

THE BRANDING OF POST-COMMUNIST NATIONS

Edited Volume

School of Communication, University of Denver (Denver)

Deadline: May 20, 2009.

Please send chapter proposals of 500-800 words and a short author bio (or CV) to Nadia Kaneva (nkaneva@du.edu). If accepted, completed chapters (about 8,000 words) will be due by November 1, 2009.

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In the aftermath of the communist system's collapse, Central and Eastern European countries were faced with the need to re-define themselves. This was equally daunting for previously established nation-states and for newly-formed ones emerging after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. New pressures from global political, economic, and cultural forces, combined with the unraveling of internal social structures, exacerbated the identity crises of former communist nations. These countries needed new ways to assert themselves on the global map and new narratives of national unity at home. Furthermore, as they strived to emulate the capitalist West, former communist countries needed to disentangle their national identities from the ideological heritage of communism and recast them in terms of the new mantras of »democracy« and »markets.«

In a wider context, the historical realities of post-communist transitions unfolded alongside processes of globalization and EU enlargement, which were accelerated, at least in part, by the demise of a bi-polar division of the world enforced by the Cold War. One crucial dimension of globalization concerns the proliferation of media technologies, discourses, and institutions that transcend national boundaries. The global media environment emerging after the end of the Cold War allowed information to flow to and from former communist countries in an unprecedented way. At the same time, these countries found themselves exposed to the vagaries of global and commercially-oriented media that traded in commodified symbols and meanings and operated according to a logic quite different from that of state-controlled media.

In this context, nation branding, a set of ideas rooted in Western marketing and management, gained popularity in the post-communist world by promising a quick fix for the identity malaise of »transitional« societies. Since 1989, almost every country in Central and Eastern Europe has engaged in nation branding initiatives of varying scope and sophistication, often creating a chaos of messages. Although, post-communist countries are certainly not the only ones investing in nation branding, the particular socio-historical challenges and conditions they face set them apart and merit closer examination. This is one of the central goals of this volume.

In addition, while a growing body of literature on nation branding has emerged in the past decade, most published studies adopt applied or descriptive approaches and offer little by way of critical analyses. Thus, another goal of this volume is to address this gap by bringing together studies that examine the discourses and practices of nation branding in the post-communist context by drawing on critical theoretical traditions.

From this vantage point, this volume aims to address questions that fall within three main areas, as follows:

- Who are the key actors involved in the spread of nation branding discourses and practices in post-communist Europe and what are their stakes in this process? What local political and cultural conditions enable nation branding to capture the imaginations of post-communist national elites? What is the relationship of nation branding to struggles over power both at national and the extra-national levels?
- What kind of images for post-communist nations and/or regions emerge through, or are obscured by, the particular lens of nation branding? How do the discourses and practices of post-communist nation branding relate to processes of globalization, mediatization, and commodification?
- What may be the cultural, political, and social implications of re-imagining post-communist nations as brands? How may the study of post-communist nation branding inform the broader study and critique of post-communist transitions?

Proposals that address these or related questions are invited. Ideally, chapters should be both empirically grounded and theoretically informed. Proposals should clearly indicate how the work is situated in relation to critical theoretical traditions. Chapters may focus on one or more countries. Various methodological and disciplinary approaches are welcome; interdisciplinary work is particularly encouraged.