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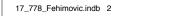
Branding Latin America

Branding Latin America

Strategies, Aims, Resistance

Edited by
Dunja Fehimović and
Rebecca Ogden

Foreword by Melissa Aronczyk

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Acknowledgments

Foreword

Melissa Aronczyk

The studies in this book show how material and symbolic relations across Latin America have conformed to, and in some cases resisted, the precepts of branding. Dunja Fehimović and Rebecca Ogden have put together a compelling set of studies that is timely on many fronts. Their collaborators discuss the cultural and political underpinnings of collective narratives and the varied responses of Latin American residents. They examine the conditions under which domestic and foreign institutions produce media that shape perceptions of national image and reputation, and the attempts of institutions to manifest sources of global capital attraction aligned with these perceptions.

In the background, and central to the complexities faced by both modern Latin American institutions and the researchers here, are the economic and political crises in these regions starting in the 1970s and the 'shock doctrines' that followed. In the last four decades, Latin American governments and their citizens have sought ways to reckon with the market-led reform initiatives imposed upon them. National 'branding'—the use of strategic tools, techniques, and expertise to create and communicate how national values and interests are attuned to footloose global capital—normalized and further embedded political-economic aftershocks. If, here and elsewhere in the world, branding is the language of neoliberalism, it is not surprising that its effects are visible in sharp relief in the Latin American context.

Fehimović and Ogden are concerned with the ways that national identities in Latin America are "deliberately (re)defined according to the principle of competition and strategically (re)oriented towards the market." This concern is reflected in their contributors' chapters, who show how this redefinition takes place, whether historicized via world exhibitions (chapter 1), woven into film and music videos (chapters 2, 5, 7, 8), written into—or out of— tourism guidebooks (chapter 3), contained in the conventions of journalism

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(chapter 6) or implanted into public displays of patriotism or values (chapters 4 and 9). As the editors explain, these are not only accounts of the cultural life of neoliberal nostrums; they are also windows onto the contemporary categories of identity, citizenship, and governance, and as such lead us onto wider analytical terrain.

The contributors to this volume are sensitive to the pitfalls of applying the vernacular and practice of branding as a proxy for the pillars of the modern social imaginary. Nevertheless, growing professional and personal tendencies to characterize a wide range of activities as branding—that is, the ways that self-conceptions, discursive practices, and models of sociability can all be labeled branding, deserve scrutiny in their own right. Though these chapters identify problems specific to the country under investigation, they also point to global properties of branding that make it both powerful and pervasive, reflecting an overall moral confrontation.

The key to understanding the expansion of branding as a neoliberal genre is its flexibility. This is not surprising, as scholars have already noted the experimental, open-ended and plastic features of neoliberalization itself. Branding evokes a determinate set of possibilities for the constitution of identity. It can present an identity as a historical inevitability, perhaps aligned with nation building and economic development; or it can offer a narrative of national identity as a radical break with, and alternative to, dominant and/ or foreign-imposed stereotypes. The strength of this book is that it does not foreclose on one or another mode of identity making. Instead, each chapter draws on empirical cases to offer evidence for the flexible uses to which branding is put. Moreover, the contributions to this collection recognize that both harmonious, all-in narratives of unity across 'stakeholders,' *and* articulations of deviation from the mean, can be forms of symbolic violence in and of themselves. In the discipline of branding, neither parody nor affect constitute reliable countermeasures to the ultimate objective, which is to align national narratives and myths to the vagaries of the free market.

This is partly a problem of the platforms upon which brands and their discontents circulate. Brands are fundamentally media objects, and even the most determined forms of resistance to them typically assume their shape to meet them on common ground. At the outset this diminishes the effectiveness of resistant modes. Both narrative and counternarrative deploy the same strategies and appeal to audiences in the same ways, posing a challenge to 'users' to distinguish between them. As some of the authors in this collection point out, this has important consequences for our conception of authenticity. It is not always clear whether the aim of branding identity is to make visible motives of political power or to highlight measures taken to counteract dominant forces. This has the unfortunate effect of diminishing a shared sense of legitimacy around national identifications and affiliations.

Another important contribution of this volume is to highlight the role of communication as a constitutive force in the repertoire of collective action. Branding campaigns are not merely a patina on the 'realer' forces of material and institutional change; they are reality-producing agents in their own right. Contributors to this volume demonstrate the power of promotional narratives to influence, and even stand in for, policymaking, state diplomacy, and governance. Of course, contemporary media platforms also play a role here, promoting values of transparency and participation through communication even as they limit what is meant by these terms.

One reason we have turned to brands as forms of expression and identity is that they are understood as a disciplining force in dramatically undisciplined contexts of contemporary media and politics. Branding, for places and people as for products, is meant to create a coherent, unified, and simplistic narrative that positions its objects in space and time. Branding is nothing less than the management of affect and agency, rooted in business-based strategies meant to integrate culture and economy. That the techniques of branding have exceeded their origins in business to represent national self-understanding typifies attempts to order and control unruly populations.

Indeed, each chapter in this volume is concerned with the ways that branding is an *imposition* on its national object. Some take a production of culture approach, revealing the instrumentality of branding as well as its alignment with familiar patterns of imperialist and colonial control. Andrea Paz Cerda Pereira (chapter 1) demonstrates the use of branding to reconcile the Chilean people's aspirations to modernity and democracy with its autocratic and militarized past, emulating earlier forms of international cultural display in World Expos. Rebecca Ogden (chapter 3) exposes stark contrasts in the Cuban government's treatment of tourists versus Cuban nationals, codified in the country's 'Auténtica Cuba' promotional campaigns as well as its tourist infrastructure. Dunja Fehimović (chapter 8) shows us another side of the political power of identity discourse, describing how Cuban leaders used the notion of authenticity in a state-sanctioned 'Battle of Ideas' to inspire domestic political commitment. Taken side by side, these two chapters on Cuba expose the knife's edge between branding and authenticity: calls to tourists to visit the country's 'authentic' territory 'before it changes' amidst political, technological, and economic reforms sit uneasily alongside calls to residents to maintain their loyalty to the 'authentic' values of the prior political regime.

Others attend to loci of cultural and political resistance to nation branding, revealing the extent to which brand strategy is as much about suppressing narratives as it is about creating them. Felix Lossio Chávez (chapter 2) focuses on artists' efforts in Peru to counteract, through parody and appropriation, a branding campaign designed to distract from exploitative and unequal political practices, offering in the process an alternative conception of Peruvian values.

In chapter 4, Paula Gómez Carrillo examines the failure to brand Colombia, where ongoing violence, political upheaval, and drug trafficking upend the idea of control through marketing. The limits of branding are made clear via the chapter's description of consultants' halfhearted attempts to incite Colombian residents to promote the proper spelling of their country's name ('It's Colombia Not Columbia') or post positive accounts of the country on social media (#LoMejordeColombia) as a distraction from the country's far less positive visibility in world political and media circuits. Claire Taylor (chapter 5) takes us through the Argentinian artist Belén Gache's digital video installation, a critique of branding and corporate communication that also underscores the political-economic struggles of Latin American countries. These cases underline both the potential and the limitations of both branding and its alternatives in the articulation of national identity.

A third approach taken in this book to deal with branding as an imposition is to identify the complicity of cultural industries in the process of national identification and meaning making. César Jiménez Martínez (chapter 6) considers the function of foreign journalists and their news organizations in perpetuating an image of Brazil mired in protest. Drawing on interviews with journalists and news editors, Jiménez Martínez explores how industrial norms and news conventions participate in branding elements of national identity. In chapter 7, Andrew Ginger shows how the music industry balances national flavors with so-called universal appeal, ensuring that Latin artists and their local habits or allegiances do not exceed the formulas for success dictated by global labels and assumptions. Brett Levinson (chapter 9) indicates how the fashion industry attempts to capture Colombian heritage, playing on local labor value and transnational commodity production.

While the set of circumstances that gave rise to the phenomenon of nation branding has been relatively well established, it is important to acknowledge another contemporary context into which this book can be inserted. This is the rearticulation of nationalism as a driving force in the modern era. It is not that nationalism has 'returned' as a feature of international politics—as several observers have noted, it never went away—but that it currently occupies a far more central place in our everyday cultural consciousness.

