exchange and societal discourse. Further, Matthias Simons (I7), head of the transport and logistics departments of the Niederrheinische IHK [Chamber of Commerce of the Lower Rhine] were interviewed. These interviews were mainly focused on Duisburg's role for BRI and Duisburg's logistics sector due to the interviews expertise. Additionally, Alexander Kranki (I3), founder and managing director of Krankikum GmbH⁶ and a member of the local business association. He also contributed to the masterplan for economy Duisburg. Sebastian Petry (I4), managing director of DWS Marketing Agency in Duisburg and Jutta Stolle (I5), manages the shareholders' office at Franz Haniel & Cie. GmbH⁷ in Duisburg and board member of the advisory board for city marketing and member of the local business association. Moreover, Johannes Pflug (I6), China representative of Duisburg and chairman of China Business Network Duisburg (CBND), offered interesting insights, especially on Duisburg's relations to China. Since they are the important stakeholders and experts on local strategies and visions for marketing and branding

⁶ Krankikum GmbH is a software company in Duisburg.

⁷ Franz Haniel & Cie. GmbH is an investment holding company in Duisburg.

Duisburg, Duisburg's development, image and marketing strategies were in the centre of these interviews. Due to the safety measures to fight COVID-19⁸, face-to-face interviews were not possible. Thus, the interviews were conducted via different video-communication tools and recorded with the permission of the interviewees. The average duration of the interviews was 22:23 minutes. In the seventh and last conducted interview, no new information was gained, only before collected data was validated.

As Meuser and Nagel (2009) strongly recommend keeping the terminology of the interviewee and to keep legibility, intelligent verbatim transcriptions were conducted. Since the focus is more on the content than on the language, transcribes were conducted intelligently by editing lightly and leaving out fillers. The interviews were analysed according to Mayring's (2008) qualitative content analysis. First, the interviews were transcribed. Besides the interview with Treppte, all interviews were conducted in German. Thus, the transcripts were translated into English and afterwards manually paraphrased into codes. These thematical units were then categorised thematically. The categorisation was made deductively based on the interview guide. These findings are outlined thematically (chapter 7) and summed up to main findings (7.12). Further, are conceptualised, which means related to the theory and the results from the policy- and the media analysis, related to the research questions (chapter 8).

4. Belt and Road Initiative

In this chapter, BRI is described by its introduction, aims and development. Further, BRI's implications for Germany, Duisburg in relation to BRI, are outlined to provide contextual information about the particular case of BRI and Duisburg.

4.1 Introduction

During the 1990s, China started to liberalise trade and FDI (Sally, 2011), the basis for BRI's introduction. Further liberalisation intensified by the 'going out'-strategy, introduced in 2000, before the admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. The core of the 'going global' strategy is promoting "the international operations of capable Chinese firms with a view to improving resource allocation and enhancing their international competitiveness." (UNCTAD, 2006, p. 210) Thus, the strategy of economic liberalisation allowed companies to expand business activities and investments globally. The Chinese government created alliances and opened its market for international trade to become more active in the global economy and financial markets (Stiftung Asienhaus, 2016). Additionally, the State Council supported Chinese enterprises by granting export tax rebates, financial and foreign exchange assistance to expand globally (UNCTAD, 2006).

During his visit to Kazakhstan in September 2013, the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, held a speech on the 'strategic vision' to construct a 'New Silk Road'. The name, Silk Road, originates from the lucrative Chinese silk trade during the Han dynasty (206 BC–220 AD). The ancient network of trade routes connected the Chinese west and east regions with the Mediterranean Sea (Costantinos, 2016). To support its development plans, China uses the positive connotation

⁸ This master thesis was written during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. Governmental safety measurements included social distancing as well as global travel restrictions.

of the myth around the historical Silk Road (Stiftung Asienhaus, 2016) and envisions a network of infrastructural links from China to the rest of the world. The main aim is “to open up the transportation channel from the Pacific to the Baltic Sea” and to enhance connectivity and generate increased trade (Aris, 2016). In 2013, Xi Jinping, launched a series of both, domestic and foreign policy initiatives, aiming to ensure political stability and continued economic growth in China and to strengthen China’s position as a major international player. In 2015, the document ‘Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road’ was released by the Chinese government, which illustrates the overall vision (NDRC, 2015). Over the next few years, through the engagement of several of China’s political institutions, provincial governments, business communities, and scholars, a series of policies emerged, which included more concrete plans for different destinations. All this led to a restructuring of China’s development strategy.

4.2 Aims and Development

As labels are important for visions (Dühr, 2007; Zonneveld, 2000), BRI’s name is essential for its development and promotion. First, the label of the silk route was used to invoke the historical imagery of the 2,000-year-old Silk Road from China, through Central Asia to Europe. Then, the term, ‘One Belt, One Road’ was used to refer to two economic corridors, the ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’ and the ‘21st-Century Maritime Silk Road’. Due to the geographical expansion, this perspective does not cover the scope of the initiative anymore. That is why currently the term is ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ (Taube & Hmaid, 2019). The term of the New Silk Route refers to the Eurasian Land Bridge (Costantinos, 2016), the connection from China to Germany. Since 2013, BRI is an essential part of Beijing’s official foreign policy rhetoric, while states along the route function as ‘building blocks’ in a network of economic corridors and within free trade zones (Stiftung Asienhaus, 2016). BRI includes the following six economic corridors:

- China - Mongolia - Russia
- China - Pakistan
- China - Kazakhstan - Russia - Belarus - Poland - Germany
- Bangladesh - China - India - Myanmar
- China - Central Asia - West Asia
- China - Indochina - Peninsula (NDRC, 2015)

President Xi promotes BRI, as the Silk Route spirit is based on the vision of stability and cooperation, strengthening of local industrialisation and modernisation. This would lead to an increase of goods for exchange and more ideas to be promoted as well as an alliance of civilisations (Chan, 2019). BRI aims for the three following main goals of (1) accelerating Chinese economic development, (2) building up China’s international image and (3) leading the world through the connectedness of trade facilitation, cross-border integration and communication (Shahriar et al., 2018). President Xi outlines BRI best by stating “China will actively promote international co-operation through the Belt and Road Initiative. In doing so, we hope to achieve policy, infrastructure, trade, financial, and people-to-people connectivity and thus build a new platform for international co-operation to create new drivers of shared development.” (Xi, J., 2017, p. 61) The overall vision of BRI is explained in depth in chapter 5.1 by a policy document analysis of the official vision and action plan.

BRI, particularly the rail connections to Europe, are a major part of the Chinese economic development strategy. China invested majorly in transport infrastructure, expansion of river ports, airports, motorway, and railway networks. Resultingly, several intermodal hubs, providing different kinds of transportation, emerged (Jakóbowski et al., 2018). Besides the investment in infrastructure, the costs of rail operations were subsidised by the Chinese government under BRI. Reports suggest that trains from China to Europe are subsidised by 60% (Knowler, 2018), which stresses the need to become more efficient to be economically sustainable (Arbuthnot Latham & Co, 2019).

“BRI is today understood as a serious undertaking expected to have a lasting impact on economic structures, political alliances, and geostrategic power constellations not only on the regional but also on the global level.” (Li & Taube, 2019, p.1)

4.3 Implications for Germany

“Germany was an early European prime target of high-level Chinese ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ promotion activities.” (Gaspers, 2016, p. 26) BRI activities in Germany are mostly about reframing and rebranding already existing rail connections. The rebranding of old railways and the framing of new railways as BRI connections are based on two principal considerations. Firstly, the positive historical connotation of the Silk Route attracts German logistics companies in China (Gaspers, 2016). Secondly and more importantly, due to the increased competition between Chinese regional governments and state-owned enterprises for launching BRI projects in Europe, BRI simplifies finding business partners in China for German logistics companies (Shepard, 2016). Despite Germany’s initial concerns about the initiative regarding Chinese debt traps and neo-colonial ambitions (Taube & Hmadi, 2019), several railway projects have been established to connect China and Germany and labelled as BRI connections. However, the railway between Duisburg and Chongqing has gained the most attention due to the frequent political and business delegations visits (Arbuthnot Latham & Co, 2019).

After Xi Jinping’s visit in 2014, the Chinese Embassy in Berlin promoted BRI in German political elites and Berlin was positively inclined to BRI. The German government showed openness and interest in the initiative and supported BRI on the political and business level within the EU. German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, highlighted BRI’s long-term strategic outlook and stresses the intention of the EU to participate in the initiative in October 2015 (Bundesregierung, 2015) since BRI potentially secures Chinese investments in Germany and Europe (Gaspers, 2016).

In 2016, the cooperation intensified. The China Federation of Industrial Economics (CFIE), a Chinese government-sponsored industry association, advertised ‘common prosperity along the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road’ to promote BRI in the German industry. Besides, Germany participates in cultural BRI conferences in China for academia and media. The *Konfuzius Institut* in Germany organises various Silk Road-related cultural events, such as concerts, dance festivals, academic conferences and publishes reports on BRI’s win-win character. Additionally, President Xi visited Germany subsequently and announced the expansion of the Sino-German cooperation and BRI’s overland route (Gaspers, 2016).

Moreover, Germany’s state-owned railway company, Deutsche Bahn (DB), and China Railways (CR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding about intensifying cooperation in three major fields: (1) rail freight transport between China and Germany, (2) consulting services provided by DB for CR in the maintenance of high-speed trains and (3) DB supports Chinese infrastructure projects in third countries with their engineering know-how. Especially, the Eurasian land bridge is emphasised (DB, 2016). Beyond that, Germany’s logistics giant DHL officially agreed with the city of Chengdu to improve rail services between the city and Europe (Van der Putten et al., 2016).

4.4 Rail Connection Chongqing-Duisburg

The government of Beijing is committed to the revival of the historic Silk Road, but actually foreign companies such as Hewlett-Packard Company (HP), Dell Technologies, Foxconn Technology Group and DHL International were the pioneers of the train connection between China and Europe, as well as of the Chongqing-Duisburg connection. Rail transport was simply the logical alternative for transporting high-value products since it is cheaper than air transport and faster than sea transport (Stiftung Asienhaus, 2016). Particularly Roland Leijwegt, Director of Global Logistics at HP, claims paternity of the connection by stating “This has been my baby, more or less, organizing this Trans-Eurasia rail” (as quoted by Hoering & Schaffar, 2017). In 2011, two years before BRI’s announcement, first company trains from Chongqing arrived in Duisburg (DB, 2019).



Figure 8: Map of the main Railway Connections between China and Germany
 Source: DB (2018), URL: https://www.deutschebahn.com/en/presse/press_releases/Success-story-in-the-Far-East-ten-years-of-service-to-China-3343904 (01.05.2020)

However, the railway from Chongqing to Duisburg was the first rail connection to be promoted as BRI (Li et al., 2016). During his visit to Duisburg in March 2014, Xi Jinping witnessed the arrival of a cargo train from Chongqing, affirmed as a milestone of BRI in the Chinese media (Gaspers, 2016). The rail connection is sometimes referred to as Yuxinou since it is organised by the YuXinOu Logistics Company Ltd., a joint venture between Russian, Chinese, Kazakh, and German railway companies. The multinational cooperation, founded in 2011, arranges unhindered exchange of goods by combining knowledge about foreign conditions (Li et al., 2016). In figure 1, BRI’s global extent is visualised, while figure 8 shows the main rail

connections from China to Germany, including Duisburg. Most trains arriving in Duisburg departed from Chongqing, although other cities in China, like Xi'an and Wuhan are also connected to Duisburg. In total, more than 40 main lines connect China and Europe (Brinza, 2017). As stated earlier, Duisburg is not only the nominal 'start- and endpoint' of the BRI railway in Europe. It functions as a distribution centre, connecting Europe and China. Goods from Western European countries, like Spain, France, Belgium or the Netherlands arrive in Duisburg to proceed to China (Li et al., 2016). Since Chongqing hosts the largest inland port on Yangtze river, the city evolved into a major Chinese transportation and logistics hub (Jakóbowski et al., 2018). Chongqing hosts the largest production of laptops in the world, which makes half of the cargo (Li et al., 2016).

The number of trains between China and Europe has increased rapidly (fig. 9) Accordingly, the number of trains travelling between China and Duisburg increased from four trains a week in 2014 to 40 trains weekly in 2018. Thus, this railway connection can be called a pioneer among the direct railway connections between Europe and China and among BRI. The Port of Duisburg handles around 130,000 TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit) annually in terms of the trade with China. 30% of the goods dispatched by rail from China in Europe arrive in Duisburg and the surrounding Rhine-Ruhr region (Duisport, 2019b). However, a disparity in China-

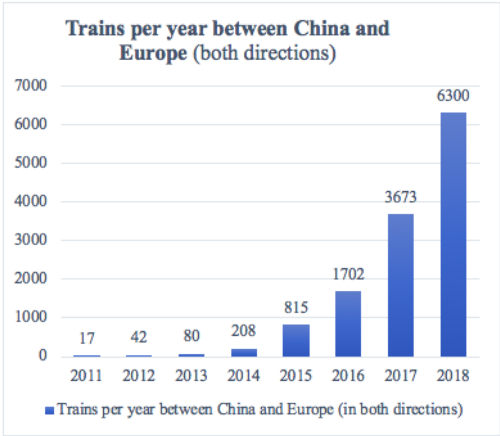


Figure 9: Diagram of Trains between China and Europe
 Data source for 2011 – 2017: CRCT (2018)
 for 2018: Duisport (2019a)

European trade regarding volumes of products has to be pointed out. Generally, the demand for goods exported from China to Europe is higher than from Europe to China. Another difficulty of exporting European goods to China is due to Russian transit bans for certain European groceries, which can thus not be transported through Russia (Brinza, 2017; Jakóbowski et al., 2018). Resultingly, transported volume on the westbound is about three times higher than trains on the eastbound (Jakóbowski et al., 2018). The trade imbalance decreases efficiency since all trains have to travel back eastbound. However, Interrail (2017) states that the trade imbalance of cargo volumes decreases as the trains leaving Duisburg are increasingly loaded.

4.5 Duisburg and BRI

The German city Duisburg has approximately 500,000 inhabitants (Kronen & Richter, 2017) and is regarded as multicultural due to a share of 20% of Non-Germans (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019). Historically, Duisburg gained importance during the industrial revolution due to coal and steel (Niederrheinische IHK & Unternehmerverbandsgruppe, 2017) and used to be one of Germany's richest cities in the mid 20th century (Hanisch, 2016). Duisburg's cultural potential is based on the history of the port, trade and as an industrial centre (Niederrheinische IHK & Unternehmerverbandsgruppe, 2017). Duisburg is located in NRW, economically one of the most important states, at the confluence of the river Rhine and its tributary Ruhr (Arbuthnot Latham & Co, 2019). Duisburg hosts the world's largest inland container port. As visualised in the map below, Duisburg is well connected by air through

Dusseldorf Airport and for road-based transport due to its location at the intersection of five international motorways (A2, A3, A40, A57, A59) (Arbuthnot Latham & Co, 2019).

The sector of transportation and storage is very important for Duisburg's economy since 9.2% of employees in Duisburg work in the field of transport and warehousing (Niederrheinische IHK, 2019). Especially duisport is a huge job creator with more than 47.000 employees directly and indirectly related to the port (duisport, 2020a).



Figure 10: Map of North Rhine-Westphalia

Source: Welt Atlas, URL: https://www.welt-atlas.de/karte_von_nordrhein-westfalen_1-185 (20.03.2020)

Today, Duisburg is one of Europe's most innovative logistics hubs (Jakóbowski et al., 2018). Many large multinational logistics service providers, such as Kuehne and Nagel, DHL, Geodis Logistics, Imperial Logistics, Yusen Logistics, Rhenus, Logistics, Schenker and Schnellecke, operate from Duisburg (Arbuthnot Latham & Co, 2019). Duisburger Hafen AG has two shareholders: the federal state, NRW (66%) and the city of Duisburg (33%). Duisport is the brand name of Duisburger Hafen AG, owner and operator of the port (Duisport, 2020b). FDI from China is very important for NRW as China is the second largest investor after Turkey. In 2019, China invested in 65 projects of FDI and created nearly 1.100 jobs in NRW. The Ruhr region received 17% of the Chinese investments (NRW Invest, 2019).

Duisport cooperates with several Chinese firms, such as China Merchant Group, CRCT and Cosco Logistics. To further develop the rail connection between China and Europe, the port has signed a cooperation agreement with China Merchants Group. In 2017, there was a discussion

about financial shareholding of the cooperation partner China Merchants Group and Duisport. While China Merchants Group wanted to purchase shares to increase China's involvement in Europe, Duisport stressed its stability due to its economic holding (Kahl, 2017). Duisburg benefits fundamentally of its connectivity with the other major industrial cities within NRW and also with key manufacturing and assembly plants across Central Europe (Arbuthnot Latham & Co, 2019). Duisburg's logistics hub is seen as a development opportunity for the surrounding region to tackle structural challenges and enhance strategic investments (Jakóbowski et al., 2018). Especially, the rail connection with China has the potential to improve Duisburg's position as a major European logistics hub (Kahl, 2017). Due to the railway operations, the Chinese company Accurate Drive Equipment Manufacturing established its European headquarters in Duisburg. It is expected that Duisburg will attract more Chinese companies and an increasing number of Chinese tourists (Li et al., 2016). According to various newspapers, more than 100 Chinese companies settled in Duisburg before 2019 (WDR, 2020). Especially since Xi Jinping's official visit in 2014, Duisburg caught the attention of many Chinese local governments, willing to cooperate. Resultingly, a positive effect on local employment is assumed (Li et al., 2016).

5. Descriptive Empirical Findings of Policy Document Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative policy document analysis was used to examine the strategy and vision of the major stakeholders of the BRI- 'ending' in Duisburg, Duisburg, Duisport and the Chinese government.

First of all, the different publishing dates and intentions of the papers based on the type of document have to be taken into account. An economic development plan is forward-looking and emphasises the economic development and the impacts for residents, while an annual report is backward-looking and majorly focused on concrete economic development for the company. In contrary, a vision plan is forward-looking, less specific and more likely to shape public opinion.

5.1 NDRC (2015) Vision and Action Plan

The document 'Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road', released in 2015 by NDRC, promotes the initiative by exposing their aims, motivation and ideas in form of a long-term vision. Participating countries of BRI are provided with a vision of shared growth and prosperity regarding its five priority areas: (1) policy coordination, (2) enhanced connectivity, (3) unimpeded trade, (4) financial integration and (5) people-to-people bond. Most key Chinese foreign-policy concepts result from emphasis on increased 'connectivity' as the recipe for international development and stability. The notion of connectivity is in the centre of BRI's vision. "The Belt and Road Initiative aims to promote the connectivity of Asian, European and African continents and their adjacent seas, establish and strengthen partnerships among the countries along the Belt and Road, set up all-dimensional, multi-tiered and composite connectivity networks, and realize diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these countries." (p. 3) BRI's connectivity projects attempt to align and coordinate the development strategies of the countries

along the Belt and Road, tap market potential in this region, promote investment and consumption, create demands and job opportunities, enhance people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and mutual learning among the people of the relevant countries, and enable them to understand, trust and respect each other and live in harmony, peace and prosperity. The projects include the expansion of seaports and airports, oil and gas pipelines as well as telecommunications network, resulting in six economic corridors (4.1). Unimpeded trade refers to improving investment and trade facilitation and remove investment and trade barriers. Financial integration is about strengthening financial cooperation regarding currency stability, investment and financing system and credit information system as well as financial regulations. People-to-people bond is referred to as cross-cultural exchange, including the promotion of cultural and academic exchanges, media cooperation, personnel exchanges and cooperation, especially for youth and volunteer services, and bilateral and multilateral cooperation (NDCR, 2015).