In the current zeitgeist, nationalism appears in one of two ways. It is either treated as epithet, characterized as symptom and effect of nativism, racism, and chauvinism. Or it is characterized as a manifestation of power from below, a popular, civil society response to an elite-driven, top-down cosmopolitan project. Both accounts fail to recognize the persistence of nationalism as a form of organization and an expression of solidarities and protections. One reason nationalism has seemed to come back so strongly as a force for change today lies in the common fallacy, repeated over at least the last four

decades, that processes of globalization would render obsolete national borders and boundaries. This is historically inaccurate as well as conceptually problematic. World events have shown that nationalism and globalism do not only coexist but are mutually reinforcing categories. Processes of regional integration, expanded trade, and global migration take place alongside resolutely national allegiances and commitments. Meanwhile, the world system organization of nation-states remains the most politically legitimate infrastructure of our time.

It seems analytically more effective, following the sociologist Craig Calhoun, to understand nationalism as a discourse: a way of thinking and talking and acting in the world that structures our social imaginary and our social institutions. This means recognizing that the 'type' of nationalism that allows for expressions of rights and rationales for collective solidarity lies along the same spectrum as its chauvinistic and antagonistic versions. Even as we perceive, through its various manifestations, the possibilities and limitations of nationalism, we may still understand its importance in structuring self-understanding and belonging in the modern world.

For these reasons, *Branding Latin America* offers a timely and highly relevant intervention into these debates. While few would hold up national branding as the ultimate arbiter of nationalism in the contemporary moment, the chapters in this volume give us valuable tools with which to think through its consequences.

—New York, September 2017

Introduction

Context and Contestation

Dunja Fehimović and Rebecca Ogden

The words of the newly inaugurated US President, Donald Trump, echoing ominously through the world—"America first. America first"—have also reverberated across the World Wide Web, returning a series of responses that offer a satirical testament to the urgency of branding for survival in our contemporary world. The first such response, produced by popular Dutch television show *Zondag met Lubach*, kow-towed, tongue in cheek, to Trump's statement, adding "but please, can we just say, Netherlands second?" In a format that quickly went viral, the video combined a montage of the Netherlands' attractions, great and small, serious and sarcastic, with a Trump-like voiceover poking fun at the country's idiosyncrasies (Zondag Met Lubach 2017). Whilst many have used these videos as a way of critiquing the shortcomings of their home nations, the rhetoric of promotion and trade—"it's *yuge*," "you're gonna love it," "we have the best…"—is telling. With a former property tycoon as the leader of what is still considered the world's most powerful country, we are witnessing the intensification of a longer process that has seen the free-market logic of competition filter into all spheres, not least the political. As these viral videos humorously show, Trump's declaration of intent to prioritize his country is likely to force governments all over the world to raise their game, polishing their pitches in order to highlight their own advantages and define their specificities—in other words, to *brand* and successfully *sell* their countries. Selling here may indicate a number of outcomes, from reaching a favorable trade agreement to attracting investment, but in each case the process of promotion and persuasion via competitive definition and distinction is key. It is precisely this process that the present volume critically examines; *Branding Latin America* sets out not only to analyze the expansion of the strategies, aims, and manifestations of branding

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beyond the 'traditional' spheres of private companies and their products, but also to highlight the problems, conflicts, and resistances that this expansion has generated.

The present urgency of promotion, persuasion, and competitive distinction becomes particularly clear when we consider Latin America. After all, the threat—or promise—to build a border wall and make Mexico pay for it was one of the touchstones of President Trump's campaign, and inaugurated a newly open hostility towards the image and interests of the USA's southern neighbor. However, the threat of the wall—itself arguably "the most indelible aspect of Trump's political branding" (Bierman and Bennett 2017)—has since undergone a transformation, as concrete plans for its construction have consistently failed to materialize. In other words, it has become clear that the rhetoric around the wall has achieved as much, if not more, than a literal barrier could. Spreading fear amongst potential future immigrants and existing immigrant communities in the USA, and legitimizing divisive and even racist and xenophobic discourses, the wall has already made its impact in the public imagination. Moreover, as a symbol, it embodies an apparently unapologetic, narrow prioritization of the national that is key to Trump's populist appeal at home and central to an open disregard for diplomacy abroad. Flying in the face of the spoken and unspoken rules of twenty-first-century international relations, Trump's championing of the wall has provoked a very public displeasure, reflected for example in Mexican President, Enrique Peña Nieto's decision to cancel a state trip and official meeting with the White House shortly after the US President's inauguration. As the controversy around the wall highlights, Latin America currently occupies a set of particularly complex positions in the global imagination, political order, and economic system. This situation makes it a privileged locus for the analysis and debate of the recent expansion and development of branding, which can be understood as an attempt to intervene in this situation, and reconfigure those positions.

For all the isolationist public rhetoric on one side, and gestures of resistance on the other, a refusal to engage beyond national borders for the duration of President Trump's administration is an unlikely, if not impossible scenario for all involved. Simply put, globalization and neoliberalism has come too far, and the fate of the world's nations—and particularly those of Latin America with its neighbor to the north—is too intertwined. Whilst they may be born out of frustrations with this same context, the diplomatic *faux-pas* of Trump's reactionary, neo-populist politics do not fundamentally change the reality of international economic interdependence; indeed, they complicate it further by intensifying and highlighting its essential inequalities. The fraught prospect of communicating, negotiating, and trading with an ill-disposed and still-powerful USA in this period makes clearer than

ever the strategic importance of branding, which highlights distinctive identities and advantages in order to pursue primarily economic goals in a competitive and fundamentally unequal marketplace. For example, Chile's 'official' response video to Trump's statement, titled "America First, Chile Second" (Nano 2017), addresses the president directly, stating "We made this video because it seems to you think that all Latin American countries are the same," before going on to highlight humorously its advantages over its neighbors, particularly Mexico. For all its critical self-awareness (the voiceover boasts dubiously that "Chile is for sale: our water, forests, copper—SOLD!"), this video makes clear the decisive role of target audiences and markets in brands and branding; that is, it shows how more powerful players (here, the USA) can dictate the terms of debate, pitting certain competitors against each other to win the spoils of international collaboration, investment, and trade. The essays in this volume explore how a variety of private and public actors shape personal, cultural, regional, and national narratives to fit this neoliberal logic of competition, whilst also investigating the emergence of manipulations of and resistances to branding that often resonate with the critical tone of many Latin American video responses to the 'America First' sentiment.

But can such competitive rhetoric be described as branding? This volume argues that it can, and that the critical examination of brands and branding has not kept up with the morphing manifestations of the concept or the spread and development of the practice. A brand is a distinctly pragmatic creature, systematically designed in response to a view of the world as a market, and strategically circulated with specific, concrete, and competitive goals in mind. Whilst branding as a practice has therefore been the traditional remit of marketing, business, and public relations professionals, the notion of the brand itself carries a certain slipperiness and pervasiveness, combining ideas of marketability with those of distinctiveness. This distinctive identity typically finds expression in textual and visual forms—a narrative, name, and logo—which, through circulation, become overdetermined with a variety of meanings that far surpass the characteristics of any literal product. The term 'brand identity' reflects this, suggesting that the way a company or corporation presents itself to its market(s) should convey its broader characteristic goals, priorities, and values. As dear as the ideals that make up this brand identity may be to executives and workers alike, however, they must always be designed in function of sustainability at least, and maximum profitability at best. And no matter how elevated these ideals, they must inevitably come back down to pragmatics; that is, they must feed back into the products, services, and ideas which generate the income that allows the company to exist in the first place.

One potential definition of a brand, then, might be an identity deliberately (re)defined according to the principle of competition and strategically

(re)oriented towards the market. It is this broader, but more fundamental definition that resonates with many of the images and narratives explored in this volume and that distinguishes these explorations from the prevalent literature on branding. If the aforementioned videos offered a comical take on the contemporary urgency of competitiveness, the contributions in *Branding Latin America* shed further light on the spread and globalization of this neoliberal logic, which has caused the expansion of the concept of the brand and the practice of branding beyond the private sector to new entities, particularly nation-states. Whilst the common notion of identity, together with the symbolic overdetermination of visual, performative, and textual forms, lays the foundations for such an expansion, the brand is always ultimately subjected to the profit principle. Its constitutive configuration according to a vision of society as a market directed by economic competition above all else foreshadows some of the risks and problems that are analyzed in the chapters that follow.

It is certainly true that all nation-states, and not least those in Latin America, will have to reconsider their economic strategies and international reputations in the light of the apparently isolationist tendency of an administration that has promised to bring jobs and manufacturing back onto US soil. Just as the stance of Trump's administration has resulted in new economic dynamics within Latin America, such as Mexico's new trade deals with Brazil and Argentina (Webber 2017), so states and businesses around the world will have to find a way to (re)brand themselves—that is, to define their unique identities in terms that will favorably renegotiate their economic and political positions in this new climate. It is by no means a coincidence that these two factors—economics and politics—are extremely hard to separate in this scenario; a thoroughly globalized economy makes international relations decisive in any country's economic prospects and introduces a new set of constraints, dictated by multinational corporations and foreign investors, on domestic policy. Conversely, economic performance and possibilities for trade, travel, investment, and collaboration are equally critical in shaping political relationships between countries. This is just another facet of a longer, broader process that carries the label of neoliberalism. Characteristic of this is a pervasive market logic that has long been eroding and reconfiguring divides between economics, politics, international relations, cultures, and identities. *Branding Latin America* contributes to existing debates around the effects of this logic—the effects of neoliberalism and globalization—by foregrounding a specific, under-examined set of practices and concepts that bring out the ambivalent, nuanced, and sometimes contradictory relationships between the local, national, and global; the individual and collective; the public and private; and the economic, political, and cultural.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BRANDING

As a strategic activity primarily aimed at increasing economic competitiveness, the story of branding is difficult to separate from the story of capitalism, and the account of the spread of branding to public, political, and personal spheres is inextricable from the account of neoliberalism and its globalization. As authors such as Alejandro Colás argue, one of the central paradoxes of neoliberalism is the fact that it "privileges the private, economic power of markets over the public, political authority of states" by implementing "the state-led, multilateral *re-regulation* of markets in favor of dominant classes" (2005, 70). This is precisely "what makes neoliberalism 'neo'" (Metcalf 2017), distinguishing it from the *laissez-faire* attitude of classical liberalism, which advocated the separation of state and economy. In principle, the state under neoliberalism must be reconfigured to support the free market in the most unobtrusive way, providing "a fixed, neutral, universal legal framework within which market forces operate spontaneously" (Metcalf 2017), and effectively receding into near-invisibility. However, in practice, neoliberal policies such as import liberalization, privatization of services, financial deregulation, and the liberalization of capital flows in and out of countries have necessitated the intervention of a reconfigured state into every sphere of society. Whilst the nation-state may have found its traditional functions restricted and transformed by the rise of transnational, non-state actors, it has also found a new importance as director, regulator, and gatekeeper of market forces.

The forms of interdependence and regulation implemented under neoliberalism and associated with the intensification of globalization have therefore not erased local, national, and regional groups, identities, and interests. Instead, they have reconfigured them according to the power and logic of an expanding global marketplace, and subjected them to the principles of economic competitiveness. According to such principles, groups are converted into stakeholders, nation-states become corporations, interests become strategic objectives, and identities become brands. The contributions in this volume shed light on the beneficiaries and casualties of these transformations, resisting the naturalization of neoliberalism as an inevitable and anonymous process by paying attention to particular contexts and actors that shed light on some of the specific mechanisms and consequences of a pervasive market logic. Undoubtedly a product of such a logic, and shaped by the spread of neoliberalism, branding nevertheless has its own origins, characteristics, and aims, and the paragraphs that follow will attempt to account for these by offering a brief history of the concept of the brand and the practice of branding. In doing so, they will offer a backdrop and framework from which to understand the critical interventions of our contributors.

Tracing the origin story of branding necessitates an etymology of the terms term itself. To brand, as key scholar, Andy Pike notes, "is literally to label, burn or mark… to place indelibly in the memory or stigmatize" (2009, 623). The permanence and violence of literal branding described here recall the physical, psychological, historical scars of the slave trade, in which the brand's mark of ownership on skin concentrated within itself the dehumanizing exchange that reduced the slave to a set of use and exchange values. Just as the painful violence of such branding foreshadowed some of the epistemological and symbolic damage that accompanies the brand's instrumentalization of identity, other early iterations of brands allowed producers to articulate provenance and distinguish their products by a visual shorthand (Blackett 2003, 14), laying the foundations for contemporary branding practices. Indeed, as far back as the ancient world, symbols—rather than initials or names—have been used to visually denote a product's provenance, marking identity and quality. Adrian Room (1998) and Angela Tregear (2003) point out that basic branding was already widespread in pre-Roman livestock and pottery, and that later, during the medieval period, it functioned to prove ownership and create differentiated, recognizable identities for competing goods and services. In the nineteenth century, corporate logos became the key interface between the producer and consumer, promoting previously generic products such as soap and cereal as singular and attractive (McClintock 1995). It is no coincidence that this shift occurred during an 'Age of Empire' that saw an intensification of "socio-economic and political interdependence and interpenetration" (Colás 2005, 73), increasing competition over national markets that forced companies to articulate their distinctiveness ever more persuasively. Historically, then, brands emerged as signifiers of identification and assurance as soon as the geographical separation of producers and consumers meant that face-to-face contact, with its associated guarantee of provenance and quality, was no longer possible (Holt 2006, 299), and they gained importance as competition within and across markets intensified.

The twentieth century saw a specific shift in the significance of branding in political, cultural, and social life (Aronczyk 2013, 23), accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s by responses to widespread economic recession and stagnation in the West and extensive debt crises in the 'Third World.' These responses, led by Thatcher and Reagan's 'New Right' on one hand, and international financial institutions' enforced structural adjustment programs (SAPs) on the other, laid the foundations for what we now know as neoliberalism, and facilitated the intensified international socio-economic and political interconnections of globalization. These developments were led by "a new elite of opinion formers and practitioners" (Colás 2005, 76) who not only created the Washington Consensus that defined the (neoliberal) terms of

many 'Third World' countries' access to international loans, but also spread, throughout all spheres, a new consensus based on a free market logic of competitiveness. Alongside the consequent broader move towards entrepreneurial forms of governance, the synonymity of branding with competitiveness and strategy resulted in the adoption of brands and branding by a far wider series of institutions and actors in the 1970s (Aronczyk and Powers 2010, 1).

At around this same time, several highly-publicized mergers and buyouts began to change the corporate landscape, underscoring new regimes of value. While at the beginning of the twentieth century a company's value could be quantified in its tangible assets, including material resources and real sales figures, by the second half of the twentieth century it became clear that other measures of corporate value, including reputation and future potential, had to be calculated and articulated for success in the globalized economy (Aronczyk 2013, 23). These intangible assets could be considered part of the corporation's *future* value rather than a reflection of its current bottom line. The Coca-Cola Company, for example, had an estimated stock market worth of $136 billion in mid-2002, in a reflection of its potential for future growth, although the actual net asset value of the business was only $10.5 billion (Blackett 2003, 14). Likewise, a company's value increasingly lay in "speculative units of exchange" (Aronczyk and Powers 2010, 5). Abrupt financial crises at major companies (including, at the extreme end of the scale, during the Argentine depression or *década perdida*—lost decade) revealed plainly that previous performance could not guarantee future profitability. Instead, as reputation built on positive characteristics such as philanthropic outreach, emotional appeal, and loyalty between a company and its customers, employees, and stakeholders, value was increasingly concentrated not in a business' literal, tangible assets, but within its brand—the symbolic embodiment of its distinctive identity and competitive advantage.