As explained in 3.3, the keywords, based on their frequency, were inductively combined into conceptual categories of thematical units. Table 4 illustrates the thematical categorisation to examine the focus of the Chinese vision of BRI.

NDCR Vision and Actions (2015)			
(total word count: 5610)			
Category	Word (Count)	Word-Count	Word-Share
Geographical scope	countries (74), international (29), regional (24), regions (18), world (15), bilateral (15), areas (14), region (12), crossborder (11), multilateral (9), cities (7), south (7), inland (6), province (6), area (6), zone (6), border (6), local (5), west (5), global (4), western (4), neighboring (4)	279	4,97%
Promotion	promote (29), promotion (29), improve (22), strengthen (15), support (12), benefit (12) increase (11), expand (11), encourage (9), deepen (8), facilitation (8), advance (8), advantages (6), push (6), strength (6), greater (5), learning (5), promoting (5), positive (4), potential (4), advantage (4), advanced (4), understanding (4), ensure (4), accelerate (4)	236	4,21%
Cooperation	cooperation (130), jointly (34), mutual (27), common (10), integration (7), joint (6), together (6), integrate (5), participate (4)	229	4,08%
Economic	economic (59), trade (38), exchange (26), investment (25), financial (12), economy (9), bank (6), credit (5), fund (5), market (5), funds (4)	194	3,46%
Vision	initiative (38), development (37), vision (17), actions (16), projects (9), developing (8), plans (7)	132	2,35%
Establish	building (29), 21st century (21), new (21), build (16), establish (9), create (9), forward (7), reform (5), provide (4)	121	2,16%
Infrastructure & connectivity	maritime (27), connectivity (14), transport (13), infrastructure (12), connecting (8), sea (7), corridor (7), network (6), ports (6), river (5), land (4), marine (4), speed (4), efficient (4), networks (4), related (4)	114	2,03%
Locations	china (33), Chinese (12), asia (22), china's (8), asian (7), europe (7), shanghai (5), africa (4), asean (4), taiwan (4)	106	1,89%
Values	opening-up (17), cultural (16), peace (11), open (10), trust (6), opening (5), openness (5), prosperity (5), spirit (5), culture (5), security (4), protection (4), communication (10), policy (10), coordination (9), costumes (9), management (7), principles (6), consultation (5), strategic (4), standards (4)	93	1,66%
Management	mechanisms (13), communication (10), policy (10), coordination (9), costumes (9), management (7), principles (6), processing (6), forum (6), implementation (5), operation (5), implementation (5), operation (5), measures (5), conduct (5), consultation (5), implementing (4), implementing (4), mechanism (4), forums (4), platforms (4), programs (4), strategic (4), standards (4)	143	2,55%
Actors	public (8), other's (8), parties (7), institutions (6), political (6), committee (5), people (5), people-to-people (5), government (5), power (5), companies (4), organizations (4), human (4), personnel (4)	76	1,35%
Sector/ Industry	industrial (14), construction (12), energy (8), resources (7), technology (7), facilities (6), tourism (6), industries (6), resource (4), service (4)	74	1,32%

Table 4: NDCR - Policy Document Analysis - Frequency of Categories

‘Geographical scope’ is stressed throughout the document with a share of almost five percent word count, stressing that BRI aims for a huge international (mentioned 29 times⁹) extent between countries (74) in the world (15). Additionally, the local (5) level is mentioned, regarding regions (12) and cities (7) and also smaller geographical relations, such as neighbouring places (4) are pointed out, but with less frequency. The category of ‘locations’ shows a focus (1,89%) on China (33), Chinese (12) and China’s (8) as the founder of BRI. It is pointed out that China connects Asia (22) with Europe (7) more than with Africa (4) or places even closer, like Shanghai (5), Taiwan (4) and ASEAN countries (4). Interestingly, reciprocal relationships between the geographical entities are stressed by the terms bilateral (15) and multilateral (9). Strongly highlighted in this document, is the category of ‘cooperation’, with a word share of slightly more than four percent in the document by terms such as jointly (34) and mutual (27).

The document includes 236 expressions, categorised as ‘promotion’, in comparison to 121 terms of ‘establishment’. It is emphasised that something already exists and is promoted (29), improved (22) and supported (12), although something new (21) is built (16) or established (9). By referring to known matters, a trustfulness is created, which allows less public doubt. The category ‘vision’ shows the characterisation as an initiative (38) for development (38). The document includes visions (17) as the document title indicates, rather than concrete plans (7). The central idea of the vision is infrastructure (12) to increase connectivity (14) with a word share of 2,35%. Regarding ‘infrastructure’, mostly maritime (27) transport (13) is stressed.

The category of the ‘economic’ dimension is essential for the Chinese vision around BRI as well with a word share of around 3,5%. Trade (38) and investment (25) are essential parts of the economic perspective. Besides, the reciprocal relations are emphasised regarding economic effects, e.g. by the term exchange (19+7). Regarding the category ‘sector and industry’ (1,32%), BRI’s vision emphasises industrial (14) construction (12). Additionally, energy (8) and technology (7) are important elements. However, the sectoral influence of BRI is very broad, since more distant sectors are also pointed out as a sphere of influence, such as tourism (6).

Regarding the category of ‘values’ of the initiative (1,66%), openness and safety are stressed strongly. Moreover, communication (10), policies (10) and coordination (9) are major functions within the category of ‘management’. Since the document is more about a vision than about concrete plans the emphasis operations (1,41%) and the category of ‘actors’ (79) is not very strong. Although one can see that public (8) and political (6) actors and parties (7) are more highlighted than companies (4) and organisations (4). Additionally, people (5) and humans (4) are mentioned, also in a relational way, as people-to-people (5).

5.2 Masterplan Economy for Duisburg (2017)

The ‘Master Plan Economy for Duisburg. For growth and employment’, released in German in 2017, was created in cooperation with the Chamber of Industry and Commerce of the lower-rhine region and the Entrepreneur Association Group. The document emphasises Duisburg’s strategic location at the Rhine and Ruhr area and its connectivity as major advantages. Duisburg is well connected by road and rail routes, to Dusseldorf, an international aviation hub and

⁹ From here on the number in brackets refers to the word’s frequency in the document

Weeze Airport as well as to the urban agglomeration around the Ruhr and Rhineland and Lower Rhine areas. Duisburg has an important logistics hinterland hub with the largest inland port in the world. Duisburg highlights the unused potential regarding the city's image with the exception of the logistics sector. Only the logistics sector, and particularly the port, is seen as a source for supra-regional growth. Different local and regional initiatives focus on improving the city image through various campaigns. Duisburg focuses on two main target groups:

- a.) potential investors: founder, companies, willing to invest and local companies
- b.) potential new residents: students, young families and specialists

Important elements for the image improvement include a common communication strategy, promoting of the city as an investment location and highlighting the locational advantages. The vision of image optimisation goes together with an internationalisation of the city (Nieder-rheinische IHK & Unternehmerverbandsgruppe, 2017).

Following the same categorisation strategy as for the NDRC document, the words of the master plan have been categorised thematically and in terms of frequency after they were translated into English (tab. 5).

Masterplan Economy for Duisburg (2017) (total word count: 10557)			
Category	Word (English translation)	Word-Count	Word-share
Locations	duisburg (334), essen (43), lower-rhine-region (37), nrw (32), düsseldorf (23), location (18), germany (16), ruhr (16), lower rhine region (14), duisburg's (13), lower rhine (11), rhine (11)	568	5,38%
Actors	companies (89), chamber of industry and commerce (57), managing director (49), residents of duisburg (31), trade association (20), people (17), Chamber of Commerce (17), actors (16), society (15), politics (13), founder (12), entrepreneurial group (11), federation (11), employment agency (11)	369	3,50%
Vision	development (27), project (24), projects (27), image (24), integration (21), masterplan (17), profile (16), develop (13), frame (13), process (11)	193	1,83%
Geographical scope	city (135), regional (26), international (15)	176	1,67%
Economic	economy (65), business location (28), investments (12), euro (12)	117	1,11%
Education	university (34), education (18), vocational training (15), college (12)	79	0,75%
Sector/Industry	industry (34), services (14), industries (12), energy (11)	71	0,67%
Promotion	improve (15), strengthen (15), stronger (13), support (12), promote (12)	67	0,63%
Labour	labour (21), employees (21), labour market (13)	55	0,52%
Values	family-friendliness (16), digital (16), family (11), environment (11)	54	0,51%
Infrastructure	infrastructure (19), port (15), network (13)	47	0,45%
Cooperation	together (18), participating (13), cooperation (12)	43	0,41%
Establish	new (18), create (14)	32	0,30%

Table 5: Duisburg Masterplan - Policy Document Analysis - Frequency of Categories

'Locations' are fundamental for the development plan of Duisburg, illustrated by a word share of 5,38%. Duisburg (334) itself is strongly focused on, as well as the neighbouring cities, Essen (43) and the state's capital Dusseldorf (23), as well as the surrounding area of the lower-rhine region (37) and NRW (32). The rivers, Ruhr (16) and (lower) -Rhine (11+11) are stressed as geographical entities and locational factors. Moreover, the category of the 'geographical scope' is highlighted by a word share of 1,67% and decreases by further distance. Hence, the city is mentioned most frequently (135), followed by a regional (26) perspective and an international

(15) scope. Regarding the category of 'industry sectors' (0,67%), generally the industry (34) and industries (12) are highlighted in addition to services (14) and energy (11). 0,44% of the words used in the document are related to infrastructure with a special focus on the port (15) serving as a network (13).

Furthermore, 'actors' have an important role in the city's economic development with a word share of 3,5%. The importance of companies (89), the chamber of industry and commerce (57) show strong emphasis on economic actors. Besides administrative actors, local residents (31) and society (15) are in the centre. On top of that, the category of 'cooperation' (0,41%) is essential for economic development. The category of 'cooperation' shows a stress on the collective, strengthened by terms as together (18), participating (13) and cooperation (12). 'Promotion' is stressed through 0,63% of all words, whereas establishment is only referred to by 0,3%. Thus, the plan is about improving (15), strengthening (15) and supporting (12), rather than creating (14). The category for the future 'vision' of the city is the main part of the document, shown by the share of words of about 1,83%. The vision is created by development (27), by different projects (51), images (24) and integration (21), shown by the future-orientation. Since the masterplan is about economic development, the category of 'economic' factors is stressed, like the economy itself (65) and particularly focussing on business location (28) and investments (12). Another major element for the city's development is the additional category of 'education' (0,75%), especially the university (34) is highlighted. 'Labour' is another major dimension (0,52%). Moreover, the category of 'values' are given a share of 0,52% of the words, while pointing out family-friendliness (16), family (11), digital (16) and environment (11).

5.3 Duisport's (2019) Annual Report

The annual report of duisport (2019) is a document about the economic development of the port, released in English. Regarding the "New Silk Road", the partnership with China is stressed throughout the document. "In recent years, duisport has entered into strategic cooperation with China's leading transport and logistics companies to ensure efficient and competitive value creation and process chains." (p. 59) The increase of transcontinental train connection and trade growth is outlined. "Duisport also made a positive contribution in 2018 to the future further development of international transport connections in the rail segment. Chinese trains continue to prove themselves as a driver. For this reason, duisport is relying on the expansion of transcontinental rail connection and the development of strategic partnerships with countries along the land bridge between China and Europe." (p. 86) The strategic partnership with China is also stressed by referring to delegation visits, such as Xi Jinping's visit to Duisburg and "North-Rhine Westphalia's transportation minister Hendrik Wüst also visited Chongqing and Chengdu, the capital of North-Rhine Westphalia's partner province Sichuan, as part of a trade mission." (p. 59) "Duisport shares an allegiance as an equal partner with all Chinese industrial regions with importance for Chinese traffic, as well as with key logistics players such as China Merchants and Cosco Shipping." (p. 63). The strategic cooperation is major part of the future vision as Erich Staake, CEO of Duisburger Hafen AG, states that "[...] by keeping an eye on future options, we have been committed to developing and optimizing the new trade routes

since the beginning – and this approach is in the interest of the regional, national, and European economy.” (p. 63).

According to 5.1 and 5.2, duisport’s annual report was thematically categorised based on the word’s frequency, as shown in table 6.

Duisport Annual Report (2019)			
(total word count: 18867)			
Category	Word	Word-Count	Word-Share
Economic	financial (196), assets (124), business (66), provisions (64), income (58), cash (50), tax (50), capital (48), expenses (43), investments (41), equity (39), sales (37), sales (37), trade (35), rate (30), taxes (29), market (29), loans (28), revenues (27), pension (25), acquisition (25), commercial (22), profit (20), economic (20), received (19), receivables (19), subsidiaries (18)	1199	6,36%
Actors	group (284), duisport (275), company (94), residents of duisburg (93), companies (93), board (61), executive (35), dpl (34), employees (26), weinzierl (25), staake (23), customers (20), aktiengesellschaft (stock corporation) (19)	1052	5,58%
Infrastructure & Connectivity	logistics (145), port (127), hafen (port) (105), logport (65), terminal (48), rail (46), Road (39), packing (38), transport (35), transport (35), logistics (30), logistik (30), goods (26), affiliated (24), container (20), hub (19), startport (19), silk (19), line (18)	888	4,71%
Locations	duisburg (217), , china (51), ruhr (59), rhine (51), düsseldorf (36), north (27), german (24), europe (22), westphalia (20), chinese (19)	526	2,79%
Management	liabilities (46), audit (46), supervisory (32), risk (31), legal (27), management (24), property (24), rights (23), land (23), valuation (21), obligations (19), risks (19), goodwill (19)	354	1,88%
Promotion	consolidated (123), consolidation (39), increase (28), increased (22), growth (23), positive (19)	254	1,35%
Sector/ Industry	services (52), industrial (45), industry (30), service (29)	156	0,83%
Geographical scope	area (55), state (33), region (31), international (25)	144	0,76%
Vision	development (56), activities (24), change (19), project (18)	117	0,62%
Establish	new (55), created (18)	73	0,39%
Cooperation	cooperation (19), together (19)	38	0,20%

Table 6: Duisport - Policy Document Analysis - Frequency of Categories

Duisport’s annual report has a strong focus on the ‘economic’ category, evident by the highest word share on economic-related words of 6,36%, including a huge variety of terms, mostly emphasising finance (196) and assets (124). ‘Infrastructure and connectivity’ represent the main purpose of the port, highlighted by a share of 4,71%. Mostly referring to logistics (145) and constructive parts of infrastructure, like port (127) in English and ‘Hafen’ (105) in German, logport (65) and terminal (48). The port is used more frequently in comparison to rail (46).

Moreover, the ‘locational scope’ has a proportion of 2,79% in the document. The local level is mostly highlighted by Duisburg (217), followed by the international focus on China (51). Interestingly, the frequency decreases by larger geographical ranges. Thus, Ruhr (59), Rhine (51), Dusseldorf (36) are mentioned more frequently towards a bigger geographical scope of Germany (24) and Europe (22). Similarly, the ‘geographical scope’ (0,76%) shows that the frequency decreases as the geographical scope increases, from area (55), state (33), region (31) to international (25).

The category ‘actors’ shows that the major actors are highlighted by a proportion of 5,58%, including group (284) and duisport (275), referring to the port’s organisational structure. Besides, the residents of Duisburg (93) are referred to most. Conversely, company (94) and companies (93), such as dpl (34), are stressed. The category of ‘management’ makes up a share of 1,88% with a strong legal focus (27) and rights (23). ‘Promotion’ (1,35%) is strongly shaped

by the terms consolidated (123) and consolidation (39) and positive development, as increase (28+22), growth (23) and positive (19). In comparison to promotion, ‘establishments’ only reach a share of 0,2%. ‘Sector and industry’ (0,83%) are focused on services (52+29) and industrial (45+30) development. The category of ‘vision’ (0,62%) is less emphasised in the document. However, development (56), including activities (24) and projects (18) are stressed. Finally, the category of ‘cooperation’ is highlighted by mentioning the terms of cooperation (19) and together (19).

5.4 Comparison of the Policy Documents

The thematical comparison of the documents revealed similarities and differences for the vision and strategy of the three major stakeholders, as visualised in a radar plot (fig. 11).

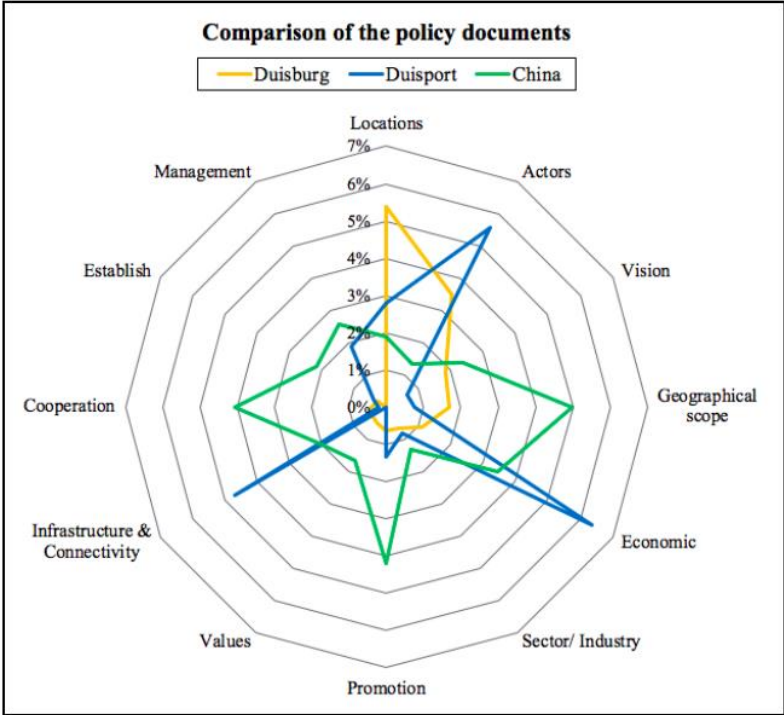


Figure 11: Radar Plot - Comparison of Policy Documents

First of all, the ‘geographical scope’ is stressed mostly by NDRC due to the geographical embeddedness of the global initiative. The scopes of the masterplan and the annual report are more regionally focused. Whereas ‘locations’ are mostly emphasised in Duisburg’s masterplan (5,38%), followed by the annual report of duisport (2,79%) and less by NDRC (1,89%). This is based on the concreteness and local focus of Duisburg and duisport in contrary to NDRC unspecific pointing out a huge scope.