The strategic mobilization of brand awareness and global competitiveness became all the more important in the context of accelerating globalization, as flows of capital, people, and goods between nations exploded, trade links multiplied, and new technologies such as the internet dramatically altered the scope, variety, and availability of information. The spread of neoliberalism as a hegemonic form of governance, the rise of international NGOs and multilateral organizations, the increasing number and scale of multinational corporations, and the subsequent apparent decline of nation-states' clout all indicated the realization of Francis Fukuyama's *End of History and the Last Man* (1992): that the world had indeed reached an inevitable and final post-ideological order. Whether out of a desire to correct the erosion of traditional forms of national legitimacy and cohesion, or to shore up the interests and authority of political and socio-economic elites in securing and directing

free market exchange, governments around the world increasingly engaged marketing and PR experts. Leading the charge in identifying answers to the question of the future of the nation-state in a globalized economic system was a group of marketing consultants spearheaded by Simon Anholt, a British practitioner widely credited with establishing the nation-branding industry in the 1990s. In addition to acting as advisor to the governments of countries around the world, including Chile, Anholt has pioneered various ways to assess the perception of nations, such as the Nation Brands Index (NBI) and more recently, the Good Country Index.

Like the bearers of Washington's neoliberal 'good news'—the opinion leaders and practitioners whose consensus has continued to shape many nation-states' social, political, and economic fates—these largely UK-based consultants, their ideas, and associated metrics still hold sway in the industry (Aronczyk 2013, 32). This industry, it should also be noted, is often most active in those same countries that implemented neoliberal reforms and restructuring programs during the 1970s and 80s. Such proponents of branding justify its necessity by suggesting that a nation's image already exists 'out there,' sustained by clichés and stereotypes; in failing to actively mold it, a country effectively agrees to pay the price for the negative associations, indifference, or ignorance of others (Dinnie 2015, 166). Indeed, despite the attendant homogenization of markets, Keith Dinnie argues, globalization has resulted in a heightened sense of national identity for many (2015, 8), and so should be harnessed to articulate competitive value. More critical analyses, such as that of Colás (2005), indicate one of the reasons behind this apparent resurgence of the national: the nation-state and its associated elites stand to benefit from their new roles as gatekeepers, regulators, and facilitators of global flows of goods and capital. The instrumentalization of discourses of national and cultural identity to reconfigure nation-state as nation-brand, one of the central phenomena examined in Branding Latin America, not only helps to direct these flows in the face of stiff competition but also publicly legitimizes the nation-state's authority and control over them. By spreading images and narratives that inspire a sense of shared identity and collective pride, nation-branding campaigns refashion Benedict Anderson's imagined community ([1987] 2006) in line with neoliberal principles, reconfiguring citizenship, identity, and the public sphere in the process. On both domestic and international fronts, then, nation branding supports the spread of neoliberalism, perpetuates the principles of free-market competition, and shores up the legitimacy of select gatekeepers and beneficiaries, whilst feeding the impression of a spontaneous 'resurgence of the national.'

Whether seen as an effect of the strategic initiatives outlined above, or as part of a broader tendencies that reassert the importance of the individual, lo-

cal, and territorial in the face of uneven global flows of power and capital (to which we cannot do full justice here), the return of the nation as "container of distinct identities and loyalties, as a project for sovereignty and self-determination" (Aronczyk 2013, 9) has in tandem engendered specific approaches in the corporate world, highlighting again the blurring of the political and the private via the contemporary ubiquity of neoliberal logics of competition. As Aronczyk argues, there is now a mutual formation of nation and brand (2013, 40). Just as the logic of branding applies corporate, competitive practices to the articulation of national identity, corporate forces have coopted the discursive frameworks of nationhood and national identity in order to inspire loyalty in their customers and staff. To cite a recent case, major Mexican convenience store chain 'Oxxo' has commissioned a promotional campaign which features slogans such as 'México, creo en tí' (Mexico, I believe in you) and 'Doy lo mejor de mi para mi México' (I give Mexico the best of me) (see figure I.1). These are not examples of government propaganda, as they might appear at first glance, but rather of the appropriation and thus reassertion of the nation as a source of symbolic and economic value.

The mutual influence described here should not be confused with a straightforward transference of techniques and tactics from the world of advertising

Figure 0.1.   Oxxo's 'México, Creo en tí' campaign

to the management of national image, as Aronczyk warns (2013). Indeed, as branding has expanded and branding consultants and practices multiplied, there has been an increase in critical examinations of the applicability of its traditional approaches and techniques. Central to these critiques is the refuted idea that a nation can be marketed in the same way as any consumer product. Instead, Dinnie urges the practitioners and MBA students who are the target audience of his work to understand that creative and editorial decisions concerning the nation brand should not begin with the brainstorming of logos and slogans; rather, the country's culture should be considered the source, belonging not to any brand manager but to the "entire citizenry" (Dinnie 2015, 5). Some, like Anholt, have dismissed the idea of nation branding as "excessively ambitious, entirely unproven and ultimately irresponsible" (2008, 2)—a surprising change of heart for the so-called 'father of nation branding.' While he concedes that a country's reputation is as essential to its prosperity as a company's brand image is to its success, he insists that branding is not something that can be 'done' to a nation. Alternatively, Anholt now encourages the pursuit of 'competitive identity,' molded on a combination of aspiration and self-awareness, which is the sum of symbolic actions that serve to advance a nation's standing, "the synthesis of brand management with public diplomacy and with trade, investment, tourism and export promotion" (2007, 4).

Anholt's reference to public diplomacy, a communicative practice traditionally implemented by states to inform and influence foreign, usually non-state actors, raises the question of the differences between branding and other ways of thinking about strategic persuasion and distinction. Perhaps the most relevant alternative concept in this regard is Joseph Nye's 'soft power'(1990), which describes the ability to get what one wants by co-option rather than by coercion, and which—in its predominant application to nation-states—relies greatly on the governmental policy of public diplomacy. On the most basic level, then, we might see branding as a particular set of practices that can be used to increase or maintain soft power, particularly but not only in reference to nation-states. Indeed, both the emergence of the concept of soft power and the spread of branding to new spheres share the same, post-Cold War context characterized by economic interdependence; the rise of private, non-state actors; and the development of communications and transportation technologies. According to Nye, in this context, the 'carrots' and 'sticks' of traditional hard power become less feasible and effective, forcing countries to find new ways to "set the political agenda and determine the framework of debate," shaping others' preferences and interests to align with their own (1990, 166). Not quite influence, which can also be achieved through threats and force, and more than persuasion, soft power is thus the ability to attract others (Nye 2004, 6), and in this sense it resonates with many of the goals of branding.

Despite these similarities, however, there is a determining difference in emphasis between soft power and branding. Where the former belongs to the fields of politics and international relations, the latter maintains, despite expansion into other spheres, its origins in economics, business, and marketing. This is more than a question of discipline. The interdependence that uncovered soft power as an important asset for the solution of transnational problems and the pursuit of national goals also places at its heart the impulse to bring diverse actors together, creating consensus and commonality in values, interests, and objectives. That is not to say that it is necessarily altruistic; after all, 'co-optive' (Nye 1990, 166) implies the prioritization of the self and the proper. However, it does set soft power apart from the brand—an identity that distinguishes the self as not just attractive but *more* attractive than others, and from branding—a strategic practice inescapably driven by the reality of limited resources and the demands of competition. It is no coincidence that soft power was initially developed as a framework to help the USA understand and face a new challenge to its hegemony: not the rising power of another country, but rather the "diffusion of power" across and beyond states (Nye 1990, 162). Whilst Nye's more recent work on the concept (2004) considers its relevance to other countries and regions, and interestingly, to non-state actors, soft power remains rooted in a position of relative privilege, and its key assets—culture, political values, foreign policies, and institutions—are all dependent on some degree of hard power to be truly effective. For example, culture is of limited attractive use if a country lacks the industry and distribution infrastructure necessary to reach target audiences. Similarly, the existence of strong domestic institutions and the influence over international or multilateral ones that might shape the global agenda are clearly inextricable from historic and contemporary economic and military might. Thus, soft power and branding are also distinguished by the strength of their relative starting positions and the subsequent way in which they relate to others: while soft power co-opts, branding competes. Over two decades after Nye developed his concept of soft power, the 'diffusion of power' between states and beyond them to transnational corporations and other non-state actors has continued and intensified. However, this has not resulted in an even playing field; as Nye himself recognized, diffusion reflects an interdependence that "does not mean harmony [... but] unevenly balanced mutual dependence" (Nye 1990, 158). The configuration of this balance may be nuanced by soft power, but it is also largely determined by hard power, both past and present. Given this uneven balance, branding is no longer seen as a tendency but increasingly as a necessity for those whose disadvantageous or threatened position forces them to think in terms of competition rather than co-option. As a result, branding is spreading to encompass new objects, including nation-states, institutions,

communities, and even individuals, and expanding to include new features and tools, such as the social media campaign. Whilst the development of technology has helped branding, it has also complicated the construction of coherent, consistent, and attractive brands by making a messy multiplicity of images, narratives, and voices instantly accessible around the world. These mixed messages tip the balance of power again, often reinforcing or reconfiguring historic and contemporary imbalances. When this occurs, branding becomes justified once again by the urgent need to redress ignorance, indifference, and misinformation, facilitating competition on an overcrowded and uneven playing field. As we will see, it is Latin America's relative (historical, structural) disadvantage on this field that makes it an illuminating lens through which to examine the solutions and strategies that branding offers, the problems it perpetuates, and the resistances it generates.