As ‘vision’ is already included in the document title of NDRC, NDRC emphasises visioning the future the strongest by a share of 2,35%. The masterplan strongly focuses on the future by visioning the development and priorities the vision by 1,83%. The annual report is less future-oriented, which is why the vision is not emphasised as much (0,62%). Another common characteristic of the documents is the higher significance of ‘promotion’ rather than ‘establishment’. Although promotion is more frequently stressed by NDRC (4,21%) in

comparison to Duisburg (0,63%) and Duisport (1,35%). NDRC has a higher need to promote, since BRI is a new initiative and doubts could be bigger. That is also why the share of establishment is still higher in the NDRC document (2,16%), than the percentile of 0,3% in the masterplan and 0,39% in the annual report.

Further, Duisport as the major logistics source of the city underscores 'infrastructure and connectivity' by 4,71%. Although infrastructure and connectivity are fundamental requirements and the aim of NDRC, cooperation (4,08%) is strengthened around double as much as infrastructure and connectivity (2,03%). Infrastructure is not in the centre of the masterplan (0,45%), which can be explained by the future-orientation. The infrastructure of Duisburg is seen as given, without much need for improvement.

Moreover, 'cooperation' is strongly highlighted in NDRC (4,08%). In the masterplan (0,41%) and the annual report (0,2%) it is clearly less focused on. Based on the number of involved stakeholders, the mutuality must be higher in a global than a local initiative. Apart from this, 'actors' (5,58%) are fundamental for the annual report due to the organisational structure, while specific organisational structures are not given by NDRC (1,35%). The masterplan focuses on actors since the development plans are more specific than the vision of NDRC.

On top of that, 'sector and industry' are of minor importance for all stakeholders. The strongest 'economic' focus is seen in the annual report due to document type. The masterplan includes the economic dimension only by a share of 1,11%, although the masterplan aims for economic growth. However, therefore the masterplan emphasises indirect economic factors as well, such as education (0,75%) and labour (0,52%). NDRC focuses on the economic dimension by 3,46% since the purpose of the initiative is manifested in the increase of global trade. Furthermore, 'management' is very important for NDRC (2,55%) as well as for Duisport (1,88%). Since both operations have huge extents, the requirements for management tasks are essential. Finally, NDRC focuses on 'values' by a share of 1,66%. Whereas the masterplan includes values by 0,51% and Duisport does not mention values in this way. Again, the type of document is a major reason for that, as values are needed for promotion, especially for NDRC.

6. Descriptive Empirical Findings of the Media Content Analysis

The descriptive empirical findings of the media content analysis are outlined in the following. Quantitatively, results about the frequency of publications and geographically, regarding the publishing countries and qualitatively, the frames about Duisburg are analysed and illustrated thematically.

6.1 Analysis of Articles by Frequency of Publication

The international media attention on Duisburg in relation to China increased after 2015, as visualised in the trendline of figure 12. For the first time scale, a total of 37 articles and for the second period 49 articles were sampled. The articles are referred to by their labels of A1 to A86.

The peak in 2011 to 2012 is based on the operation on the railway from Chongqing to Duisburg and the foundation of YuXinOu (4.4). The high number of sampled articles from March 2013

to 2014 can be related to the Chinese launching policies referring to BRI. Since then, BRI has become an essential part of the Chinese rhetoric. As stated in chapter 4.4, the number of trains arriving in Duisburg from China increased constantly from four trains weekly in 2014 to 40 trains in 2018. This development is in line with the continuous increase of selected publications from 2014

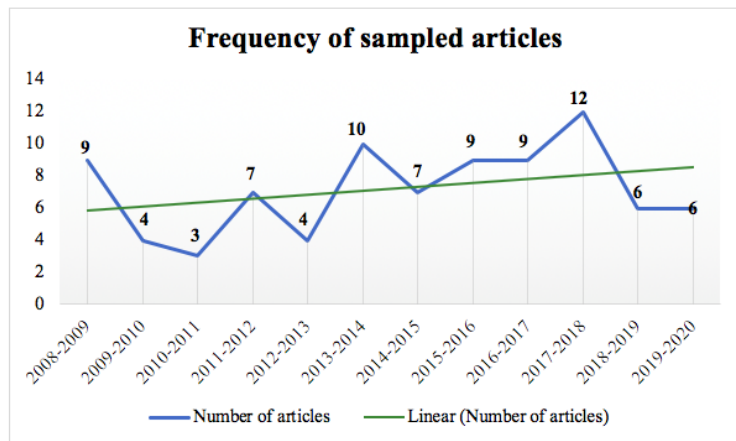


Figure 12: Frequency of Publication

to 2018. The strong increase begins with the Chinese president visiting Duisburg in March 2014. The release of the official vision and action plan by the Chinese government in 2015, the EU's supporting BRI after 2015 and the intensified rail cooperation after 2016, are in accordance with the increased medial interests, peaking between March 2017 and 2018.

6.2 Analysis of Articles by Country of Publication

The countries writing about Duisburg in relation to China can be examined by comparing the two time scales. The analysis of publishing countries is important to examine geographical differences of Duisburg's image. The focus lays on the change between the two time scales, from March 2008 to March 2014 and March 2014 to March 2020¹⁰. By comparing the frequency of publications regarding the countries and their thematical focus as visualised in figure 13, five major trends stand out.

Firstly, the share of articles published in the UK decreased from 49% to 19% and publications in the USA decreased from 21% to twelve percent. Since English articles were sampled, it does not surprise that most articles were published in English speaking countries, like the UK and the USA. Looking more precisely at these

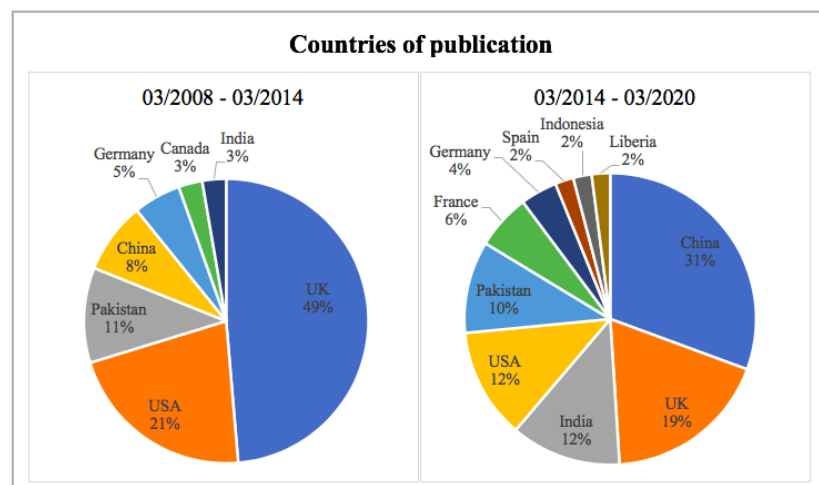


Figure 13: Countries of Publication before and after 2014

publications, it is noticeable that in the UK most articles were published in a metal trade journal. These publications increased slowly until the peak in 2013. After 2013, the second period, they no longer appear. This phenomenon is also evident to a lesser degree in the USA and for the automotive magazines in the UK and USA. This trend shows a weaker connection of Duisburg with the metal and automotive industry. Secondly, publications in China increased from eight

¹⁰ From here on referred to as before 2014 and after 2014.

to 31%, stressing that after Xi Jinping’s visit to Duisburg, only the medial interest in BRI increased. Chinese media focuses on Duisburg to promote BRI.

Thirdly, the number of sampled articles, published in Germany, stays more or less the same. Searching for articles with the same sampling criteria (tab. 3) at Lexis Uni with the only difference of language, German instead of English, a clearly different picture of media performance appears. As visualised in figure 14, German media interest rises after the establishment and the promotion of BRI. The frequency of publications increased after 2011, when YuXinOu was founded. When the initiative was launched in 2013, German media interest reaches its peak. With small fluctuations the interest of the media continues to increase on average for the same reasons as Chinese publications increased, promotion. Fourthly, noteworthy is that the share of articles published in India increases from three to 12%, while the frequency of publications in neighbouring Pakistan remains approximately the same. However, the articles published in Pakistan and India refer thematically to infrastructure and transport. Fifthly, only one sampled article was released in Africa, in Liberia in 2019, illustrating the further extent of BRI at a later stage.

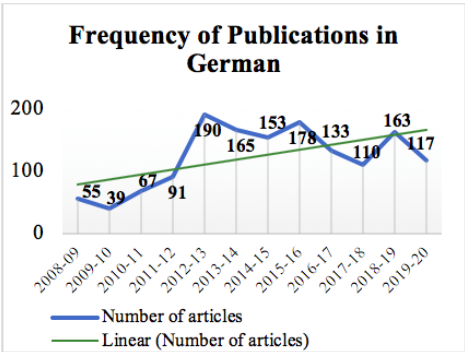


Figure 14: Frequency of Publications in German

All in all, the diversity of countries writing about China and Duisburg increases. The sample includes seven countries for the first and ten countries for the second time frame. Additionally, the second time frame, includes more European countries without English as an official language, such as France and Spain. The articles published in France particularly refer to BRI. These developments indicate an increased global popularity of Duisburg in general and related to BRI.

6.3 Frames about Duisburg

The frames including Duisburg illustrate the thematical focus of Duisburg’s image. First of all, it is important to point out that 37 articles sampled for the first time scale, also include 37 frames about Duisburg. For the second time scale, 49 articles were sampled, including 57 frames about Duisburg. This observation indicates that Duisburg is the main core of the article and not only mentioned minorly. Figure 15 shows the proportion of frames about Duisburg for each conceptual category before and after 2014. Comparing the shares of the main categories, it is apparent that the focus of frames about Duisburg shifted after BRI’s introduction. Frames regarding ‘companies’ in Duisburg accounted

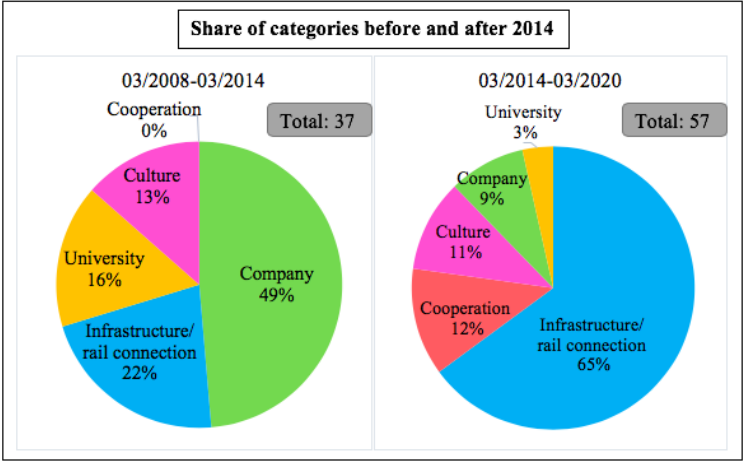


Figure 15: Shares of Categories before and after 2014

for almost half of all frames. After 2014, the share fell to nine percent. In contrast, the share of frames on ‘infrastructure and rail connections’ increased from 22 to 65%. The proportion for the category of ‘culture’ did not change significantly, only from 13 to eleven percent. While no frames could be assigned to the category ‘cooperation’ in the first period, cooperation accounted for 13% of the frames after 2014. The share of frames about the ‘university’ dropped from 16 to three percent, which is not examined particularly due to limited relevance.

6.3.1 Category: Company

Looking closely at the category ‘company’, it is noticeable that the distribution of the frames regarding operations, decline, investment, and expansion did not change significantly, although the number of frames has been reduced considerably, as visualised in figure 16. Noteworthy, Duisport was categorised as ‘logistics’, not as ‘company’. However, before 2014, there are significantly more frames related to ‘companies’ decline than to expansion, while after 2014 the proportion of decline and expansion remained the same. As this category has to be analysed regarding the company’s sector and the company’s action, table 7 illustrates the companies with the sector and their frequency and the categories of actions, such as operation, expansion, investment and decline by their frequency of before and after 2014. It must be taken into account that operations have a neutral connotation, while expansion and investment have a rather positive connotation and decline a more negative connotation.

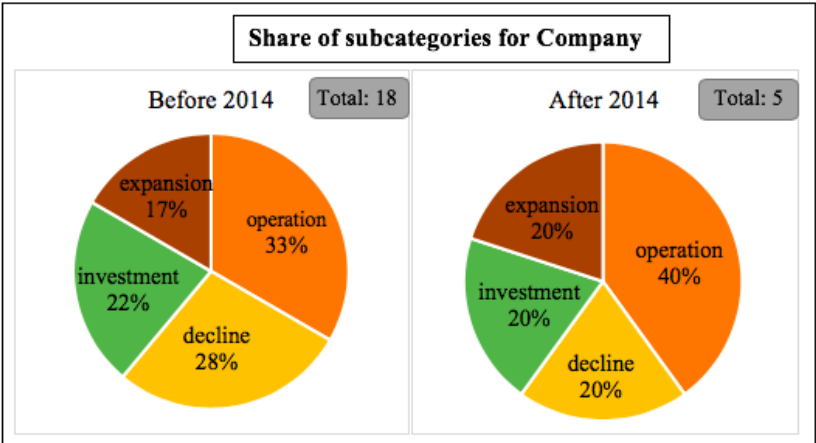


Figure 16: Frequencies before and after 2014 - Category of Companies

For the first period, most frames referred to the sector of manufacturing, mostly to Thyssen Krupp. All frames about a company’s operation referred to manufacturing companies. ThyssenKrupp is referred to by its business focus (A1), modernisation supported by Siemens (A16) and regarding their hot rolled coiled transportation system (A33, A34). Espera Werke is mentioned due to an international meat exhibition (A28), while Klöckner & Co’s CEO pointed out the decrease of the EU’s importance due to the rise of China (A29). Regarding declines, most frames referred to the manufacturing sector. The poor market conditions (A10) and the general decrease in iron and steel industry illustrated by Klöckner & Co (A30), leading to the closing of plants (A6) and mills (A10) and short time work (A24). The chemical industry was referred to once, as Hexion sells plants (A2). Investments were only made in manufacturing. ThyssenKrupp invested in aerospace (A3), strip mills (A9, A17) and Arcelor in the relocation of mills (A13). Expansions mainly referred to manufacturing on a global scope, as Klöckner & Co expands internationally (A20) and Soventix GmbH invests globally into solar plants business (A32). Regarding the food industry, Duisburg was mentioned as a location in a chain of 26 countries (A37). For the second period, the sector of chemistry had the highest share of frames, although the total number of frames decreased

significantly. Although the sector of gastronomy and hospitality had a small share of frames and is therefore not representative, it can be seen that the first period is about gastronomy and the second period about hospitality due to the operation in real estate development (A68). The location of the German chemicals, energy and logistics group PCC in Duisburg was stressed by a Polish company being part of it (A44). The expansion of Klöckner & co (A58) was focused on the US market, while Solvay’s investment for expanding the chemical production affects Duisburg (A73). In contrary, Huntsman scaled down plants (A48).

Sector	Company	Frequency		Category (Before / After 2014)							
		Before 2014	After 2014	Operation	Expansion	Investment	Decline				
Manufacturing ¹	ThyssenKrupp	9		4				3		2	
	Arcelor Mittal	2						1		1	
	Klöckner & co	3	1	1	1	1				1	
	Espera-Werke	1		1							
	Soventix	1			1						
Chemistry	Hexion	1								1	
	PCC		1	1							
	Huntsman		1								1
	Solvay		1					1			
Gastro-nomy ²	Vapiano	1			1						
	Hyatt Hotels		1	1							

¹ Manufacturing includes industrial and mechanical engineering, steel and metal production, mining and energy
² Gastronomy includes hospitality

Table 7: Frames about Companies by Frequency, Category and Sector

6.3.2 Category: Infrastructure & Rail Connection

As illustrated in figure 17, half of the frames about Duisburg, were categorised as ‘infrastructure and rail connection’, and referred to potential effects in the future before 2014. 25% were about logistics and another 25% about the routes from China to Duisburg, while BRI promotion was not present in media. For the second time frame not only the number of frames increased from eight to 37, the routes from China and Duisburg increased to 38%, which makes it the major frame. BRI effects have a share of 30%, while potential and actual effects are pointed out. The proportion of frames regarding logistics remained approximately the same and promotion rose its share to eight percent.

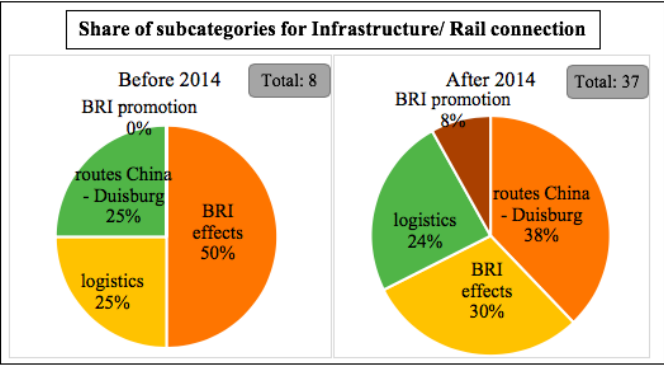


Figure 17: Frequencies before and after 2014 - Category of Infrastructure & Rail Connection

Routes from China to Duisburg

Before 2014, establishments of rail connection were focused on. In August 2012, “Chengdu inaugurated the regular cross-border cargo train to Duisburg” (A35), another destination of the rail route connecting north western China, through Kazakhstan with Duisburg (A36). After 2014, the Trans-Eurasia railway, connecting Chongqing and Duisburg, is the mostly referred to BRI-connection (A38, A41, A70). This route was framed as an “important trade route” (A64) and used as a role model for the initiative (A64) as one of five rail connections to point out general advantages of BRI (A65). Duisburg was framed as a role model, as the connection from China to Duisburg “is used as a good example, referring to a “similar manner we want to see direct connections from Port of Antwerp” (A69). Duisburg is emphasised as the first connection (A84). Furthermore, Chongqing’s connection to Duisburg was used to highlight Chongqing’s connectivity (A80). Duisburg was described as the “westernmost destination of Chongqing-Yinijiang-Europe International rail route” (A41) and as one of Europe’s major logistics hubs (A53). Another advantage of the rail connection over maritime transportation was based on the movement of China’s production further away from coasts (A46). In 2016, the first cargo train departed from Urumqi to Duisburg on (A56, A59). Regarding the routes, Duisburg was stressed as one of two German destinations (A66).

BRI effects

Before 2014, proposed effects included the attraction of “interest from companies in the automotive industry, the chemical industry, manufacturers of household goods, and the engineering and paper industries” (A4) for three major cities, Hamburg, Nuremberg and Duisburg (A4, A5, A45). The advantage of a rail connection being faster than shipping and lower costs in comparison to air transportation is pointed out (A23, A31). Besides, time reduction is assumed to increase (A23, A31). After 2014, the value of BRI was described as “more than symbolic” as BRI “found position in the market” (A39). Economic advantages were pointed out by expected further economic growth of Trans Eurasian Logistics by highlighting the connection Duisburg-Chongqing as a key route (A55). Additionally, increased China-Germany trade was stressed as an effect of BRI (A60). This is emphasised by the fact that the rail connection is “used by big western firms, such as Hewlett-Packard and BMW” (A43). The reduction of travel time was pointed out as BRI’s main advantage (A62, A49, A45) and lower costs. The time and cost reduction make the export of fresh food exports possible (A49) and the exports of cars, mechanical products and clothes effective (A63). The strategic location of Duisburg was referred to as a “perfect connection” (A63) for car imports. An increased number of Chinese companies operating in Duisburg and the creation of over 6,000 jobs only in Duisburg’s logistics sector were emphasised as positive effects (A81). While all the before mentioned effects were positively connotated, the challenge of trade imbalance between China and Duisburg was stressed in terms of full trains arriving and empty trains leaving Duisburg to return to China (A86).