LATIN AMERICA: UNEVEN PLAYING FIELDS AND SPECTACULAR VISIBILITY

The emergence in Latin America of what we have been referring to as efforts to circulate strategic images and narratives of the collective—the emergence of branding, in other words—has its roots in colonization and the birth of global capitalism, and has been shaped by growing globalization, the rise of the society of the spectacle (Debord 1983), and postmodernity more broadly. Branding may thus be seen as a new attempt to intervene in a wider system that is already weighted in others' favor. The origins of this uneven playing field can be traced back to the encounter between Europe and the 'New World,' where Latin America's key role in the production of modernity and the ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment coincided with a series of political, economic, demographic, and ideological interventions whose consequences have outlasted the formal end of colonialism. As Peruvian scholar Aníbal Quijano explains, the "constitutive, founding element of the relations of domination" imposed by conquest was the idea of race, a biological structure that determined a "natural situation of inferiority" and justified subjugation. At the same time, conquest also forged a new kind of control of labor, its resources, and products that articulated all previous forms "around and upon the basis of capital and the world market," creating "world capitalism" (Quijano 2000, 533–34). These two aspects were inextricable in the establishment of a new system that placed Europe at the center of a world market and assigned not only particular forms of labor and production but also certain "geocultural identities" to other regions and populations (Quijano 2000, 540). The idea that the structures, identities, and inequalities that originated in the colonial

project continue to shape Latin America's development and position in the global system, as well as, indeed, that system itself, may be summed up by Quijano's term, "coloniality of power."

Although the injustices and oppression of colonialism fomented the emergence of concrete forms of intellectual and political nationalism in the Americas almost a century before they emerged in Europe (Quijano 1993, 143), these very same circumstances also rigged the outcome of such efforts, condemning them to frustration. Just as the region started to "define itself as a new social and cultural possibility," its development was stalled by the restrictions imposed by its colonial centers, and the displacement of economic power towards England. From the eighteenth century onwards, Latin America experienced the cognitive dissonance of a modernity lived intellectually but not materially, a situation that contributed to the internalization of a view of the region as "a latecomer to, and almost passive victim of, 'modernization'" (Quijano 1993, 144). This discourse of insufficiency and/or incompleteness in relation to a Western (European and, later, North American) model or ideal has been a constant in debates about Latin America, repeatedly reinterpreted, reinforced, or rejected by artists and thinkers—from José Enrique Rodó's *Ariel* ([1900] 2010), a manifesto that figured Shakespeare's character as the ethereal embodiment of Latin America's alternative modernity, to Octavio Paz's *El laberinto de la soledad* ([1950] 1972), which explored the historical and psychological foundations of Mexico's apparent exclusion from modernity, to name but two classic examples. The latter tendency, both evidenced and named by Paz, to view Latin American history as a series of (frustrated) attempts to achieve modernity ([1986] 1998, 119) took a different turn in the 1980s, when debates around postmodernity gave rise to new theorizations of the region's alternative, incomplete, peripheral, hybrid modernities. Perhaps best known amongst these interventions is Néstor García Canclini's suggestion that Latin America be viewed in terms of its "culturas híbridas" (hybrid cultures), multiple, coexisting temporalities, discourses, and values, and complex internal and international relationships (1995). Similarly, for Nelly Richard, the postmodern perspective made it possible to see Latin America not as insufficient or incomplete but rather as the product of multiple pasts and heterogeneous cultures (1993).

While these reframings of Latin American histories, cultures, and identities deconstructed the notion of deficiency with respect to a Western ideal and asserted regional and national distinctiveness, the political and economic contexts in which these debates took place continued to testify to the coloniality of power, as global capitalism appeared to undermine divisions and differences to recreate the world as market whilst also reinforcing historical structural and symbolic inequalities. From the early decades of the twentieth century until

the 1980s, the region's economies had been characterized by attempts to build domestic industries and services, particularly in basic goods, banking, and infrastructure, in an effort to eliminate dependence and achieve development at the same time. However, the limited success of such projects was brought to a halt by the 1980s, when the foreign debt acquired to finance costly import substitution industrialization (ISI) programs finally and decisively outgrew earning power, most notably in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. Amidst a global recession, the region was faced with soaring interest rates and hyperinflation which led to rising unemployment, falling wages, and stagnant growth. The depth of the crisis combined with pressure from the IMF, World Bank, and the US government to impose neoliberal reform as the only and natural solution to the region's profound problems. Whilst local elites were motivated by the desire to preserve existing socio-economic hierarchies, the general population was often brought on board by the urgency of inflation, which helped to conceal transitions to neoliberalism as targeted, temporary solutions to a specific situation (Saad-Filho 2004, 225).

In several countries, these transitions to neoliberalism coincided with and were complicated by political transitions from dictatorship. Argentina returned to constitutional rule in 1983 following a euphemistically-termed 'National Reorganization Process' (1976–1983), characterized by assassinations, disappearances, and human rights violations, as well as economic reforms that liberalized imports and foreign borrowing, damaging domestic industry and increasing socioeconomic inequalities in the country. Presidents Raúl Alfonsín (1983–1989), Carlos Menem (1998–1999), and Fernando de la Rúa (1999–2001) struggled against the inflation crisis that had triggered the end of ISI under dictatorship with increasingly drastic budget cuts and privatizations. Renegotiations with the IMF allowed Argentina to keep borrowing, but the country repeatedly failed to meet the terms of the programs. These difficulties culminated in the depression of 1998–2002, arguably the worst since independence, when unemployment, spending cuts, tax increases, and a freeze on bank accounts sparked widescale rioting. For many, the *desaparecidos* (disappeared) of the dictatorship had become the *excluidos* (excluded) of a cruel neoliberal system, and political transition masked a continuity of marginalization and oppression. In Chile, this overlap between oppressive authoritarian politics and neoliberal economics was clearer still, with General Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990) overseeing the implementation of a 'shock therapy' characterized by privatization and trade liberalization. This contributed to a so-called economic 'miracle' that lasted until the 1982 crisis, but also jeopardized national industry, increased unemployment, and deepened inequality. As the paradoxical slogan, 'Continuidad y cambio' (continuity and change) indicated, democratization in Chile—led by President Patricio

Aylwin (1990–1994)—was combined with a project that pursued growth over and above any redistributive measures, maintaining the neoliberal orientation established under dictatorship.

Both in Chile and beyond, neoliberal reforms were led by the so-called 'Chicago Boys'—a group of primarily Chilean economists who had trained at the University of Chicago under Milton Friedman and Arnold Harberger before returning to take up influential positions in governments across the region during the 1970s and 80s. The result of economic crisis, soaring foreign debts, and the dominance of domestic technocrats and international financial institutions combined with democratization processes to make this a period of heightened visibility and intense scrutiny for the region. As the century came to a close, political transitions and economic reforms shaped by the Washington Consensus and the Chicago Boys sought to put Latin American countries such as Chile 'back on the map,' declaring them open for business and claiming—in new, neoliberal terms—their belonging to a civilized, democratic world figured as an open market. But whilst these badges of progress—democracy and free trade—were traditionally paired in European and North American history, in Latin America, political liberalism had typically been associated not with economic liberalism, but rather with state interventionism and social redistribution. In this context, it is largely thanks to the limitations that neoliberal reforms have imposed on the region and on the quality of its democracies that this form of governance—and mark of modernity—has been sustained in Latin America (Weyland 2004). Paradoxically, the political and economic systems that have sought to align the region with development, modernity, and progress have also worked to limit choice, minimize dissent, and weaken public debate—the very values championed by advocates of democracy and the free market.

As Kurt Weyland (2004) has argued, neoliberalism has had a "double-sided" impact on the region. Firstly, the interdependence created by neoliberal reforms has subjected the region to heightened *external* political and economic pressures to maintain democratic rule. This was particularly evident in the Peru of 1992, where US protests and the need to reestablish good relations with the IMF quickly convinced President Alberto Fujimori (1990–2000) to reverse his *autogolpe* (self-coup) and restore congress. At the same time, neoliberal reforms have weakened *internal* threats to democracy by securing local elites. Weyland explains that calls for extensive social reforms and redistribution from citizens, left-wing parties, and trade unions historically had the effect of alarming political and economic elites in the region, leading them to seek the intervention of the military to restore or reinforce the status quo, thereby effectively disrupting democracy. However, thanks to a dominant international business sector and neoliberal measures such as privatization, market

de-regulation, and trade liberalization, these former threats have been dramatically diminished. With the region's "economic, social, and political elites […] much more secure nowadays" (Weyland 2004, 142), military intervention has become both unnecessary and undesirable, and (formal) democracy has thus been maintained. Secondly, Weyland shows how neoliberalism has also—and by the same token—constrained and weakened the quality of democracy, both externally, by limiting the range of social and economic policies realistically available to nation-states, and internally, by weakening the size and strength of civil and political institutions.

We thus arrive at a situation in which longstanding inequalities are heightened but political participation and public debate is limited. Although democracy has facilitated open expression, the wane of left-wing associations and the rise of transnational political and business elites has hampered the emergence of plural discourses, perspectives, and projects. This has taken on particular importance in post-dictatorship contexts, which have been marked by struggles over how to record, remember, and redress a repressive past. Whilst popular and cultural contestations of official narratives of transition (see Masiello 2001, Richard 2004, or Fornazzari 2013, for example) have been further fueled by widening social inequalities under neoliberalism, governments have been keen to project a new, confident image to the world and unite their countries behind 'new' economic and political projects. In this environment, the promises and procedures of branding appear particularly appealing and practicable, such that the turn of the century has seen the Chicago Boys brand of libertarian economics increasingly supplemented, if not replaced, by a new set of discourses, practices, and technocrats. On the one hand, nation-states are keen to emerge from the shadows cast on their reputations by economic crises and authoritarian regimes; in the globalized age of digital technologies, 24-hour media, and dependence on international markets, Latin America needs a new, spectacular face for the world. As in the past, when national symbols and World Exhibition displays sought to stake the nation-state's position in a world system, this new face needs to elicit both identification ('they are like us—as good as us') and also recognition of difference ('they have something different and valuable') from more powerful Others.

On the other hand, this pursuit of strategic, spectacular visibility is also directed internally, at citizens themselves, constructing an appealing image and coherent narrative that places branding within a longer history of collective self-imagining. However, whereas the performative creation and assertion of collective identity associated with independence processes in Latin America was directed towards political and cultural sovereignty, more recent attempts to encourage identification with particular images and narratives of the col-

lective only further imbricate that collective in the unequal power dynamics of global capitalism. More specifically, these images and stories attempt to ensure that all sectors share the same vision and work together to meet the approved strategic goals. In this process, the private sector, the public sector, and civil society are all reconfigured as stakeholders in an entity (the city, region, or nation) that is itself redefined as a sort of business—a business that, of course, has an inevitable ultimate goal: profit. Ultimately, then, they aim to cultivate compliance with a neoliberal development agenda. Any sense of identity that is created or performed in the process must serve this agenda, whether more or less directly. By creating an appealing and strategic identity—a brand—local economic and political elites may be able to raise the funds, make the deals, and engage the partners necessary to achieve a certain kind of development, perhaps edging closer to being included within the list of the world's 'developed nations.' But this potential recognition and development come at a price, either literally through international debt, or metaphorically through social inequality and unrest.

The present functioning of this system in Latin America comes into sharper view when we consider the example of Brazil's recent hosting of the World Cup (2014) and the Olympic Games (2016). The bidding process for such global cultural events is extensive and elaborate, not least because of the promise of increased tourism, investment, employment, and international visibility that accompanies both the events themselves as well as their lengthy preparation periods. Perhaps most importantly, these mega-events are designed to provide a lasting impact that furthers their hosts' long-term, strategic objectives. As is clear from the benefits mentioned above, many of these goals are ultimately economic in nature, but they also aim to propagate positive images, which in Brazil's case related to the dominant narrative of the country as an emerging economy—one of the BRICS stars. Crucially, in order to be successful in their bids, hosts must have a well-defined set of objectives, and a clear vision of the intended legacy of the event in question, "with all of the relevant organizations, authorities and stakeholders working together as one united team" (Olympic Games Candidature Process). Combining sport, cultural events, social initiatives, infrastructural development, international PR, and extensive investment, both the World Cup and Olympic Games exemplify the highly conspicuous imbrication of culture, identity, economics, and international relations in today's world.

Moreover, these events are highly political. As the debates and protests that took place in the build-up to Brazil's World Cup demonstrate, consensus amongst such a broad range of 'stakeholders' is elusive, and the selection, prioritization, and enactment of collective goals a contested terrain. The visibility brought by such events also places under critical scrutiny existing and

aspirational images and narratives of the collective—whether that be city, region, or (and especially) nation—revealing them to be selective, fragile constructs. Maite Conde and Tariq Jazeel (2013) point out that whilst the protests that erupted in São Paulo in June 2013 may have been triggered by the very local and apparently minor issue of the increased cost of public transport, they responded to deep-rooted national problems of corruption, military police brutality, and poor public services. This accumulated discontent was catalyzed by the 'dress rehearsal' for the World Cup: the Confederations Cup. However, the event was not just a catalyst; rather, the conspicuous and copious spending of taxes to prepare for both the Confederations Cup and the World Cup and increase Brazil's international profile brought into focus the unevenness of the country's recent development. In this way, the hypervisible time and space of Brazil's streets and stadiums leading up to and during these international events became the staging ground for debates about citizenship, governance, collective goals and priorities. They demonstrated, in dramatic and even spectacular ways, the discrepancies between the image of Brazil that the events were intended to propagate, and the various conflicting visions of local actors. Furthermore, through their actions in this period, citizens constructed new collective identities and political cultures, breaking with the models of protest and party affiliation familiar from the 1970s and 80s (Conde and Jazeel 2013) .

The repeated displacement of marginal urban communities, the investment in disproportionately-sized stadiums, and the construction of extensive retail spaces (whose profits would be siphoned off to international corporations) in preparation for these high-profile events, occurred alongside internationally visible, nationwide protests to highlight "the strange collision of neoliberalism and democratization" that has characterized Brazilian developmentalism since the 1990s (Conde and Jazeel 2013, 440). It is a combination that has seen social and economic inequality rise at alarming rates, whilst also leading to developments such as the 2001 enshrinement into Constitution of the 'right to the city,' which attempts to ensure that urban development caters to citizens' needs before lining the pockets of national elites and transnational corporations. Although this particular pledge is unique in the world, the combined circumstances of neoliberalization and democratization apply to much of Latin America over the last thirty years. The often uneven, troubled, and incomplete nature of democratization processes across the region has turned efforts to stage collective development, identity, and distinctiveness to both domestic and foreign audiences into sites of contestation and conflict. Whilst democratization created the possibility of dissent and fragmentation of national narratives, particularly concerning past traumas, the negotiation of these issues in the public sphere has revealed a reluctance to interrogate rela-

tionships between current governments and previous regimes and to hold to account those responsible for the crimes of dictatorship. Continuing attempts to impose singular stories have also been motivated by the desire to rebuild an international reputation of political and economic stability and leave the past definitively behind. These circumstances have combined with the effects of neoliberal policies on social inequality to produce an uneven playing field increasingly shaped by deliberate, primarily but not exclusively state-led efforts to promote strategic, positive images and narratives that might suture the wounds of the recent past whilst helping particular cities, regions, or nation-states to compete in the global marketplace.