Logistics

In 2012, the joint venture in the China-Europe rail freight service regarding the foundation of YuXinOu was stressed (A25). Besides that, the introduction of the European rail traffic

management system was thematised with Duisburg-Warsaw as one of five affected rail connections (A26). After 2014, Duisburg was framed as a “pivotal city in Germany’s trade with the East”, particularly for China and India (A74). For stressing connectivity and openness, convoys to Duisburg were framed (A71). Regarding investments in China, Duisburg was mentioned as one of two German cities, including Hamburg, for European rail connections (A76) and described as major hubs for Eurasian rail lines (A82). “Duisburg is Germany's biggest inland port and one of the important slots of China Railway Express” (A77). For highlighting NRW's infrastructure, Duisburg was emphasised by the world’s largest inland port, European economic hub, business and logistics centre for the China-Europe connection (A86).

Promotion

Logically, there was no promotion of BRI before the establishment of BRI. The first article related to the promotion of BRI (A40) was released on 01/10/2014. All articles about BRI’s promotion included President XI’s visit to Duisburg. Additionally, Duisburg’s distribution function was outlined (A79). One of the frames added “the phrase ‘One Belt, One Road’ was a new phrase heard by very few people. Nowadays, this phrase is a buzzword in the media all over the world.” (A83)

6.3.3 Category: Culture

Before 2014, 40% of frames, categorised as ‘culture’, were related to heritage and to the Love Parade and 20% referred to football (fig. 18). After 2014 the number of frames slightly increased from five to six frames. The share of heritage-related frames decreased to 33%. The cultural heritage of Duisburg referred to the former industries in the first and second period. Before 2014, *Landschaftspark* [Nature Park] Duisburg-Nord was framed as a prime example for the adaptive reuse of a former industrial site (A8). Besides, the historical beginning for the steel industry was mentioned with reference to August Thyssen (A11). After 2014, the conversion of a historic warehouse into a new landmark (A42) and machinery, which was built in Duisburg (A52) was stressed. While the category of arts was not referred to in the first period, the category’s share rose to 33% after 2014.

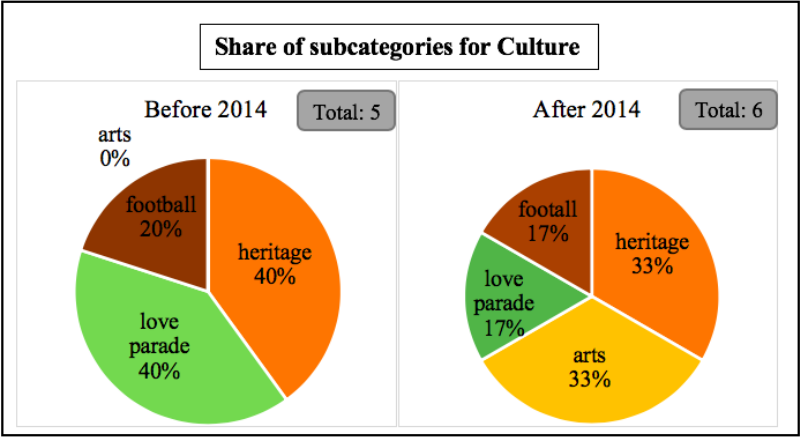


Figure 18: Frequencies before and after 2014 - Category of Culture

In 2015, “China 8, a major exhibition” (A51) took place in eight cities in the Ruhr region, also in Duisburg. Another article focused on the opening in Duisburg “with support from Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for Economics and Energy Sigmar Gabriel” (A47). The emphasis on high-political involvement, stressed the importance of the event. Frames about football stayed more or less

the same, whereas the share of frames about the Love Parade decreased from 40 to 17% percent. The Love Parade disaster happened in 2010, explaining the higher share in the period. In the second time period, Duisburg was only mentioned once in relation to the Love Parade. In this article, Duisburg was framed as an example for an “orderly society”, which can be affected by disasters (A72).

6.3.4 Category: Cooperation

The categories ‘infrastructure and rail connection’, ‘company’ and ‘university’ included cooperation, but the category ‘cooperation’ is an addition to the before mentioned. The first article, which was sampled and categorised as ‘cooperation’, was released on 30/9/18, so that there were no articles in the first time frame. For the second period, seven frames were selected, noteworthy from only two articles (fig. 19), indicating that the information about Duisburg were more detailed. Most frames were related to Duisburg’s cooperation with Huawei¹¹ to digitalise Duisburg, others are about promoting cooperation. One article was about the delegation visit of Duisburg’s mayor to Huawei’s headquarter in Shenzhen to strengthen cooperation of smart city development (A78). The second article mentioned the delegation by providing further information about Duisburg’s transformation and digitalisation based on the cooperation with Huawei. Both sides, Duisburg and Huawei, aim to deepen the cooperation as a future-oriented and long-term partnership. Additionally, this category included promotion in the sense of Duisburg providing information online not only in German and English, but also in Chinese (A85).

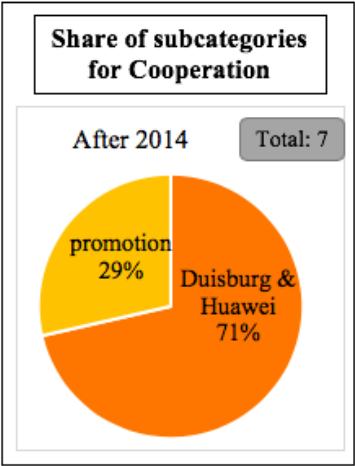


Figure 19: Frequencies before and after 2014 - Category of Cooperation

6.4 Main Findings of the Media Content Analysis

Regarding the frequency of publications, an increase of international attention was demonstrated after 2015, related to the milestones of BRI’s development. The President’s visit to Duisburg in 2014 was mostly referred to. Based on the number of frames in relation to the number of sampled articles, Duisburg’s gained popularity as demonstrated in the media and was more in the focus of publications after 2014. Focussing on the publishing countries, an increased diversity of countries releasing articles about Duisburg and BRI was outlined. The huge decrease of publications from the UK and the USA were explained by their thematical focus on the metal and automotive industry, which decreased in Duisburg. China’s focus on Duisburg increased strongly, which is due to their promotion of BRI. Focussing on Germany, the number of English articles remained the same. However, a rise of German media interest after 2011 became obvious by looking at the release of German articles. Further, the media

¹¹ Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd. is a Chinese multinational technology company.

attention increased in other European countries, like France and Spain, and in Asia. Particularly in India, media attention increased by thematically referring to infrastructure.

A thematical shift of frames about Duisburg after 2014 was examined. While frames regarding ‘company’ in Duisburg decreased, the share of frames on ‘infrastructure and rail connection’ increased. Duisburg was highlighted as a major logistics hub. For companies a strong focus on manufacturing, mostly related to declines and investments, was manifested before 2014. After 2014, a stronger focus on chemistry and a lesser share of company’s declines was pointed out. After 2014, a significant increase of frames, categorised as ‘infrastructure and rail connection’, and routes from China to Duisburg were identified. The connection of Chongqing and Duisburg was the route mostly referred to. The connection’s importance was stressed since it is the first connection and a role model for BRI. Positive effects, like the settlement of companies and advantages over other transportation modes, were stressed. Negatively, a trade imbalance between China and Duisburg was emphasised. After 2014, Duisburg’s framing towards logistics increases as connectivity and openness were stressed by referring to Duisburg’s hub function, based on the transportation infrastructure and trade with the East. Further, a decrease of BRI promoting was highlighted by referring to President XI’s visit to Duisburg and Duisburg’s distribution. By referring to the category of ‘culture’, an influence of BRI was indicated on the basis of an art exhibition and reuses of former industrial industries. Interestingly, the category of ‘cooperation’ was only assigned after 2014, referring to Duisburg’s cooperation for digitalisation with Huawei, delegation visit of Duisburg’s mayor and cooperation for promoting.

7. Descriptive Empirical Findings of the Interviews

The following descriptive empirical findings are based on seven qualitative interviews (app. B), conducted according to the same interview guide (app. A). The analysis focuses thematically on the main topics of the interview, which are based on the sub-questions.

7.1 Reasons for the Route to ‘end’ in Duisburg and Duisburg’s Role for BRI

The interviewees agreed upon duisport being the major reason for Duisburg being the ‘end’ of BRI since “duisport is a very, very strong, very proactive business actor, who grabbed the opportunity very, very quickly and then also became proactive with investments.”¹² Taube highlighted duisport as a very strong player, not only in transportation but also warehousing. The high share of containers dispatched and value-added activities in Duisburg are based on the efficiency of the port and its hub function. Simons outlined that “before this initiative was announced, the port had already had a test train, running between China and Europe, thus Duisburg”¹³, hence “the port has of course recognised its opportunity and has of course pushed

Quotes translated from German to English. Original quotes (Interview-Label):

¹² „Duisport ist ein sehr, sehr starke, sehr proaktive unternehmerische Akteur, der die Gelegenheit sehr, sehr schnell am Schopf gepackt hat und dann eben auch proaktiv unternehmerisch aktiv geworden ist.“ (I2)

¹³ „bevor diese Initiative angekündigt worden ist, hat der Hafen schon mal testweise einen Zug zwischen China und Europa, also Duisburg, verkehren lassen.“ (I7)

this forward.”¹⁴ Kranki highlighted the long-term vision of the port, when taking the opportunity. Petry added “the port also has a standing”, [...] so that as long as the residents are not disturbed, [...] the city will give the go-ahead.”¹⁵ Treppte, Taube, Pflug, Simons and Stolle agreed on the port playing an active role in attracting BRI and related businesses, while the city played a more passive role. Taube outlined that the city’s focus was “rather on logistics than on the China card”¹⁶. Duisburg supported duisport by providing regulations and infrastructural support, while duisport “put itself on the China map early on.”¹⁷ Besides the passive circumstance of terminal capacity, Treppte stressed duisport’s activeness in attracting additional businesses, being open for business and having less doubts than other players. Passively stated was the capacity in terminals to handle the additional business. Besides duisport, the University of Duisburg-Essen attracting a lot of Chinese students and professors, was pointed out as a reason for the route to ‘end’ in Duisburg by Taube, Stolle and Treppte.

Further, Duisburg’s strategic location and connectedness were stressed as major reasons for BRI-‘ending’ in Duisburg by the interviewees. Treppte explained “NRW is the federal state with most inhabitants, which means a big market for products without further transport.”¹⁸ Simons stated due to “the central location in Europe [...], goods can easily be transported further by inland waterway or rail [...] [and] distributed in Europe.”¹⁹ Pflug highlighted Duisburg’s “excellent transportation infrastructure”²⁰ by referring to “the largest inland port [...], excellent motorway network [...] the junction of railway lines [...] and the airport Dusseldorf.”²¹ Stolle added that Duisburg is “very well connected. Even to Dusseldorf Airport”²² and pointed out the city’s gateway function for “North Rhine-Westphalia and also to the neighbouring countries of Holland and Belgium”²³, which offers “interesting and important business deals.”²⁴

Regarding Duisburg’s role for BRI, Treppte, Taube, Stolle and Pflug refer to Duisburg’s hub and distribution function. Stolle emphasised “Duisburg has been an important hub between water, rail and road for a very, very long time.”²⁵ Stolle stressed “Duisburg plays a crucial role and should continue to play.”²⁶ Pflug highlighted Duisburg’s importance for the initiative as “Xi Jinping also explained in detail [...] that Duisburg is their end point in Europe, their end

¹⁴ „hat das Thema aufgenommen und ja, bis zum heutigen Punkt dann ausgebaut.“ (I7)

¹⁵ „Der Hafen natürlich auch ein Standing“. [...] Solange die Anwohner nicht gestört werden [...], da winkt die Stadt das eigentlich ganz gut durch.“ (I4)

¹⁶ „Logistikdienstleister in den Vordergrund [...] als die China Karte“ (I2)

¹⁷ „frühzeitig auf die sich China Karte gesetzt hat“ (I2)

¹⁸ (I1)

¹⁹ „die zentrale Lage in Europa [...], die Güter sehr gut weiter per Binnenschiff oder per Schiene transportiert werden können. [...] [und] in Europa verteilt werden können“ (I6)

²⁰ „hervorragende Verkehrsinfrastruktur“ (I6)

²¹ „den größten Binnenhafen Europas. [...] hervorragendes Autobahnnetz, [...] Knotenpunkt der Eisenbahnlinien, [...] Flughafen Düsseldorf“ (I6)

²² „gut miteinander verbunden“ [...] Auch zum Düsseldorfer Flughafen.“ (I5)

²³ „Nordrhein-Westphalen und auch in die angrenzenden Länder Holland, Belgien“ (I5)

²⁴ „interessante und wichtige Geschäfte.“ (I5)

²⁵ „Duisburg [ist] schon sehr, sehr lange ein bedeutender Knotenpunkt [ist] zwischen Wasser, Schiene und Straße.“ (I5)

²⁶ „Duisburg eine entscheidende Rolle spielt und auch weiterspielen sollte.“ (I5)

point of the Silk Road”²⁷ and “the function of [...] a gate to Western Europe due to its excellent transport connections.”²⁸

7.2 The Role of the Logistics Sector for Duisburg and the City’s Image

All interviewees agreed that logistics had always played an important role for Duisburg’s image. Kranki emphasised the tradition of the logistics sector and the port’s special role for the city. Since the decline of coal and steel, “the logistics sector is the leading and only [...] success story [that] has been produced over the last ten years.”²⁹ Pflug agreed that the port “has always played an important role for the city”³⁰, although the port’s function changed from mainly “bulk goods”³¹ “to a trimodal container port, but due to the Chinese this has of course taken an enormous upswing”³², nowadays. However, Taube stated Duisburg’s logistic sector was not well-known. Petry outlined that “duisport has a very great importance for Duisburg. Only in terms of jobs, only in terms of economic growth”³³ and logistics is “very crucial [...], the city lives from logistics.”³⁴ Stolle emphasised logistics as a “very important factor for the city and the port.”³⁵ Simons added “especially in the logistics sector, it is of course an important attraction.”³⁶ Pflug agreed by stating “the Silk Road also attracts important connections.”³⁷ Pflug stated “more and more logistics has been added over the years, especially freight forwarding companies that have established themselves in Duisburg.”³⁸ Simons agreed with Pflug and Kranki by stating that “the port has developed into a logistics hub even before the New Silk Road.”³⁹

Treppte and Simons stated that in the beginning of the 2000s, with the development of the logport project, “Duisburg was already heavily focused on logistics” as “one important pillar for economic growth.”⁴⁰ Simons explained the “various port locations where even large companies from the logistics sector have settled and which [...] control their activities throughout Europe”⁴¹ are the main reason why “various, many large companies that have settled here in the last decades and even after the Silk Road has been expanded [...] and that is already

²⁷ „Xi Jinping hat auch ausführlich [...] erklärt, Duisburg sei Ihr Endpunkt in Europa, Ihr Endpunkt der Seidenstraße“ (I6)

²⁸ „hervorragenden Verkehrsverbindungen auch die Funktion [...] eines Tores nach Westeuropa“ (I6)

²⁹ „ist der Logistik Sektor schon der, der bestimmende und [...] einzige der Erfolgsmeldung produziert über die letzten zehn Jahre“ (I3)

³⁰ „hat für die Stadt immer eine wichtige Rolle gespielt“ (I6)

³¹ „Schuttgüter“ (I6)

³² „zu einem Trimodalen Containerhafen, aber durch die Chinesen hat das natürlich einen gewaltigen Aufschwung genommen“ (I6)

³³ „Duisport hat halt für Duisburg eine Wahnsinns Bedeutung [...]. Allein was Arbeitsplätze, allein was Wirtschaftskraft“ (I4)

³⁴ „sehr entscheidendes [...], die Stadt lebt von der Logistik.“ (I4)

³⁵ „ganz wichtiger Faktor für die Stadt und der Hafen“ (I5)

³⁶ „gerade im Logistikbereich ist das natürlich ein wichtiger Anziehungspunkt“ (I7)

³⁷ „zieht die Seidenstraße auch wichtige Verbindungen an“ (I6)

³⁸ „im Laufe der Jahre immer mehr Logistik hinzu, also vor allen Dingen auch Speditionen, die sich in Duisburg niedergelassen“ (I6)

³⁹ „der Hafen hat sich auch schon vor der Neuen Seidenstraße als Logistkdrehscheibe entwickelt.“ (I7)

⁴⁰ II

⁴¹ „verschiedenen Hafen Standorte, wo sich auch große Unternehmen angesiedelt haben aus dem Logistikbereich und die [...] europaweit ihre Aktivitäten steuern.“ (I7)

a great attraction”⁴². Treppte highlighted business offerings as more relevant to attract players than BRI. Taube stressed that the expansion of logistics was “born out necessity.”⁴³ Due to the decline of steel, something new was needed and risk had to be taken. However, Kranki stated that the logistics sector grew independently of BRI and referred to other developments, such as the reusing of the old Krupp steel plant for logistics purposes. Petry concluded “the only thing that really booms and really attracts people in Duisburg is the logistics sector, and that’s why it’s such a shame when the potential is simply not being used to transfer it to the city”⁴⁴ and criticised the limited “understanding for logistics.”⁴⁵

Kranki, Taube and Petry highlighted the significance of the logistics sector, particularly the port for Duisburg’s image and for attracting companies and investors. Petry agreed by stating logistics is “a huge fund here, and there's nothing else there.”⁴⁶ Besides, Taube and Pflug stressed the public sectors involvement in duisport’s operations as well as Duisport’s involvement in places along the silk route, other than China. Petry talked about logistics and Duisburg’s image being “very strongly connected, also too disadvantageous”⁴⁷, since “the port could be seen [as] much more [...] strongly and could be integrated [...] more strongly into the city marketing and could be included in improving the image of the city”⁴⁸. Since “the city has nothing else [...], logistics has to reinvent itself, logistics has to develop further, and the city has to give the whole thing space.”⁴⁹

According to Pflug, after former doubts about being a port city, “today, it is clear to everyone that Duisburg is a port city and that Duisburg is actually the largest logistics centre in the hinterland.”⁵⁰ Petry and Stolle emphasised the controversy of the logistics sector. Petry highlighted “on the one hand, almost 50,000 jobs depend on the port and the logistics sector, which is ten percent of the population”⁵¹ and the great significance since “duisport has been creating workers where nothing really happened for the last 20 years”⁵². Pflug added that out of more than 6,000 employees at the Logport, the “Chinese now account [to] [...] eight to ten percent.”⁵³ Although residents focus more on “traffic and the traffic noise or truck movements that are caused by it”⁵⁴ than job creation. Thus, logistics is “very controversial, and the press is

42 „verschiedene, viele große Unternehmen, die sich in den letzten Jahrzehnten und auch noch nachdem die Seidenstraße [...] ausgebaut worden ist, da sich angesiedelt haben und das ist ja schon ein großer Anziehungspunkt.“ (I7)

43 „aus der Not geboren“ (I2)

44 „Das Einzige, was in Duisburg wirklich floriert und richtig richtig groß anzieht, ist der Logistiksektor und deswegen ist es so schade, wenn das Potenzial einfach nicht genutzt wird, um es auch auf die Stadt zu übertragen.“ (I4)

45 „Verständnis für Logistik“ (I4)

46 „einen riesen Fund liegen, und ansonsten ist auch nichts da.“ (I4)

47 „Auch das hängt sehr stark zusammen, auch zu nachteilig.“ (I4)

48 „Der Hafen könnte [...] viel stärker gesehen werden und viel stärker auch ins Stadtmarketing eingebunden werden, in Imageverbesserung der Stadt mit eingenommen werden“ (I4)

49 „die Stadt hat sonst nichts [...], Logistik muss sich neu erfinden, Logistik muss sich weiterentwickeln, und die Stadt muss dem Ganzen den Raum geben.“ (I4)

50 „Heute ist jedem klar, dass Duisburg eine Hafenstadt ist und auch das Duisburg eigentlich das größte s Logistikzentrum im Innenland ist.“ (I6)

51 „Auf der einen Seite sind fast 50.000 Arbeitsplätze vom Hafen und vom Logistiksektor abhängig, was zehn Prozent der Bevölkerung sind.“ (I4)

52 „duisport hat in den letzten 20 Jahren immer wieder Arbeitskräfte entstehen lassen, wo eigentlich nichts war.“ (I4)

53 „der Anteil der Chinesen [...] liegt vielleicht bei acht bis zehn Prozent.“ (I6)

54 „Verkehr und aufkommenden Verkehrslärm oder LKW Bewegung, die dadurch entstehen.“ (I4)

actually very badly presented. It is actually a great pity.”⁵⁵ “The logistics sector is simply a huge mainstay and Duisburg does not have many mainstays.”⁵⁶ According to Pflug and Stolle, logistics is an “important aspect for setting up business here”⁵⁷, but one has to “make sure that you don't just have large halls and areas and things available here for shipping other goods. In other words, that does not create a lot of added value here in the city.”⁵⁸ The city has to avoid the “mistake of focusing on logistics alone, but you have to make sure that you get a good, good mix.”⁵⁹ Moreover, Kranki highlighted that the further growth of logistics is restricted by space limitations and the low number of jobs per space.

7.3 Duisburg's Self-Image

Pflug stressed “Duisburg sees itself as a big logistics city”⁶⁰, strengthened by BRI, and he pointed out that Duisburg's mayor called Duisburg the “Chinese city [...] [based on] the most activities or the dynamic activities in relation to China”⁶¹.

Regarding Duisburg's self-image, Kranki, Taube and Petry emphasised challenges. According to Taube, the city has a realistic self-image, which is negatively characterised by high unemployment, societal segmentation and fragmentation. According to Kranki, Duisburg sees itself as an “emerging big city, with temporary problems.”⁶² Petry described Duisburg's image as “very difficult”⁶³, although “the city sees itself as very, very outstanding and very far ahead.”⁶⁴ Stolle states that “city sees itself quite differently or actually has no fixed image.”⁶⁵ She highlighted the problem of defining the self-image due to regional overlaps because saying Duisburg is the “city in the Ruhr area, [...] city on the Rhine [...] port city”⁶⁶ is not fully applicable. “At least [...] [Duisburg is] a city with water.”⁶⁷

7.4 Development of Duisburg's Image

Duisburg, “like all cities in the Ruhr area, is of course considered a city in structural change, [...] which tries of a different image”⁶⁸, according to Pflug. The city was “characterised by heavy industry, coal [...], steel, plant construction, chemistry. That is the old image [...] [of]

⁵⁵ „sehr, sehr, sehr kontrovers, auch in der Presse sehr schlimm eigentlich dargestellt. Sehr schade eigentlich.“ (I4)

⁵⁶ „der Logistiksektor ist halt einfach ein riesen Standbein und viele Standbeine hat Duisburg nicht.“ (I4)

⁵⁷ „wichtiger, wichtiger Aspekt, um hier Geschäfte anzusiedeln“ (I5)

⁵⁸ „Man muss natürlich auch gucken, dass man hier nicht nur große Hallen und Flächen und Dinge zur Verfügung stellt, um andere Sachen zu schleusen. Sprich, dass man keine hohe Wertschöpfung hier in der Stadt bewirkt.“ (I5)

⁵⁹ „Fehler machen, alles nur auf Logistik, sondern man muss gucken, dass man eine gute, gute Mischung hinbekommt.“ (I5)

⁶⁰ „Duisburg sieht sich als große Logistikstadt“ (I6)

⁶¹ „die Chinastadt [...] die meisten Aktivitäten oder die dynamischen Aktivitäten im Verhältnis zu China.“ (I6)

⁶² „aufstrebende Großstadt, mit temporären Problemen“ (I3)

⁶³ „sehr schwer.“ (I4)

⁶⁴ „sieht die Stadt ganz, ganz herausragend und ganz weit vorne.“ (I4)

⁶⁵ „die Stadt sieht sich recht unterschiedlich oder hat eigentlich kein festes Bild“ (I5)

⁶⁶ „Ruhrgebietsstadt, [...] Rheinstadt, [...] Hafenstadt“ (I5)

⁶⁷ „zumindest eine Stadt mit Wasser“ (I5)

⁶⁸ „gilt natürlich Duisburg wie alle Ruhrgebietsstädte als Stadt im Strukturwandel [...] [damit] versucht man natürlich auch etwas anderes Image zu geben.“ (I6)

the whole Ruhr Area”⁶⁹ Taube explained that Duisburg’s image suffered from the decline of steel industry and the Love Parade disaster as major events in Duisburg’s image development. Although investment initiatives were put into place, the Love Parade disaster diminished Duisburg’s image. Stolle and Petry agreed on Duisburg being stuck in the process of image development. Stolle explained that “Duisburg still has the problem of being stuck in this [...] negative Schimanski image and montane.”⁷⁰ The city “not yet managed to be perceived as a modern service location.”⁷¹ Petry stated “the general excuse is always the Love Parade, [...] afterwards Duisburg was Duisburg. Duisburg had such a rise, then the Love Parade happened, and then the city was over. It's still this lived image that we have here.”⁷² He points out structural challenges, like “almost no city centre [is] left, [and] the inner harbour is slowly dying away.”⁷³ Furthermore, he stressed Duisburg’s challenge of negative press, especially through the Love Parade disaster. Besides, the bad press on China does not allow advertisements and creates a difficult setting to generate a positive image of BRI right now.

Pflug saw “Duisburg has considerably improved its image [...] in the economic sector”⁷⁴ and “the Silk Road has of course given Duisburg a new image.”⁷⁵ Kranki distinguished between the image inside and outside of Germany, since foreigners do not know about the image of Duisburg. They relate Duisburg with the good image of Germany. Stolle went further by explaining that Duisburg is positively and well-known in China as “the heart of Europe.”⁷⁶ In Germany, Duisburg’s image is devastating, since people keep an old and negative picture in mind. Customers are positively surprised when they come to Duisburg. According to Petry, locational problems are affecting Duisburg’s image, such as vacant office buildings. Pflug pointed out that “Duisburg has the image of a port city.”⁷⁷ Pflug and Simons highlighted that “Duisburg is perceived as a major logistics location. The port is simply the largest inland port in Europe, and it is certainly a defining feature”⁷⁸ as Simons stated. Kranki, Taube, Simons and Treppte emphasised the positively increased attention of Duisburg due to BRI as reasons for the changed image. BRI gives Duisburg positive attention within Germany, although the positive impact of BRI on Duisburg’s image is limited to the logistics sector, according to Kranki. Due to the media attention of BRI, Taube sees the chance for Duisburg “to build up a positive image from scratch.”⁷⁹

Simons did not identify much influence on the “cityscape [...] because the port already existed before.”⁸⁰ In contrary, Stolle pointed out that the cityscape changed. “Where there used to be

⁶⁹ „Wir waren „geprägt durch Schwerindustrie [...] durch Kohle, [...] Stahl, Anlagenbau, Chemie. Das ist das alte Image. [...] [für] das gesamte Ruhrgebiet.“ (I6)

⁷⁰ „Duisburg hat ja immer noch das Problem, verhaftet zu sein in dieser, ich nenne es jetzt mal, negatives Schimanski-Image und Montan“ (I5)

⁷¹ „noch gar nicht geschafft [...] als moderner Dienstleistungsstandort wahrgenommen zu werden.“ (I5)

⁷² „Die General Ausrede ist immer die Love Parade, [...] danach war Duisburg Duisburg. Duisburg hatte so einen Aufstieg, dann kamen die Love Parade, und dann war die Stadt zu Ende. Das ist immer noch dieses gelebte Imagebild, was wir hier haben.“ (I4)

⁷³ „so gut wie keine Innenstadt mehr, die ist tot. Der Innenhafen stirbt langsam weg.“ (I4)

⁷⁴ „Duisburg hat erheblich an Image dazugewonnen im Wissenschaftsbereich.“ (I6)

⁷⁵ „die Seidenstraße hat natürlich der Stadt Duisburg ein neues Image gegeben“ (I6)

⁷⁶ „Nabel Europas“ (I5)

⁷⁷ „Duisburg das Image einer Hafenstadt hat.“ (I6)

⁷⁸ „Duisburg als großer Logistikstandort wahrgenommen wird. Da ist der Hafen einfach als größter Binnenhafen Europas sicherlich prägend.“ (I7)

⁷⁹ „die Chance, ein positives Image eigentlich von null aufzubauen.“ (I2)

⁸⁰ „Stadtbild, [...] weil der Hafen ja vorher auch schon vorhanden war“ (I7)

coal mountains, ore mountains [...], now there are either huge areas where containers are stored, or large halls have been built.”⁸¹ Visually, the city changes due to “gigantic plants that are being demolished are slowly changing, and the port image is also changing.”⁸² However, she stressed “that's still [...] [far from being] in people's minds. [...] We are far from being at the end of our journey.”⁸³ Besides, “new business areas are being developed, new ideas are being developed for the city, which urgently need this as a steel and mining location that has to struggle with many closures.”⁸⁴ “So it has already meant changes for the city’s image and also for the logistics in the city.”⁸⁵

7.5 BRI’s Influence on Duisburg’s Image

Pflug emphasised BRI as it “plays a very important role, especially in the economy. All very positive.”⁸⁶ Treppte stressed the international recognition of Duisburg as an important hub for China-Europe trains due to BRI, leading to the location becoming more interesting to different players, like international investors and companies. Simons stressed that in the media, “Duisburg is frequently mentioned as the end point of this new Silk Road and it is reported that significantly more trains arrive there. Therefore, this has certainly been image-building.”⁸⁷ Pflug explained the “economic upswing”⁸⁸ by Chinese companies, Chinese Hotels and investments in Duisburg. Petry pointed out that the city profits from the increase of “start-ups with an international background and also strongly based in China”⁸⁹, shaping Duisburg.

Since an image can only be changed by attention, Kranki sees huge economic potential for Duisburg to be well-known in China. Pflug stressed “Duisburg now has the reputation of the Silk Road city.”⁹⁰ Taube stated that BRI’s growth is “the only dynamic for Duisburg.”⁹¹ Treppte and Taube gave some examples for positive influences of BRI, such as businesses, FDI, growth potential, business contacts, jobs and partnership. Although Taube points out that international recognition can only be an impulse. However, Pflug emphasised Duisburg “getting the character of an [...] international city.”⁹² Kranki stressed Duisburg’s role for BRI as “objectively much smaller than symbolically.”⁹³ Noteworthy, Taube and Kranki evaluated the strong neighbouring cities as more influential than BRI for Duisburg’s image. Stolle agreed by referring to BRI as “one facet in the whole logistics assessment” [...] [but it is not] so distinctive

⁸¹ „Da wo früher Kohleberge, Erzberge [...] waren, da sind jetzt entweder riesen Flächen entstanden, wo Container abgestellt werden, oder da sind große Hallen entstanden.“ (I5)

⁸² „riesen Werke, die abgerissen werden, langsam sich verändern und auch das Hafengebilde sich verändert.“ (I5)

⁸³ „das ist noch lange, lange [...] nicht in den Köpfen. [...] Da sind wir noch lange nicht am Ende.“ (I5)

⁸⁴ „neue Geschäftsfelder entwickelt, neue Ideen entwickelt für die Stadt, die das ja auch dringend braucht als Stahlstandort und Montanstandort, der mit vielen Schließungen zu kämpfen hat.“ (I5)

⁸⁵ „Also es hat schon Veränderungen für das Stadtbild und auch für die Logistik in der Stadt, bedeutet.“ (I5)

⁸⁶ „spielt [...] eine ganz erhebliche Rolle. Vor allen Dingen in der Wirtschaft. Alles sehr positiv.“ (I6)

⁸⁷ „Wenn man Duisburg als Endpunkt dieser neuen Seidenstraße natürlich häufig genannt wird und berichtet wird, dass deutlich mehr Züge da ankommen. Von daher ist das sicherlich Imagebildend gewesen.“ (I7)

⁸⁸ „Aufschwung [...] in wirtschaftlicher Hinsicht“ (I6)

⁸⁹ „Startups mit internationalem Background und auch stark im chinesischen Raum angesiedelt sind.“ (I4)

⁹⁰ „[...] hat Duisburg den Ruf der Seidenstraßenstadt“ (I6)

⁹¹ „die einzige verbliebene Dynamik, die die Stadt aufweisen kann“ (I2)

⁹² „Auch den Charakter [...] internationalen Stadt.“ (I6)

⁹³ „objektiv, ist die Rolle sicher sehr viel kleiner als symbolisch“ (I3)

that the whole city is seen in connection [to] silk roads and China.”⁹⁴ Petry stressed “press right now is the new terminal, what’s being built in Duisburg or what is strongly influenced or founded by Cosco and is involved as a shareholder. Of course, large corporations play a part in the cityscape or are heavily involved”⁹⁵. Pflug approved Duisburg’s political and economic independence, mentioning that the “port is fully owned by the public authorities”⁹⁶ and that there is “no company here in Duisburg that is significantly indebted to the Chinese.”⁹⁷

7.6 Ties between Duisburg and China

The interviewees agree that the ties between China and Duisburg developed before BRI. Treppte, Stolle and Pflug mentioned the city partnership of Duisburg and Wuhan. Pflug stressed that the “partnership agreement with Wuhan [was signed] in 1982”⁹⁸, which makes it “the oldest partnership with a Chinese city”⁹⁹, much older than BRI. However, these ties were intensified by delegation visits as Treppte, Simons, Pflug, Taube and Kranki stated, especially after 2014. Treppte stressed that the ties between Duisport and China were mostly economical. Stolle highlighted “very long, very close relationships [that were] also economically”¹⁰⁰, which “developed quite well.”¹⁰¹ Pflug and Simons emphasised that BRI “pushed the economic performance further. Because an additional trading point has simply been added, for the port.”¹⁰² Taube and Pflug added the Huawei partnership for digitalisation as reasons for the intensified relations.

Especially Taube emphasised the importance of culture to build up a new image. Taube, Kranki, Pflug and Treppte, referred to the *Konfuzius Institut*, which impacts cultural exchange between China and Duisburg. Kranki, Pflug, Simons and Stolle highlighted the close connection to China based on Duisburg’s Chinese community and the high number of Chinese students. While Stolle indicated “this feeling of being [...] appropriated by Asians. For many citizens, this triggers fear, but you have to see it this way. It is not entirely trivial and must be viewed and accompanied in a very balanced way.”¹⁰³ Pflug mentioned the negative public impression of the “ghost image. Duisburg is a city dominated or influenced by Chinese”¹⁰⁴, which he calls “complete nonsense.”¹⁰⁵ Besides, more Chinese companies and owners become members in the

⁹⁴ „eine Facette in der gesamten Logistikkbetrachtung. Dass es jetzt so prägend ist, dass die ganze Stadt mit Seidenstraßen und China in Verbindung betrachtet wird, nein“ (I5)

⁹⁵ „gerade durch die Presse geht, ist das neue Terminal, was in Duisburg gebaut wird oder was stark vom Cosco mit beeinflusst bzw. begründet wird und als Teilhaber da mit drin ist. Da spielen natürlich Großkonzerne ins Stadtbild mit ein oder greifen stark mit ein.“ (I4)

⁹⁶ „der Hafen ist voll und ganz im Besitz der öffentlichen Hand“ (I6)

⁹⁷ „in Duisburg nach meiner Kenntnis kein Unternehmen, welches etwa nennenswert verschuldet wäre gegenüber den Chinesen.“ (I6)

⁹⁸ „mit Wuhan diesen Partnerschaftsvertrag unterschrieben im Jahre 1982.“ (I6)

⁹⁹ „die älteste Partnerschaft mit einer chinesischen Stadt überhaupt“ (I6)

¹⁰⁰ „sehr lange, sehr enge Beziehungen, auch wirtschaftlich.“ (I5)

¹⁰¹ „ganz gut entwickelt.“ (I5)

¹⁰² „die Wirtschaftsleistung weiter vorangetrieben hat. Da einfach ein zusätzlich Handelspunkt hinzugekommen ist, für den Hafen.“ (I7)

¹⁰³ „dieses Gefühl von [...] Asiaten vereinnahmt zu werden. Bei vielen Bürgern löst das Ängste aus, das muss man aber auch mal so sehen. Das ist nicht ganz trivial, das muss man sehr ausgewogen betrachten und begleiten.“ (I5)

¹⁰⁴ „Gespensterbild, Duisburg sei eine von Chinesen beherrscht oder beeinflusst“ (I6)

¹⁰⁵ „vollkommener Blödsinn“ (I6)

Rotary Club, who “contribute their input to the cultural areas”¹⁰⁶, which are “strongly about sponsoring”¹⁰⁷. Additionally, Petry and Kranki emphasised Chinese festivals in Duisburg, which are “strongly supported [and sponsored] by Chinese companies”¹⁰⁸. Petry stressed that the implications are focused on the internationalisation and digitalisation of Duisburg. According to Kranki, cultural exchange remains limited to the individual level.

7.7 Duisburg’s Strategy to improve the City’s Image

Petry stressed “from a marketing point of view, this city has a lot of potential. But it simply doesn't use it at all.”¹⁰⁹ Kranki, Petry and Stolle referred to Duisburg’s image improvement as a long-term process. Kranki and Stolle explained “the city is very open[-minded]”¹¹⁰ and the process started with the understanding that “image is important for a city in order to attract investors and citizens.”¹¹¹ Duisburg’s administration is aware of the city’s challenges and the necessity for improvement. The process has intensified “since the beginning of this year, the city has had a budget for image and marketing, and not only for tourism”¹¹². Image is seen as “extremely important for the city to generate income [...] [and] to make sure that we get the right industry to Duisburg to generate tax revenue [...] [and] to get people to settle here [...], so that we can provide all these social services.”¹¹³ Petry outlined that Duisburg ran “two campaigns in the last years. The current campaign, which is strongly aimed at making Duisburg more attractive again. [...] So, this “Duisburg ist echt” [Duisburg is real] is not worth much and that is unfortunately the only thing they do.”¹¹⁴ Interestingly, “logistics is hardly ever mentioned”¹¹⁵ in this campaign.