At the same time, the proliferation of new media in the same period has meant that the very visibility deliberately sought for the purposes of neoliberal development can also be its undoing, perpetuating stereotypes, circulating stories of corruption, disaster, and war, and creating new sources of stigma, most notably in relation to the 'war on drugs' in Colombia and Mexico. Importantly, these media are more open than ever before, resulting in a multiplication of images and fragmentation of narratives. One of the most spectacular examples of this was the Sandinistas' commandeering of Nicaraguan television in the wake of their overthrow of the Somoza regime in 1979. Later, in 1994, armed Zapatista *guerrillas* seized control of several towns in the southern state of Mexico and broadcast their demands to overthrow Mexican president and NAFTA author Carlos Salinas over the internet to a stunned global audience, citing the treaty's threat of inequality and denouncing historic abuses at the hands of the government. These two telling examples of the interweaving of politics and media demonstrate the importance of creating and controlling new narratives and images for new or alternative political projects. Of course, the proliferation of news sources and content channels through the internet in more recent years has proven the most decisive development in this sense, 'democratizing' information to some degree, whilst also reconfiguring existing inequalities along new technological lines.

Similarly, rather than straightforwardly uniting citizens in a common project and integrating them as equal actors in a developed, globalized world, the official and unofficial work of branding carried out by government officials, economists, businessmen, consultants, and other individuals in Latin America over the last two decades has often played into longstanding inequalities. By circulating specific, strategic images of their cities, regions, and countries, the state and its partners in the private sector repeat and reshape patterns of marginalization present in the nation-building projects of the nineteenth century. Moreover, in their bids to intensify and direct global flows of goods, people, and capital, these initiatives create and amplify internal socio-spatial divisions of labor and competitive relations (Pike 2009). Such inequality can

also be mapped onto a global level, as many Latin American governments have continued to 'sell' their countries as sources of raw materials, whilst others have attempted redefine their economies in terms of the service industry, promoting visions of their countries as sources of cheap, skilled labor. In this process, the divisions of labor carved out by the extractivism and forced mass migrations characteristic of the colonial period are reproduced and reconfigured for a new era.

These aforementioned divisions do not concern only physical labor, but also affective work and symbolic capital. The 'New World' has not lost its colonial associations with discovery, novelty, exoticism, and emotion. These notions are renewed most conspicuously through tourism campaigns—'Mexico: the place you thought you knew,' 'Colombia is passion,' 'Discover Nicaragua… Experience Nicaragua'—but also, perhaps more surprisingly, in other spheres; a tango-dancing couple is the seemingly unlikely image chosen to illustrate a national investment brochure entitled "Embrace your Passion, Invest in Argentina," for example (Dinnie 2015, 73). Aptly, Marta Savigliano (1995) uses precisely the example of Argentine tango in order to explain the notion of exotic capital, expanding existing historical accounts by suggesting that flows of exotic capital between Latin America and the imperial West have represented a parallel to global capitalism. Exotic capital forms a raw export through which the peripheral Third World is represented to the rest of the world, constituting a source of symbolic wealth that can be produced, distributed, consumed, and traded; this political economy of passion, according to Savigliano, is "a trackable trafficking in emotions and affects" (1995, 1–2). Notwithstanding the violence entailed by this consumption and its intimate association with colonialism (Sheller 2003), contemporary forms of consumption have seen brands and branding direct and capture these flows of symbolic wealth in very deliberate ways and for particular strategic purposes.

As we have seen, it is both possible and illuminating to place branding within a longer Latin American history of struggles for independence, recognition, and development, as well as a bigger picture of shifting but unequal power dynamics between colonial centers and colonized peripheries, between developed and underdeveloped countries, between the First and the Third Worlds, between the West and its Others. In particular, we could trace a line of continuity between certain contemporary uses of branding and the formation and consolidation of the nation-state through practices and signifiers (anthems, currency, flags) that facilitated the development of an internal imagined community (Anderson [1987] 2006) and allowed fellow nation-states to recognize an equivalent if not equal member of the world of nations (Billig 1995). Whilst these projects may have been primarily political, the creation of internal coherence and international visibility would undoubtedly have con-

tributed to new nation-states' trade capacities, economies, and international standing. Given such connections between branding and Latin America's history, we might ask: what is different now? What differentiates branding from the kinds of collective performance, image, and narrative associated with the colonial, republican, and modern periods? This contributions in this volume seek to answer these questions by combining theoretical frameworks drawn from a variety of disciplines with close, context-sensitive analyses to offer, for the first time, a sustained *critical* perspective on the strategies, aims, and consequences of branding.

BRANDING LATIN AMERICA: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The markers, images, and narratives of identity associated with the formation of the nation-state aimed to create internal coherence and foster international recognizability within a world of nations. Citing these key goals and effects, commentators and practitioners such as Wally Olins (1989) have figured branding as a natural and almost inevitable development of modern history. According to this logic, the country brand logo is the new flag or coat of arms, the catchy slogan is a new national anthem that serves to identify and unite the collective, and 'brand values' are the Romantic 'volksgeist' of our times. Whilst it may be true that twenty-first-century city, region, and nation brands often share similar goals to the nation-building exercises of previous centuries, there is one decisive difference: fostering national unity and international visibility now have the ultimate aim of economic competitiveness in an ever-more intricately interconnected global marketplace. Reconfiguring state and citizenry as stakeholders, branding seeks recognition from a world of corporations as much as from a world of nations, and in so doing, it amplifies existing geopolitical inequalities. By affirming the continued validity of the 'local' (however that may be conceived) as an influential repository of meaning and value, contemporary branding practices appear to resist the flattening of differences associated with globalization and neoliberalism. Such an (admittedly reframed) assertion of difference seems to corroborate the trajectory that leads from nation-formation to nation-branding, but by shoring up the exchange value of the local, it is also complicit in the erosion of that very difference. Branding thus adds new economic, political, and cultural layers to historically-shaped inequalities, cementing the unbalanced power dynamics already present in the nineteenth century's world of nations.

Indeed, as our first contributor shows in 'Promotion Before Nation Branding: Chile at the Universal Exhibitions,' the global inequalities through which nation-states were forged and into which they emerged feed into the global

competition that shapes brands and creates the perceived need for branding today. Of the 23 International Expos in which Chile participated between 1851 and 2010, Andrea Paz Cerda Pereira considers five from across several centuries, revealing the ways in which the images, narratives, and techniques used by Chile at early universal exhibitions can be seen as precursors of the marketization of national imaginaries evident in Chile's branding-influenced participation in 2010. Through a review of these different exhibitions, our first chapter traces key characteristics of Chile's representation over time, paying particular attention to the narratives associated with the assembling of each national display and the technological devices used by the state administration to stage, communicate, and exhibit Chile to the world. Taking a comparative approach to the *longue durée* of Chile's international image, Cerda Pereira's contribution highlights the persistence of the notion of Chile as an eternal 'work in progress,' a teleological narrative of development dictated by system of classification that underpins both the Universal Exhibition project and the phenomenon of nation branding. The discourses that subsume branding into a longer history of nation building and so frame it as a benevolent intervention tend to make invisible the inequalities and injustices that branding perpetuates and even exacerbates. As this volume aims to show, then, we need a more nuanced view that considers context and continuity in order to place brands and branding within a critical global history.

One of the apparent differences between nation-building projects and branding campaigns is that whereas the former involved the invention and management of a coherent collective and identity by a country's political, economic, and intellectual elites, the latter supposedly depart from and rely on a starting consensus between a variety of 'stakeholders.' However, not only is such harmony notoriously elusive among parties with such different interests, but it also paints a false picture of the equality of each stakeholder. Given the neoliberal logic that underpins branding, the private sector becomes a crucial ally whilst civil society is quickly reified as a quasi-Romantic repository of unique 'essence' or 'authentic' culture that could constitute a competitive edge. It is hardly surprising then that the majority of existing scholarship on branding generalizes at best and glosses over at worst the messy variety of voices that prevent society at large from functioning as a single, coherent, consistent ally to the neoliberal project. The complex relationship of individuals and communities to brands and branding is simplified, and resistance is reconfigured as an unfortunate instance of the imperfect application of techniques and principles.