Kranki explained the strategy of producing new pictures of Duisburg. Since one “can only change images in one’s head, if one touches them again”¹¹⁶, editors and multipliers need to come to Duisburg. Positive news about Duisburg should be distributed by changing and turning the perspective of negative news. Furthermore, Kranki stressed that despite BRI, cluster promotion is essential for Duisburg’s strategy to attract investors and companies, like the hydrogen industry. Since the region has a lot of students, it is fundamental to keep these students as potential founders. An umbrella campaign, mostly PR measures, is used to improve the

¹⁰⁶ „die [in] kulturellen Bereiche ihren Input mittragen.“ (I4)

¹⁰⁷ „stark über sponsoring.“ (I4)

¹⁰⁸ „stark von chinesischen Konzernen, die hier angesiedelt sind, unterstützt werden, gesponsert werden“ (I4)

¹⁰⁹ „aus Marketingsicht, hat diese Stadt unheimlich viel Potenzial. Nutzt sie aber einfach überhaupt nicht.“ (I4)

¹¹⁰ „die Stadt ist offen“ (I5)

¹¹¹ „Image für eine Stadt wichtig ist, um entsprechende Investoren und Bürger in diese Stadt zu holen“ (I5)

¹¹² „seit Anfang dieses Jahrs erst, hat die Stadt überhaupt ein Budget dafür, dass sie sich mit Image und Marketing beschäftigt, und zwar nicht nur mit Tourismus“ (I5)

¹¹³ „extrem wichtig, dass die Stadt Einnahmen generiert [...] [und] dafür sorgen, dass die entsprechende Industrie nach Duisburg zu bekommen, um Steuereinnahmen zu generieren. Und [...] Personen hier ansiedeln [...], damit eben auch diese ganzen sozialen Dinge [bedient werden kann]“ (I5)

¹¹⁴ „zwei Kampagnen in den letzten Jahren. Eben die aktuelle Kampagne, die stark darauf abzielt, Duisburg wieder attraktiver zu machen. [...] Also dieses ‚Duisburg ist echt‘ bringt nicht viel und das ist leider das einzige, was die machen.“ (I4)

¹¹⁵ „da kommt Logistik so gut wie gar nicht vor.“ (I4)

¹¹⁶ „Bilder im Kopf kann man ja auch nur ändern [...] wenn sie überhaupt noch einmal angefasst werden“ (I3)

image locally first. Pflug pointed out that Duisburg is “very oriented towards the tertiary sector, trade, banking, insurance, services, especially tourism”¹¹⁷ and the “great cultural offer.”¹¹⁸

7.8 Duisburg using BRI for Development Strategies

Simons sees “potential that can be enhanced”¹¹⁹ “to establish new trade relations with the connected countries along this Silk Road.”¹²⁰ According to Simons, BRI is “a very important point for the development of the port, because it is simply [...] an additional opportunity to use a trade route where you come across the gap between air freight and sea freight.”¹²¹ Duisburg tries to “gain Chinese interest [...] [and] make [our] connection to East Asia clear [...], [by] trying to promote it and also to become active as investors within the city”¹²², according to Pflug. BRI’s influence should not be overestimated, according to Treppte. He stressed BRI as one of many external factors influencing the development of Duisburg, since China-Europe trains make only 130,000 TEU of 4 million TEU handled at Duisport. Pflug stressed the need “to achieve a kind of skill-over effect from the port.”¹²³ Hence, the “activities of the Chinese and other nations, which mainly take place in the field of logistics, also have an effect on the city through investments.”¹²⁴

7.9 Company’s and Investor’s reaction to Duisburg being part of BRI

Companies and investors react “positive[ly]”¹²⁵ to Duisburg being part of BRI as stated by Petry and Treppte. “The bigger, the more internationally operating [the company], the more [BRI] is recognised.”¹²⁶ Petry, Kranki and Treppte highlighted the effect of Chinese companies shifting their headquarters to Duisburg. Petry added that two net consultancy firms only advice Chinese companies to settle in Duisburg. Kranki and Petry stressed this effect as being “much stronger in logistics.”¹²⁷ Pflug stressed BRI as an “interesting point for the decision whether to go to Duisburg or to develop business from Duisburg.”¹²⁸ Simons emphasised that “the offer is

¹¹⁷ „sehr orientiert auf den tertiären Sektor, Handel, Bank, Versicherung, Dienstleistungen, vor allem eben auch Tourismus.“ (I6)

¹¹⁸ „tolles kulturelles Angebot“ (I6)

¹¹⁹ „Potenziale, die [...] noch gehoben werden können“ (I7)

¹²⁰ „neue Handelsbeziehungen entstehen mit den angeschlossenen Ländern an dieser Seidenstraße“ (I7)

¹²¹ „ein sehr wichtiger Punkt, weil das einfach [...] eine zusätzliche Möglichkeit ist, eine Handelsroute zu nutzen, wo man in die Lücke zwischen Luftfracht und Seefracht stößt.“ (I7)

¹²² „Chinesen dafür zu interessieren, [...] unsere Verbindung bis nach Ostasien deutlich zu machen [...]. Das machen wir und wir versuchen halt eben dafür zu werben auch als Investoren innerhalb der Stadt tätig zu werden.“ (I6)

¹²³ „aus dem Hafen heraus so etwas wie einen Skill-over-Effekt zu erreichen.“ (I6)

¹²⁴ „Aktivitäten der Chinesen und auch anderen Nationen, die vor allen Dingen im Logistikbereich abspielen, auch sich in die Stadt hinein Auswirkungen durch Investitionen“ (I6)

¹²⁵ „Positiv“ (I4)

¹²⁶ „Je größer, je international operierender, desto mehr wird erkannt.“ (I4)

¹²⁷ „in der Logistik viel, viel, viel stärker“ (I4)

¹²⁸ „interessanten Punkt an mit für die Entscheidung, ob sie nach Duisburg gehen oder von Duisburg aus Geschäften entwickeln wollen.“ (I6)

accepted. The trade is [...] there”¹²⁹, despite “an imbalance, [...] so, the trains that return to China are still significantly emptier than those that arrive here.”¹³⁰

7.10 Duisburg using BRI for its Branding to attract Companies and Investors

Kranki argued that the PR of BRI is run more by the port than the city. Simons highlighted that “the port [...] naturally uses its image as a logistics hub, as a trading centre with China - the end point of the Silk Road - to be able to offer appropriate services, which is of course very interesting for new companies settling there or existing companies.”¹³¹ Petry assented: “Silk Road is now a topic that we have been taking into account in our marketing activities for the past five or six years and have focused on it very strongly. And that has already changed very, very much.”¹³² While Stolle explained, no concrete marketing or branding strategies for BRI from the city, yet. Petry stressed: “the city has already understood the meaning”¹³³ of BRI and “the significance is already very strong, but it is not even used in perception, i.e. in marketing.”¹³⁴ Thus, “to introduce this into city marketing, to carry it [...] self-confidently, would have a huge potential. And you could really run a nice campaign there. A self-confident campaign.”¹³⁵ While Kranki added BRIs importance for the internationalisation of Duisburg. Petry argued “the potential is there and it's huge. But the city simply does not make enough use of it.”¹³⁶ He sees higher potential in branding the city regarding logistics, which has “much more benefit.”¹³⁷

Petry criticised that in “metropolitan marketing, for example, the port is [...] much more important and much more strongly positioned than in the city itself”¹³⁸, while Duisburg “likes to concentrate on [...] topics such as leisure activities, also citizen-oriented topics, but not on the employers or the individual economic fields.”¹³⁹ He highlighted the necessity to “emphasise it much, much, much more strongly and also give much, much more self-confidence because of the Silk Road”¹⁴⁰. Petry argued that “the city has such a self-conception that it has to

¹²⁹ „das Angebot wird ja angenommen. Der Handel ist [...] da.“ (I7)

¹³⁰ „ein Ungleichgewicht ist, [...] die Züge, die wieder nach China zurückfahren, sind doch noch deutlich leerer als die, die hier ankommen.“ (I7)

¹³¹ „Der Hafen [...] nutzt natürlich sein Image als Logistikkdrehschreiber, als Handeln mit China also Endpunkt der Seidenstraße um da natürlich auch entsprechende Dienstleistungen anbieten zu können, was durchaus natürlich für neue Unternehmen, die sich ansiedeln oder bestehende Unternehmen.“ (I7)

¹³² „Seidenstraße ist jetzt ein Thema, was wir seit fünf, sechs Jahren sehr stark mit ins Marketing reinnehmen und sehr stark fokussieren. Und das hat sich schon sehr, sehr stark gewandelt.“ (I4)

¹³³ „Die Stadt hat die Bedeutung schon verstanden“ (I4)

¹³⁴ „Man hat die Bedeutung schon sehr stark, aber in der Wahrnehmung, also im Marketing wirds gar nicht benutzt.“ (I4)

¹³⁵ Das ins Stadtmarketing, tragen, das wirklich selbstbewusst tragen. [...] Und da könnte man wirklich eine schöne Kampagne fahren. Eine selbstbewusste Kampagne“ (I4)

¹³⁶ „das Potenzial ist da und ist riesig. Aber wird seitens der Stadt einfach viel zu wenig genutzt.“ (I4)

¹³⁷ „riesen Benefit“ (I4)

¹³⁸ „Im [...] Metropolmarketing ist der Hafen zum Beispiel [...] vielbedeutender und viel stärker aufgehängt als in der Stadt an sich.“ (I4)

¹³⁹ „Die Stadt konzentriert sich gerne auf, auf Themen wie Freizeitangebote sehr stark, auch bürgernahe Themen, aber nicht auf die Arbeitgeber oder auf die einzelnen Wirtschaftsfelder.“ (I4)

¹⁴⁰ „viel stärker herausstellen und auch viel, viel mehr Selbstbewusstsein aufgrund der Seidenstraße mittlerweile geben.“ (I4)

apologize for it.”¹⁴¹, especially during the times of the Covid-19 pandemic. Petry and Pflug highlighted the need for Duisburg to position itself, such as the neighbouring cities, which found their own specialisations.

Stolle anticipated that China and BRI “will certainly play a role in further considerations [...], but always in the overall context, logistics, the port, so it will always play a role in this context.”¹⁴² Thus, “the topic of logistics, connections, water, road, airport [...] plays a huge role”¹⁴³, but “that is one facet of many.”¹⁴⁴ According to Petry, Duisburg has to “start to attract investors, cultural events, even sporting events. [...] All the areas [in which] you can get a huge, huge benefit through partnerships [...] [and] companies, are simply not being used at all. That's why [...] from the classic areas of company settlements, jobs and so on, to all other fields of culture and leisure activities, everything could benefit if the city were to gain the corresponding acceptance.”¹⁴⁵

7.11 BRI's Importance and Potential for Duisburg's Image

Kranki, Taube, Stolle, Simons and Petry agreed upon BRI's importance for Duisburg's image improvement. Kranki identified BRI as “a great opportunity for Duisburg”¹⁴⁶ due to the “economic power to develop from it.”¹⁴⁷ BRI is very important for the image improvement, across all policy areas, economic development and social restructuring. Petry called the potential of BRI “outstanding, hence, it's years of unused potential, which has really accumulated a lot, what you can do in the city.”¹⁴⁸ “Duisburg [would] really be able to position itself [...], we are really the start and end here, as we communicate this at duisport, the new Silk Road.”¹⁴⁹ Simons and Pflug stressed: “Duisburg will of course continue to be perceived as a logistics hub, and that they will certainly continue to expand.”¹⁵⁰ Stolle argued that BRI “is a very, very important strategic aspect, because it is the connection to the East, including all the stations, located along the Silk Road. That should not be underestimated. And it will certainly be an essential component in future marketing and in future attempts to change the image.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴¹ „die Stadt [hat] so ein Selbstverständnis [...] sich dafür entschuldigen zu müssen“ (I4)

¹⁴² „werden mit Sicherheit in weiteren Überlegungen eine Rolle spielen [...], aber immer den Gesamtkontext, Logistik, Hafen, also immer in diesem Kontext wird das eine Rolle spielen.“ (I5)

¹⁴³ „das Thema Logistik, Anbindung, Wasser, Straße, Flughafen [...] spielt schon eine riesen Rolle.“ (I5)

¹⁴⁴ „Das ist eine Facette an vielen.“ (I5)

¹⁴⁵ „anfangen [...], Investoren, kulturelle Ereignisse daraus zu ziehen, auch Sportereignisse. [...] Alles Bereiche, wo man über Partnerschaften, [...] [und] Firmen wirklich einen riesen, riesen Benefit rausziehen könnte, wird bislang einfach so gut wie gar nicht genutzt. Deswegen [...] von den klassischen Bereichen Firmenansiedlungen, Arbeitsplätze und so weiter, in alle anderen Bereiche Kultur, Freizeitaktivitäten, könnte alles davon profitieren, wenn die Stadt mal eine entsprechende Akzeptanz dann eben auch fahren würde.“ (I4)

¹⁴⁶ „eine große Chance für Duisburg“ (I3)

¹⁴⁷ „da auch neue [...] Wirtschaftskraft daraus zu entwickeln“ (I3)

¹⁴⁸ „Herausragend, also das, es ist jahrelang ungenutztes Potenzial, was sich echt stark angesammelt hat, was man in der Stadt“ (I4)

¹⁴⁹ „Duisburg sich mal wirklich [...] positionieren, [...] Wir sind hier wirklich das Start und Ende, sowie wir das bei duisport ja kommunizieren, der neuen Seidenstraße.“ (I4)

¹⁵⁰ „die Wirtschaftsleistung weiter vorangetrieben hat. Da einfach ein zusätzlich Handlungspunkt hinzugekommen ist, für den Hafen.“ (I7)

¹⁵¹ „[ist]ein ganz, ganz wichtiger strategischer Aspekt ist, weil es die Verbindung in den Osten ist, auch die ganzen Stationen, die eben auf dieser Seidenstraße liegen. Das sollte man nicht unterschätzen. Und es wird sicherlich ein wesentlicher Bestandteil im künftigen Marketing und im künftigen Versuch, das Image zu verändern.“ (I5)

Simons highlighted BRI is an “important point for the port with which they can advertise and with which they can of course increase their presence.”¹⁵²

Petry sees the risk of dependence on China but estimates “90 per cent more on the opportunities’ side, the importance and economic growth, than in this mini risk of dependence.”¹⁵³ Pflug emphasised Duisburg’s “equal footing with the Chinese, [...] [and] not to become dependent on the Chinese.”¹⁵⁴ Although Taube explained that already one third of BRI’s potential impact is generated and BRI can only give impulses. Thus, BRI’s future growth depends on the “catalytic effect”¹⁵⁵, as stressed by Taube and Pflug, including indirect related business models and new production sites along the route. The business models have to work without subsidies, which Taube stressed since it serves as a niche.

Although Petry and Taube mentioned the challenges of using BRI for Duisburg’s image improvement. Petry said: “to say we are really the end point of the New Silk Road here, or the starting point, as Mr. Staake likes to say, is of course in the minds of the end users, first of all with distance and with fear.”¹⁵⁶ Hence, firstly, Duisburg has to “create potential, [and] only then to draw out misunderstanding, in order to [understand] the significance.”¹⁵⁷ Taube and Pflug outlined the dependence of China’s press and image. Due to the bad press of China, Duisburg is cautious and uses BRI less for its marketing. Before, BRI had been used to show competences, according to Taube. People change their picture once they come to Duisburg. He outlined further that the potential of BRI and its influence on Duisburg’s image depends on economic investments, which Duisburg cannot spend. Since the competition is very high, presumably competitors with more economic resources will take over. Pflug stressed that the potential “depend[s] very much on how global relations between America and China.”¹⁵⁸

7.12 Main Findings of the Interview Analysis

The interviewees agreed upon Duisport’s and Duisburg’s strategic location and connectedness as the major reasons for BRI to ‘end’ in Duisburg. Duisport was stressed as a strong and proactive player, who attracted business and BRI, in contrary to the city playing a more passive role. In reference to the transportation infrastructure, especially, the largest inland port was stressed. Duisburg’s role for BRI is based on the hub function.

All interviewees agreed that logistics had always played an important role for Duisburg’s image as the “leading and only success story [that] has been produced over the last ten years” (I3),

¹⁵² „für den Hafen ist das ein wichtiger Punkt, mit dem sie auch werben und mit dem sie natürlich Ihre Präsenz erhöhen können.“ (I7)

¹⁵³ „90 Prozent eher auf der Chancenseite, der Bedeutung und Wirtschaftswachstum, als in diesem mini Risiko der Abhängigkeit.“ (I4)

¹⁵⁴ „auf gleicher Augenhöhe mit den Chinesen zu machen, also in keiner Weise abhängig zu werden von den Chinesen“ (I6)

¹⁵⁵ „Katalysatorwirkung“ (I6)

¹⁵⁶ „zu sagen Wir sind hier wirklich der Endpunkt der neuen Seidenstraße oder auch der Startpunkt sowie es Herr Staake gerne macht, ist natürlich in den Köpfen der Endverbraucher erst einmal wirklich mit Distanz und mit Angst zu sehen.“ (I4)

¹⁵⁷ „Potenzial schöpfen, um dann eben auch Unverständnis rauszuziehen, um auch die Bedeutung [zu verstehen]“ (I4)

¹⁵⁸ „sehr stark davon abhängen, wie sich die globalen Beziehungen zwischen Amerika und China entwickeln“ (I6)

referring to job creation and economic growth. Increased traffic was negatively mentioned as an effect of logistics has a negative impact on the image. The significance of the logistics sector for Duisburg's image and for attracting companies and investors is based on the strong association of Duisburg as a port city and logistics hub, as manifested in the interviews.

Duisburg's self-image was illustrated as economically and socially challenging, but realistic. It was highlighted that Duisburg has no defined image. Duisburg's image development is strongly influenced by structural changes. As a city of the Ruhr region, Duisburg is still associated with the old image of steel and coal, as indicated in the interviews. Further, negative press, especially about the Love Parade disaster, affected Duisburg's image negatively. A distinction was made between the image inside and outside of Germany as foreigners have a more positive impression. Especially in China, Duisburg is positively and well-known as "the heart of Europe". (I5) Positive attention on Duisburg in relation to BRI was pointed out as an opportunity to build up a new image. The interviews indicated an economical image improvement as Duisburg's internal and external image is increasingly associated with the port, logistics and China.

BRI's importance for Duisburg's image was positively stressed, especially economically, and limited to the logistics sector. Duisburg's international recognition as an important hub for China-Europe was highlighted as a reason for the location Duisburg becoming more interesting to investors and companies. BRI's positive influence on Duisburg is evident by businesses, companies, FDI, jobs and partnerships, shaping Duisburg. BRI's growth was stated as "the only dynamic for Duisburg" (I2), although BRI's value is symbolically higher than objectively. Despite BRI, strong neighbouring cities were regarded as influential for Duisburg's image.

The interviewees agreed upon, ties between China and Duisburg existed before BRI, but after 2014 ties intensified by delegation visits and especially economically with Duisport. Companies and investors reactions to Duisburg being involved in BRI was outlined as positive, especially for big and internationally operating companies, proofed by Chinese companies shifting to Duisburg. The interviews stressed BRI's potential for Duisburg's development strategies and especially for the port due to trade relations, although it was argued that the influence should not be overestimated. Regarding economic growth, the need for a spill-over effect was stressed as most activities are focused on logistics. BRI was used to proof competence and can only give impulses in the future. Although Duisburg's political and economic independence was highlighted, dependencies on China, on global relations and investments were identified. Besides the economic effects, emphasis was laid on the Huawei partnership for digitalisation as an example for the intensified relations. The importance of culture was emphasised, related to the *Konfuzius Institut*, impacting cultural exchange between China and Duisburg, Chinese festivals, the Chinese community and students in Duisburg. The University of Duisburg-Essen was referred to as a reason for BRI to 'end' in Duisburg and as an effect of BRI. Conversely, a fear of being dominated by Asians was argued negatively.

Regarding Duisburg's image, marketing potential was identified. Duisburg is only at the beginning of the process since Duisburg first has to define and position itself. Regarding BRI and the connection to China, it was stressed to communicate BRI as a competitive strength. Duisburg's image optimisation started with the awareness of the city's challenges and the necessity for marketing.

It was argued that the PR of BRI is mainly run by the port. In contrary to the city, the port uses the image of the logistics hubs and the connection to China for marketing. It was emphasised that the connection between logistics and Duisburg's image needs to be stronger stressed in marketing, although a mix of industries was emphasised. Additionally, it was mentioned that the city would not use the marketing potential of BRI and the need for a self-confident marketing campaign emphasising BRI was stated. The logistics sector and BRI were identified as important factors for future marketing activities, but only in a context. BRI was identified as "a great opportunity for Duisburg" (I3) and important for Duisburg's image, especially economically. Although, the bad press on China was mentioned as a challenge of BRI promotion since China's bad image would reflect back on Duisburg. Despite BRI, cluster promotion and keeping students in the region were emphasised as strategies to attract companies and investors. Since images can only be changed by attention, the strategy of producing new pictures of Duisburg by bringing editors to Duisburg was outlined.

8. Empirical Analysis: BRI's Influence on Duisburg's Image

In the following empirical analysis, the descriptive results from the policy document, media content analysis and the analysis of the interviews are triangulated. These results are related to the theoretical concepts regarding the main topics of Duisburg's image development, marketing and branding strategies, visions related to BRI and Duisburg, Duisburg's role for BRI, the logistics sector, BRI's influence on Duisburg's image and branding strategies related to BRI.

8.1 Duisburg's Image Development

In line with Ward's (1998) approach of the lost source of wealth, the interviews indicated that Duisburg's image development is strongly associated with structural changes since the old image of steel and coal remains in minds. The influence of structural changes was illustrated by the thematic shift of frames about Duisburg after 2014, as identified in the media analysis. Since frames - in this case the medial representation (Reese et al., 2001) - influence public opinion (Knight, 1999), the thematic shift of frames about Duisburg after 2014, indicated the development and indirectly BRI's influence on Duisburg's image. As the share of articles about companies decreased, especially on manufacturing and in reference to decline, the share of articles about infrastructure and rail connections increased. This illustrates the decline of Duisburg's manufacturing and rise of the logistics sector.

Furthermore, the media analysis showed the negative medial influence due to the Love Parade. In the interviews, the Love Parade was highlighted as a major event affecting Duisburg's image development. The Love Parade was stressed as a reason, but also as an excuse for the negative image of Duisburg. The frames about the Love Parade can be referred to as 'conflict frames' (Burscher et al., 2014), negatively increasing seriousness and influencing people's perception.

Duisburg's identity was illustrated by a realistic self-image of Duisburg and the awareness of economic and social challenges, based on the policy analysis and the analysis of the interviews. However, Duisburg's self-image is strongly and increasingly associated with logistics and China. The interviews indicated Duisburg being positively framed as a logistics city, Chinese city, port city and the 'endpoint' of BRI. Due to Duisburg's and Duisport's strong connection,

an interdependence was identified, especially image-wise. Besides the strong association, it was criticised that Duisburg has no defined image. In reference to Shirvani Dastgerdi and De Luca (2019), these results stressed that Duisburg is in the beginning of the process of strengthening the city's reputation. The possibility of building up a new image from scratch was regarded positively in the interviews.

8.2 Duisburg's Marketing and Branding Strategies

In accordance with the outlined development of branding, Duisburg's marketing strategies were focused on tourism and oriented towards the tertiary sector, i.e. trade, banking, insurances, services and culture, as indicated by the interviewees. The high competition between cities (Johansson & Kociatkiewicz, 2011) relates to Duisburg and the logistics sector, as indicated by the interviews. Due to the competition, the need for city branding was outlined (Medway & Warnaby, 2008; Zenker, 2009) to distinguish itself (Cleveland et al., 2015).

The importance of a strong identity to attract investment and business (Askegaard & Kjeldgaard, 2007; Kotler & Gertner, 2002) was referred to in the interviews. In comparison to Kavaratzis's (2004) illustration of the city branding process and the dimensions of city branding (Kavaratzis, 2009), it is notable that Duisburg is at the beginning of the process – at the stage of defining and positioning itself. The interviews indicated that the process started with the city's awareness about the importance of the image and only this year a budget for city marketing was established. As outlined earlier, Duisburg's self-image is hardly defined. Thus, the identity of the city has to be defined and Duisburg needs to position itself in relation to BRI and China for promotion.

In line with Akotia (2005) and Kortler (1999), emphasising communication for image improvement, Duisburg highlights the importance of a common communication strategy to promote locational advantages and attract investment. According to Duisburg's masterplan, different campaigns and initiatives on local and regional scales were put into place to improve the city image. Duisburg focuses on two main target groups, potential investors and potential new residents, which is in accordance with Foroudi et al. (2014), stressing the focus on specific target groups. Further, the focus on attracting new target groups, can be referred to as Hospers' (2010) approach of cold marketing. He emphasised the warm city marketing, which is partly addressed by the strategy of keeping students from the region as potential founders, as resulted from the interviews.

In accordance with Kavaratzis' (2004) and Foroudi et al.'s (2014) emphasis on creating positive images in the target audience's mind, the interviewees indicated the importance of turning negative news into positive news by changing the perspective and of producing new images of Duisburg, which is why editors and multipliers have to come to Duisburg. In reference to city rankings, this involves changing the focus of indicators, as from return on real estate -whereby Duisburg stands out negatively - to affordable housing, where Duisburg scores positively.

8.3 Visions related to BRI and Duisburg

The visions related to BRI and Duisburg were examined on the basis of the policy document analysis, including the main stakeholders, Duisburg, Duisport and China. These visions are strongly characterised as strategic and spatial, since BRI's development can be seen as a transformative, socio-spatial process. It became evident that the creation of visions, frames and actions, shape the place (Albrechts, 2013). A strategic vision, created through strategic planning, are used to promote common assets and a created future in an economic, social, political context with regard to power structures (Albrechts, 2004). These dimensions refer to BRI's economic, political, geostrategic effects on a global and local level (Li & Taube, 2019).

Framing and labels were determined as essential elements for envisioning BRI. As stated by Healey (2007), strategic spatial planning is often linked to renaming and framing strategies. This corresponds to the cases of BRI and Duisburg, since there were already trains in those areas before BRI was initiated in 2014. In line with a focus on framing, the policy data suggested that Duisburg, Duisport and especially China stress promotion rather than establishment. The emphasis on framing and promotion in the strategic planning can be beneficial, especially for China, to eliminate doubts about the initiative. Dühr (2007) and Zonneveld (2000) highlight the importance of labels for visions and to reduce complexity of planning issues, frames are needed in form of storylines for a metaphor (Van Duinen, 2013). This linguistic strategy can be referred to as the positive connotation of the historical name, silk route (Stiftung Asienhaus, 2016), which was used to promote BRI.

Healey (2009) stated that temporal and spatial opportunities determine the success of a spatial vision, which is fully applicable to Duisburg. While the capacity was given in Duisburg, Duisport pro-actively attracted business and took the opportunity very early, similarly to China. In contrary to other players, Duisport had less doubts and initiated a long-term vision early in the process. The city of Duisburg had a more passive position regarding the China-business and supported the port by regulations. Strategic spatial planning typically involves driving forces, such as political ambitions (Albrechts et al., 2003), which can be related mostly to the Chinese vision on a global scale. Whereas Duisburg's political and economic independence was highlighted in the interviews. Based on the public sector's involvement and shareholding in Duisport's operations, power structures are balanced in accordance to Albrechts (2004).

Geographical scopes and stakeholders are fundamental for visions. In reference to Faludi (2000), it can be concluded that spatial development occurs on different geographical scales. The results of the policy analysis came to a similar conclusion of emphasising different geographical scopes. While China's vision stressed more the geographical scope due to the embedding of the global initiative, Duisburg and Duisport focus more locally. However, particular locations are emphasised more by Duisburg and Duisport, which stresses their concreteness of envisioning. As argued by Tasci and Kozak (2006), the value of a place can be increased by diverse stakeholders. However, according to Dimitriou (2007), the increased number of stakeholders lead to a more complex process of strategic spatial planning. The complexity of the planning process was proven by illustrating the different scopes and priorities of the main stakeholders' visions. Another major difference of the stakeholders' vision is based on the notion of connectivity as the policy analysis indicated. The notion of connectivity is stressed as the centre of BRI's vision as the basis for international development and stability to

align and coordinate the development strategies by the Chinese. This is in line with the global trend of increasing the economic importance of connectivity (Neal, 2011; Ma & Timberlake, 2013). Interestingly, Duisport stresses partnership most, especially the strategic partnership with China. While China refers more to cooperation, which might result from the number of involved stakeholders, indicating that mutuality must be higher on a global than a local scope.

Furthermore, strategic spatial planning addresses social, economic and spatial challenges (Albrechts, 2015), although stakeholders' priorities differ, as resulted from the policy analysis. As outlined, China focuses on promotion and stresses their vision and values rather than economic effects. However, China focuses on the economic dimension due to the main purpose of BRI, the manifestation in the increase of global trade. Duisburg focuses on visioning development, emphasising values and priorities and stressing economic effects, mainly indirectly. Whereas Duisport has the strongest economic scope and the importance of management due to the huge extents, similarly to China. Noteworthy, Duisport was stressed as the major reason for BRI-‘ending’ in Duisburg, according to the interviewees.

8.4 Duisburg’s Role for BRI

The interviews demonstrated BRI’s importance for Duisburg’s development, especially for the port, referring to the potential of new trade relations and BRI serving a niche. The efficiency in terms of transportation time and costs, and therefore economic advantages, especially for particular products, were positively highlighted in the media analysis. However, it has to be mentioned that connectivity leads to economic interdependence (World Bank, 2019) and strategic spatial planning underlays distorting factors (Albrechts, 2004). Being embedded in a global initiative weakens Duisburg’s independence and increases its susceptibility to external factors. These were outlined in terms of Duisburg’s challenges regarding BRI’s development and accordingly BRI’s influence on Duisburg’s image in the interviews and the media analysis. Duisburg emphasises acting independently and being equal partners with China, but the interviewees outlined BRI’s influence on Duisburg depends on China.

Economically, the challenge of trade imbalance between China and Duisburg was confirmed by the media analysis and the interviews. As outlined in chapter 4.4, the subsidies were reduced, and interviewees indicated a possible termination. Similar to the economic influence, Duisburg’s image is influenced by China’s image. Hence, bad press on China complicates using BRI for Duisburg’s marketing. The global relationship between the USA and China and the dependency on economic investments were outlined as additional challenges. The high dependence on investments might be disadvantageous for Duisburg in comparison to competitors with more economical resources. BRI’s further growth and therefore its influence on Duisburg’s image depends on the ‘catalytic effect’. Thus, Duisburg aims for a skill-over effect from the port to other sectors, especially in terms of investments.

In line with the globally increasing importance of the logistics and transportation industry (Dicken, 2015; Coe, 2014) and connectivity (Scholte, 2005), Duisburg’s connectivity was highlighted regarding the city’s importance for BRI. Duisburg’s transportation infrastructure and strategic location are the basis for Duisburg’s connectivity and its gateway function. Duisburg’s transportation infrastructure was stressed in the interviews by referring to the largest

inland port in Europe, the motorway network, railway lines and the airport of Dusseldorf. Additionally, the policy analysis leads to the conclusion that Duisport emphasised infrastructure most, as it is the major logistics source of the city. The interviewees related Duisburg's connectivity to NRW and neighbouring countries. The big market for products without further transportation increases the strength of connectivity based on costs of access (Derudder et al., 2018). Thus, Duisburg can be characterised as a gateway city from a logistics perspective based on Scholvin et al.'s (2019) features of gateway cities and regarding the characteristics of the city-hinterland relation and their connections to global flows (Lee & Ducruet, 2009; Notteboom, 2007; Ordóñez et al., 2010). In line with Burghardt (1971) arguing that being an 'entrance-point' gives control over economic processes, Duisburg's gateway function was highlighted in the media and in the interviews. Resultingly, Duisburg's role for BRI is regarded as an important hub for water, rail and road, and as a distribution centre for Europe, which is in line with Li et. al (2016). Duisburg's crucial role for BRI was stressed by Xi Jinping framing Duisburg as the Chinese 'endpoint'.

8.5 Duisburg's Logistics Sector

After the decline of coal and steel, logistics was simply Duisburg's only success story. Although logistics had always played a role in Duisburg's development and image, Duisburg's logistics sector was not well-known, as demonstrated by the interviews. The port's special role for Duisburg's image and for attracting companies and investors was stressed by the interviews in line with the economic importance of the port for employment as outlined in chapter 4.5. In reference to the change of the port's function from mainly bulk goods to a trimodal container port, the port gained further attention through BRI, which was confirmed by the interviews, media and the policy analysis, concluding that the port is seen as the main driver of superregional growth. However, the relation between the logistics sector and Duisburg's image is regarded as strong, but disadvantageous since logistics is mostly presented negatively in the media. Indeed, the analysis of the interviews stressed the controversy of the logistics sector. Logistics is considered positively in terms of job creation. Conversely, residents focus on negative effects, like traffic and noises.

Furthermore, the importance of Duisburg's logistics sector was stressed in correspondence with the centrality of cities based on transportation networks (Burghouwt, 2005), especially regarding economic development (Clark et al., 2018). In line with this, the interviewees stressed the city's needs to give space to logistics. Nevertheless, the restricted growth of the logistics sector was emphasised due to space limitations and the low number of jobs in proportion to space. BRI's growth was affirmed as the only dynamic in Duisburg, but logistics is only one element of Duisburg's image. Although the interviews suggested that China brought 'enormous upswing' for Duisburg's logistics, other developments such as the reusing of plants, increased the growth of logistics for BRI. Sassen (2010) stated that increasing global connectivity results in increasing importance of cities. Duisburg is embedded in the global initiative of BRI and can be seen as a localisation of a global process. In line with this, Duisburg's strategic location and rail connections, especially to China, were increasingly stressed in the media since 2014. The statement about the connection Duisburg-Chongqing being in the focus of attention (Arbuthnot Latham & Co., 2019) was approved, as this connection was mostly referred to in the media.

This route was highlighted as a pioneer and role model for the initiative, which stresses its relevance on different geographical scales - within Germany and internationally.

8.6 BRI influencing Duisburg's Image

BRI's influence on Duisburg's image is manifested in two dimensions: (1) increased attention on Duisburg and (2) increased connectivity of Duisburg going along with intensified ties between Duisburg and China.

International attention

The significance of international attention for improving the image and for gaining interest of different players, was pointed out in the interviews as well as the increased international attention on Duisburg, particularly in relation to China. In accordance, the media analysis leads to the conclusion that the diversity of countries writing about China and Duisburg increased, which implies increased global popularity of Duisburg. BRI is the main reason for the increased international attention on Duisburg, since the peaks of media attention are coherent with the milestones of BRI's development and with the increased promotion of BRI by referring to President Xi's visit to Duisburg, as concluded. In accordance to Bornhorst et al. (2010) as well as Garcia et al. (2012) illustrating differences between stakeholders regarding their image perceptions, Duisburg's image differs especially geographically, as demonstrated by the interviews and the media analysis. In Germany, Duisburg is perceived more negatively than outside of Germany and Duisburg's image improvement is limited to the logistics sector. Especially in China, Duisburg is well and positively known as the 'heart of Europe', according to the interviews. This perception is in line with the increased medial interest on Duisburg to promote BRI. The media analysis showed a strong association of China and Duisburg and a positive impact of BRI on Duisburg's image.

Connection to China

As connectivity is multidimensional and includes politics, trade, and culture (NDRC, 2015), the influence of increased connectivity on a city is also multidimensional. Since Duisburg's increased connectivity is related to BRI, the development is accompanied by the connection between China and Duisburg. This was approved by the analysis of the interviews, concluding that having the largest inland port in Europe and the intensified ties with China shape Duisburg, which gives the reputation of the Silk Road city a more international image. First of all, the interviewees agreed upon the fact that ties between China and Duisburg existed before BRI by referring to the old city partnership between Duisburg and Wuhan. However, in reference to Gaspers (2016), a strong intensification of ties between China and Duisburg was identified. Interestingly, the category of cooperation in the media analysis has only been assigned after 2014, which stressed BRI's influence on cooperation. Especially, the importance of digitalisation, promoting cooperation and the Huawei cooperation stood out in the media analysis and approved by the interviews.

Duisburg's image development can be regarded in accordance to Shirvani Dastgerdi and De Luca's (2019) four dimensions of a city image: economic performance, policy making, cultural

activities and media advertising. Especially economically and since 2014, the connection to China and BRI's influence on Duisburg's image was indicated as positive by the interviews. Despite the delegation visits, the connection with China is more economically than politically forced. The interviewees highlighted BRI as economically very important, referring to Duisburg's 'economic upswing' in terms of new businesses, FDI, growth, jobs, start-ups, hotels and partnerships. The reaction of companies and investors to Duisburg being involved in BRI was described as positive with the evidence of the high number of companies, especially big and internationally operating, settling in Duisburg and the trade happening. The positive economic effects of BRI for Duisburg (4.4) were proven by the media analysis, indicating an increased number of Chinese companies operating in Duisburg and the creation of jobs. The increase in Chinese companies can be explained by Scholvin et al. (2019), who stressed the alignment of major companies to gateway cities. Beyond, it can be regarded as an economic frame influencing the city's image (Neuman et al., 1992). Further, these results approve Straub et. al.'s (2008) statement on connectivity increasing interactions and business. Resultingly, BRI is an important locational factor for attracting companies and investors, but mostly in logistics. The before outlined visions are evident for the China-Duisburg relation regarding policy making.

The cultural influence of BRI on Duisburg's image goes along with the intensified cultural ties between China and Duisburg. The media analysis and the analysis of the interviews lead to the conclusion that the logistics industry and China affect Duisburg's culture. The significant cultural influence was stressed by referring to the *Konfuzius Institut*, the Chinese community, students, business stakeholders and Chinese festivals, supported and sponsored by Chinese companies. In line with Garcia et al. (2012) stating that an image is influenced by different sources, the interviews demonstrated that cultural exchange not only occurs in public, but also on an individual level. Despite the possible anxiety of people fearing to be dominated by Asians, the personal cultural exchange was connotated positively. Furthermore, the University of Duisburg-Essen, attracting a lot of Chinese students and professors, was stated in the interviews as a possible reason for BRI-'ending' in Duisburg and as another effect of intensified ties between China and Duisburg.

Regarding media advertisements, the interviewees argued Duisburg uses BRI in marketing, but not sufficiently. The need for BRI being concretely, strongly and self-confidentially included in city marketing as BRI was highlighted as important for the internationalisation of the city. Self-confidence is particularly important, since the identification of the stakeholders is a key factor for successful city branding (Dinnie, 2010). Moreover, the interviews indicated a visual influence of the cityscape and the port due to the expansion of the logistics sector, thus, indirectly by BRI. The intensified connections outlined above are obvious proof of the benefits Duisburg derives from increased connectivity (Arbuthnot Latham & Co, 2019).

8.7 Duisburg using BRI for Marketing and Branding

First of all, based on the policy document and interview analysis, the high potential and importance of BRI for Duisburg's image improvement in a long-term process needs to be stressed. The interviewees agreed upon BRI's importance for Duisburg's image improvement across all economic and social development policies. In relation to communicating the

competitive and comparative strength (Piskóti et al., 2002), the interviewees stressed the need to emphasise logistics for city branding more as Duisburg has proven its competences because of BRI. The interviews stressed the significance of Duisburg further by highlighting the logistics hub for marketing and image and emphasise being the ‘start’- and ‘endpoint’ of the route stronger. In line with Duisburg’s need to position itself regarding China, Duisburg needs to promote this connection, similar to China, whose activities promote international cooperation (Xi, 2017). Particularly, the port needs to be more underlined in marketing and the city image, as the port and Duisburg are positioned stronger in metropolitan marketing. As stated by Dühr (2007) and Zonnefeld (2000), a symbolic representation is needed, which stresses the need for Duisburg to position and represent itself further. Anyway, the interviewees made it clear that logistics, BRI and China are elements that play a role in Duisburg’s marketing, but only in a certain context. Indeed, the analysis of the interviews clearly concluded BRI being only one external factor influencing the city’s and port’s development. Additionally, Duisburg’s image is affected by strong neighbouring cities. Johansson and Kociatkiewicz (2011) stressed the use of a symbolic economy to present attractions and gain more attention. In accordance, the interviews and the media analysis indicated that BRI is symbolically more relevant than objectively to give Duisburg a new image.

Additionally, the policy analysis showed that Duisburg’s vision of image optimisation goes together with an internationalisation of the city, which further stresses BRI’s influence on Duisburg’s image in terms of internationalisation. The concept of cluster branding as a form of place branding, emphasising communication and behaviour (Andersson et al., 2012), can be referred to the marketing of Duisburg’s logistics hub. As Burmann et al. (2009) pointed out, cluster branding is about the unique value proposition and communicative ties between internal and external actors. In line, the interviews emphasised the trading centre with China and the ‘endpoint’ of BRI, the port mostly doing the PR of BRI and using the image of the logistics hub. According to Blinda (2007), Duisburg’s logistics sector can be regarded as successfully branded, since the internal image of Duisburg’s logistics cluster confirms the external perceived image. However, it was argued that Duisburg needs to create added value and avoid focusing only on logistics. The interviews approached to get a good mix of industries. The chemistry sector has been identified as another supportive cluster for Duisburg, emphasised for future branding strategies.

9. Conclusion and Reflection

In the following, the overall research objective, BRI’s influence on Duisburg’s image and related marketing strategies to attract companies and investors, is concluded on the basis of the sub-questions. This research is reflected regarding its limitations, relevance and contribution. On the basis of the conclusion, recommendations are stated for further research and practical actions.

9.1 Conclusion

Connectivity is increasingly important in modern economy (World Bank, 2019) and BRI majorly impacts modernity economically, politically and culturally (Nobis, 2017). Based on

these major trends, this research aimed to identify to what extent the global infrastructure project BRI affects the local level, Duisburg regarding the city's image in relation to the geopolitical setting.

1. Sub-question: Duisburg's Image Development

In relation to the first sub-question on Duisburg's image development, it is essential to note that negative frames of the past still influence the image today, so that old pictures remain in mind. Hence, it can be concluded that Duisburg's image is associated with old negative frames, such as structural changes and the Love Parade disaster. Nonetheless, the results stressed that Duisburg's image is increasingly strongly associated with the port, logistics and China. Especially frames of Duisburg being the 'endpoint' were demonstrated as a positive influence of BRI on Duisburg's image. Regarding Duisburg's identity, the results demonstrated a realistic self-image of Duisburg due to economic and social challenges. Interestingly, Duisburg has no defined image. Hence, Duisburg has to position and represent itself to take advantage of the opportunity to build a new image. These results strengthened the confidence in the hypothesis of structural changes and negative events sustainably having negative influence on Duisburg, in reference to the Love Parade. Although, an increased association with BRI and logistics was determined. Noteworthy, it was outstanding that positioning and defining the image is Duisburg's current challenge.

2. Sub-question: Marketing and Branding Strategies

In relation to the second sub-question, concerning Duisburg's marketing strategies, the results demonstrated the main goal of attracting companies and investors and focus on the tertiary sector. The high competition between cities and logistics hubs implies the necessity for Duisburg to position itself. City identity is an important factor to attract companies and investors. One can conclude, Duisburg has to define itself and make its connection to China clear to promote Duisburg's locational advantages, including BRI. The results stressed the importance of creating positive images by changing the perspective of negative images. The before outlined results support the hypothesis that city marketing aims, above all, to attract companies and investors, which is the reason for Duisburg to focus their marketing strategies on different industries. Generally, and regarding BRI, the need for Duisburg to position and represent itself was strengthened.

3. Sub-question: Duisburg in relation to BRI

The third sub-question of how Duisburg is related to BRI is answered by two sub-sub-questions on visions related to BRI and Duisburg, and Duisburg's role for BRI and its influence on Duisburg's development.

A. Visions of BRI and Duisburg

Regarding the visions related to BRI and Duisburg, the importance of framing and promotion as well as differences of the stakeholders' focuses, and geographical scopes were outlined. It can be concluded that framing shapes places, meaning that frames about BRI affect Duisburg's image. Despite the temporal and spatial opportunities, which were given in Duisburg, Duisport actively attracted business and grabbed the opportunity very early. The differences of the stakeholders' visions imply different focuses on different scales. While China's vision refers to a global scope and stresses connectivity and cooperation most, Duisburg and Duisport have a regional focus and focus on partnership. China does not address economic benefits directly, such as Duisport. However, the main purpose of BRI is increasing global trade, which stresses China's indirect economic focus. Duisburg emphasises indirect economic growth and societal values. BRI is politically influenced by China's vision and locally, by Duisburg's public shareholding. Therefore, it is important to highlight the fact that Duisburg is the localisation of a global process. Thus, the main notion of BRI and effect of global trade, connectivity, affects Duisburg on a local level. Returning to the hypothesis posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that framing visions is a very important factor for strategic planning and that stakeholders' visions differ regarding their focus. As proven for BRI's vision and ongoing development, different focuses and geographical scopes of the stakeholders were identified.

B. Duisburg's Role for BRI and BRI's Importance for Duisburg's Development

Regarding Duisburg's role for BRI and BRI's potential for Duisburg's development, the notion of connectivity is central. Duisburg's strategic location and transportation infrastructure, especially the largest inland port, are the basis for Duisburg's connectivity and distribution function for BRI. The crucial role of Duisport for BRI due to Duisburg's hub function, economic effects and the framing of Duisburg as the Chinese 'endpoint' was supported by the results. On the one hand, trade relations evolve from BRI and increased connectivity, which is economically very important for Duisburg's and particularly the port's development. On the other hand, challenges, resulted from increased connectivity, were identified. It is notable that the relation to China does not only influence BRI's development, but also the influence on Duisburg's image. The global relation between the USA and China and economic investments were stressed as other influencing factors for BRI's development and Duisburg's image. The results showed Duisburg has the main characteristics of a gateway city, limited to the logistics sector. Due to this sectoral limitation, a 'catalytic effect' is needed for economic growth and for improving the image. In accordance with the hypothesis, it can be concluded that BRI is economically very important for Duisburg's development, although challenges regarding dependencies need to be emphasised. Duisburg's strategic location is the reason for Duisburg's connectivity and gateway function. Thus, it does not surprise that Duisburg's role for BRI is manifested in the function of a distribution centre for Europe.

4. Sub-question: BRI's Influence on Duisburg's Image

The fourth sub-question refers to the importance of the logistics sector, BRI's influence on Duisburg's image and Duisburg using BRI for branding and marketing strategies.

A. *The role of Duisburg's Logistics Sector*

Regarding the logistics sector's role for Duisburg's image, an increase of importance and popularity, especially after 2014, was manifested. This implies an association with BRI as one factor for Duisburg's economic growth and image optimisation. In line, the results demonstrated the increased importance of Duisburg's strategic location and rail connection and the port's special role. The results indicated the national and international importance of Duisburg's logistics sector and relevance for BRI by particularly emphasising the route between Chongqing and Duisburg as a pioneer case and role model for BRI. The results lead to the conclusion that the relation between the logistics sector and Duisburg's image is strong, but disadvantageous due to the controversy of logistics and its negative press. The results outlined the need for the city to give space for logistics, although the growth of logistics and its importance is restricted by space limitations and the low number of jobs in proportion to space. In line with the hypothesis, the importance of the logistics sector increased, especially after 2014, while additional emphasis was drawn on the lack of alternative industries. Duisburg gained international attention and relevance thanks to BRI, in correspondence to the hypothesis. Further, the pioneer and role model function of the route between Chongqing and Duisburg has to be stressed regarding the importance of Duisburg's logistics sector as well as to Duisburg's relevance for BRI.

B. *BRI's Influence on Duisburg's Image*

In reference to BRI's influence on Duisburg's image, two outstanding dimensions were identified: (1) increased attention on Duisburg and (2) increased connectivity of Duisburg going along with intensified ties between Duisburg and China. Regarding these two dimensions, BRI's influence on Duisburg's image in terms of connectivity and internationalisation as Duisburg perceives the reputation of the 'Silk Road City' and a more international image was confirmed. Firstly, the increase of international attention, highlighted as essential to improve the image and for gaining interest of different players, is evident for Duisburg's increased global popularity. Based on the coherent development of BRI and the increased attention on Duisburg, the increased diversity of countries writing about Duisburg and the increased promotion of BRI, it can be concluded that BRI is a major reason for Duisburg's increased popularity. However, the geographical differences regarding Duisburg's image perception have to be highlighted. It was outlined that within Germany, Duisburg is perceived more negatively than outside of Germany, and the image improvement is limited to the logistics sector. In China, Duisburg is seen positively and is well-known as the 'heart of Europe'. Finally, a strong association of China and Duisburg, resulting in a positive impact of BRI on Duisburg's image, was implied. Secondly, it was illustrated that the increased connectivity affects Duisburg multidimensionally as the strong intensification of ties between China and Duisburg was identified as a major factor for shaping the city. Despite political delegations, the relation to China is mostly economical. In reference to investments, companies and jobs, it was concluded that the connection to China is regarded as economically positive, although the positive economic effects only relate to the logistics sector. Furthermore, a strong cultural influence was determined by positively referring to the *Konfuzius Institut*, Chinese festivals, Chinese community and students. Regarding media advertisement, the results indicated that Duisburg has to emphasise BRI more concretely and

self-confidentially. In relation to the hypothesis, the anticipation of BRI influencing Duisburg positively due to increased attention, was approved. Noteworthy, geographical differences were identified additionally. Besides, BRI's influence on Duisburg's image in terms of connectivity and internationalisation were confirmed. In conclusion, connectivity and ties between China and Duisburg are strongly linked, especially economically and culturally.

C. Duisburg's use of BRI for Marketing and Branding Strategies

BRI's potential and importance for Duisburg's branding to attract companies and investors is mainly based on BRI's economic relevance for Duisburg. BRI's potential was determined by the emphasis on the communication strength and the use of symbolic economy to gain attraction. The marketing of Duisburg's logistics hub, related to cluster branding, is mostly done by the port, which uses the image of the logistics hub, the trading centre with China and the 'endpoint' of BRI. In contrary to the port, the results strongly indicate that Duisburg needs to focus stronger on logistics and use BRI, and particularly the port, more actively for marketing. However, logistics and BRI are important elements for Duisburg's image and marketing, but only in a contextualised manner. To create added value, a good mix of industries is approached by the interviews. These results confirm the hypothesis about BRI's importance for Duisburg's branding and attracting companies and investors, which is mainly based on BRI's economic relevance for Duisburg. Beyond, the results strongly indicate the need for Duisburg to focus more on logistics and actively use BRI for marketing strategies, but in a contextualised manner.

All in all, this research showed a positive influence of BRI on Duisburg's image as a locational factor in order to attract companies and investors, which is in line with the main hypothesis. First of all, an important differentiation between the actual and the desired image of Duisburg needs to be stressed. As explained before, the actual image of Duisburg is determined by negative frames of the past remaining in mind, which stresses the importance of framing and promotion with different focuses and scopes. The results indicate that BRI's influence on Duisburg's image is based on increased attention and connectivity. Important to note are the geographical differences of Duisburg's image and the sectoral limitation. Since most positive effects are limited to the logistics sector, a 'catalysator effect' is needed. Increased connectivity goes along with intensified ties between Duisburg and China, especially economically and culturally. The results prove an influence of BRI on Duisburg's image based on strengthened connections and associations of Duisburg with China and logistics. Hence, it was confirmed that BRI influences Duisburg's image in terms of connectivity and internationalisation, leading to Duisburg being perceived with a more international image, as it is increasingly known as the 'Silk Road City'. To perceive the desired image of Duisburg, BRI's potential for Duisburg's image improvement was stressed on the basis of economic relevance and increased popularity of Duisburg's logistics sector. Duisburg's identity, position and representation, not only in relation to BRI, was identified as the major challenge of Duisburg's image optimisation. Finally, the main research question of this thesis, 'To what extent does the global initiative BRI influence Duisburg's image on the local level and how does Duisburg influence image-making to attract companies and investors?' is summed up by the conclusion of BRI being an important factor influencing Duisburg's image and marketing, but only in a contextualised manner.

9.2 Reflection

The reflection of this research is based on limitations and conversely, relevance and contribution. As outlined in the methodology, generalisability of this research is limited. While the case study design limits the generalisability of this research, this approach provides in-depth insight into Duisburg's image. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine to what degree the results of Duisburg are applicable to other cities involved in BRI due to the particular setting. Thus, the methodological choices were constrained by the triangulation of different research methods to increase validity and representativeness.

There are several limitations to this methodological approach. For the policy document analysis, reliability is impacted by different kinds of documents and the different publishing dates. Due to this potential limitation, the results were treated cautiously as an element of the visions. To the best of my knowledge, only reliable documents were used including the awareness about potential risks of using an English translation of a Chinese official document. For the media content analysis, objectivity was impacted, since only one person coded the articles. However, the results of the media content analysis are representative based on the sufficient number of articles and reliable due to the accessibility of data. Regarding the limitations of the interviews, it could be argued that there is a subjective influence. However, all interviews were conducted according to the same interview guide, which increased the comparability of the interviews. Due to the number of seven expert interviews with stakeholders from different fields, representativeness was assured. An apparent limitation of the qualitative interviews is that most interviews were conducted and transcribed in German and afterwards translated and paraphrased into English. Thus, objectivity may be limited by an interpretative influence of the translation. However, to counter this, the original German quotations were included as footnotes. Finally, it can be stated that objectivity, reliability, representativeness and transparency were assured based on the limited research resources, including time and scope of this thesis.

Overall, the data contributes to a clearer understanding of the centrality of connectivity, the influence of framing on city marketing and city branding to attract companies and investors. As outlined before, most previous research on branding rather focused on strategy and process and a research gap of marketing effects to attract newcomers (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008; Niedomysl, 2007; Hospers, 2009). Scientifically, this research contributes to the debate with the focus on brand image and the aim of attracting companies and investors. Research on branding mostly emphasises big cities (Andersson, 2015), whereas this thesis applied the branding theories on Duisburg, which is a medium scale city. Most scientific research on branding is tourism-related and research gaps about gateways and connectivity were outlined. As it was highlighted, clusters are increasingly important, but not sufficiently researched on (Mauroner & Zorn, 2017). However, this research focused on connectivity and the logistics sector as a cluster. Furthermore, the concepts of vision and image-making were applied on different scales. Hence, this research focused on the influence of a global initiative on a regional scale, focussing on the city of Duisburg. Thus, this research contributes to the scientific debate about branding, particularly regarding different geographical scopes and the effect of branding. Pain et al. (2016) argued that there is no proof that connectivity and internationalisation

influence performance positively. This research showed that connectivity and internationalisation can positively influence a city's image. Regarding BRI, general research gaps (Shahriar, 2018), particularly on a local level (Nobis, 2017) were emphasised, which this thesis contributes to. Regarding these outlined elements of contribution, this thesis provides valuable insights into the region's and Duisburg's development.

9.3 Recommendations

Recommendations for further research and practical actions are derived based on the outlined results. Based on the scientific relevance and the outlined conclusions, recommendations for further research can be stated. Future studies should take into account how Duisburg's image differs in the perspective of companies, investors, and residents and geographically. To focus more on Duisburg's image within Germany or to attract specifically German companies, only German articles should be sampled and compared to the examined foreign image of Duisburg. Further research is needed to examine to what extent the findings of Duisburg are transferable to other cities affected by image-challenges or involved in BRI or other global initiatives. Further research is needed to determine the reciprocal effect of Duisburg's image on BRI. To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could address the geographical scope of cities in relation to connectivity and logistics more extensively. Further research is needed to determine the relationship of logistics and image in-depth.

Based on these conclusions, Duisburg's practitioners should consider focussing their marketing stronger on logistics and especially on the port. It was indicated that Duisburg has to identify itself to communicate and promote and represent competitive strength. It can be recommended to make the position to China clearer and actively promote Duisburg as an important logistics hub by referring stronger to the 'end- or start point' of BRI. However, it has to be mentioned, that a good mix of industries has to be achieved to promote economic growth and image improvement. Moreover, it was outlined that positive pictures of Duisburg are needed to change the image of the city. Therefore, the strategy of changing the perspective of negative press into positive press and emphasising journalists and multipliers coming to Duisburg is advisable to create positive frames and pictures of Duisburg.

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