However, as our second contributor, Félix Lossio-Chávez notes, nation-branding campaigns in Latin America have not been passively received, but rather actively challenged and contested. In 'The Counter-narratives of Na-

tion Branding: The Case of Peru,' he looks in detail at the resistance to Peru's 2011 nation-branding campaign enacted by local artists and designers, who disseminated video parodies and visual reconfigurations of the original logos and slogans publicly on social networks. Lossio-Chávez uses discourse and visual analysis alongside interviews with creators to analyze the social significance of these nation brand counter-campaigns. Through the promotion of "alternative stories" (Julier 2011) far from the official branding campaign's purposes, they shed light on social and political tensions such as economic inequality, racism, the overexploitation of natural resources, and state repression. The chapter shows how these images disrupt and disturb the idyllic-exotic depiction of the nation oriented towards the touristic gaze in the global market, rooting the idealistic nation-brand in more problematic situations. By fighting the hegemonic construction of the nation based on neoliberal discourses and executed through branding techniques, these artists and designers question the state's (apparently) legitimate monopoly over branding. As they encourage public awareness of the dissociation between brand and reality, these resistant actors engage in a sort of symbolic battle with the nation-brand's other 'stakeholders.' Rather than being simply destructive, Lossio-Chávez argues that such interventions play a potentially productive role: they expand the horizon in which the nation is narrated and turn nation-branding efforts into opportunities for much-needed public debate.

This second contribution demonstrates that only a detailed examination of specific cases, informed by a thorough understanding of context, can yield a nuanced account of how branding acts on and is acted out in reality. By contrast, existing literature often elaborates goal-oriented, generalized accounts of how public and private sectors may interact to create and benefit from branding campaigns. However, such practical accounts and the similarly pragmatic approaches they describe leave untouched or at least under-examined two of the most important characteristics of successful brands: authenticity and affect. Implicit in the work of authors such as Dinnie (2015) is the notion of the brand as an almost effortless encapsulation of pre-existing, authentic 'essence' to be found in landscapes, people, and culture. By ensuring identification, this authenticity allows the brand to successfully interpellate domestic audiences, and by expressing distinctiveness, it appeals to international markets. In both cases, perceived authenticity is the prerequisite for an affective connection between brand and audience that is in turn the condition of the brand's effectiveness. As our third chapter suggests, in no context is this more true than in tourism, and in no country does it apply more than contemporary Cuba. Indeed, the recent frenzy around seeing the 'real' Cuba 'before it changes' testifies to a fascination heightened by recent political, economic, and social shifts. Our third contributor, Rebecca Ogden,

therefore departs from the island's most recent, and highly successful tourism campaign—'Auténtica Cuba'—in order to explore the possibilities and problems created by branding's reliance on authenticity and affect.

'Living the Brand: Authenticity and Affective Capital in Contemporary Cuban Tourism' shows that perceived authenticity constitutes one of Cuba's most important USPs, distinguishing it from competitors who have been rendered 'inauthentic' through overexposure—not only in terms of their visibility in the tourist marketplace, but also in the extent of their immersion in homogenizing global flows of goods and technologies. Ogden reveals how, in contrast to such destinations, Cuba's most recent tourism campaign plays into the perception of the island as a space of authentic human interaction and affective connection, offering immediacy and intimacy in a hypermediated world. Using unposed scenes of everyday Cuban life, 'Auténtica Cuba' constructs cultural authenticity and trades on affective capital as markers of competitive difference. In this touristic vision, encounters with ordinary Cubans become the gateway to an authentic, affective experience, and the state has responded to this demand by opening up possibilities for interaction between foreigners and tourists. But, as Ogden argues, the continued restrictions to such contact testify to a much more complicated, conflicted dynamic between 'brandees' and brand audiences than normally allowed by both practitioners and theorists. If authenticity and affective capital—key to Cuba's tourism brand—are generated and circulated through contact between tourists and locals, a paradox is created: in order for the brand to succeed, the creators of that brand (here, the state) must relinquish some control over its implementation. As Ogden demonstrates in relation to Cuba's particular political and economic context, this presents a dilemma that testifies to branding's fundamentally *relational* nature. In other words, a brand is not simply an expression of how the 'brandee' wants to be seen, but also a concession to the desires, demands, and expectations of its audience. As such, it is molded by a series of complex, affectively-charged relationships at individual and collective, local and global levels.

In their star role in the 'Auténtica Cuba' campaign, the Cuban population is cast as the object, subject, and means by which the national tourism brand is mobilized. Whilst the images, narratives, and values that make up such a brand may have been formulated, refined, and combined by key stakeholders on the basis of perceived pre-existing qualities, the projection of that brand and the pressure of expectation to uphold it must nevertheless be recognized as a new kind of disciplinary measure. Indeed, the very fact that the brand in such cases claims to express and champion local values, cultures, and identities serves to increase its efficacy as a device by which to mold and direct the behavior of citizens and thereby further the agendas of the brand's more pow-

erful stakeholders—the state and the private sector. As Paula Gómez Carrillo shows in 'Covert Nation Branding and the Neoliberal Subject: The Case of "It's Colombia NOT Columbia,"' the engagement of the population with a brand through campaigns that claim to come from the 'grassroots' is one of the key recent developments in branding. Our fourth chapter analyzes a social media campaign created to correct the common misspelling of Colombia and increase national visibility as an example of this expansion of nation branding to new, covert strategies that effectively perpetuate and intensify the neoliberal project, which fundamentally aims to expand the logic of the market to other realms.

Despite being manufactured by two private companies in conjunction with the official nation brand of Colombia, the 'It's Colombia NOT Columbia' campaign (ICNC) was positioned as a social movement steered by Colombian citizens. Gómez Carillo therefore uses this case to focus on an implied but underexamined category within both practices and studies of nation branding: the citizen. More specifically, by examining citizens' own perceptions of their role within the campaign, this contribution sheds light on covert nation branding as a focalized and intense practice of nation branding—an improved neoliberal technique used by governments to shape common sense by directly targeting citizens from below. Deploying a theoretical framework inflected by Foucault's analysis of governmentality and drawing on studies of nation branding that reflect on this concept (Browning 2013; Dzenovska 2005; Varga 2013; Volcic and Andrejevic 2011), Gómez Carillo highlights the fact that the citizen who participates in and supports covert nation-branding initiatives such as ICNC does not operate spontaneously, but rather in response to a complex network of power relations. Within this web, nation branding and its covert extensions work to reconfigure the subject according to a disciplinary logic that seeks to produce the forms of self-mastery, self-regulation, and self-control (Rose 1996) deemed necessary to govern a nation made up of citizens responsible for its future (Aronczyk 2013, 40). Notwithstanding its sophistication, which allows it to seduce the subject while leaving him or her to assume different roles, to creatively participate, and to promote him- or herself, covert nation branding only endorses one kind of subjectivity: the neoliberal one. By revealing the imbrication of nation branding with practices of self-branding, Gómez Carillo argues that the expansion and covert operation of branding practices serve to naturalize a neoliberal rationality, weakening much-needed critical debates about the social, political, and economic problems faced by citizens.

The ICNC campaign is a striking example of the operation of covert branding practices through social media and digital technologies. As Gómez Carillo explains, the campaign encourages citizens to tweet examples of misspellings

and take selfies connected by the official hashtag in order to capture allegiances and enlist them in the service of the nation-branding project. It is evident from this case study that the internet is an important frontier and facilitator of contemporary nation branding. However, the digital sphere may also function as a key space of resistance, according to our fifth contributor, Claire Taylor. Indeed, 'Resisting the Brand, Resisting the Platform? Digital Genres and The Contestation of Corporate Powers in Belén Gache's *Radikal karaoke*' provides an analysis of an online project that engages in a process of what we might call 'resistant branding,' in which digital technologies are employed to contest the corporate powers so often associated with those technologies, and the dynamics of late capitalism. The work under analysis is Argentine author Belén Gache's *Radikal karaoke* (2011), an online piece combining text, still and moving images, sound files, and user-activated effects. The chapter argues that Gache's recycling of platitudes, slogans, and commonplaces encourages us to critique the practices of corporate branding, as the "paradigmatic embodiment of the logic of informational capitalism" (Arvidsson 2006, 13). The various key figures in this work—the zombie that represents the consumer in thrall to commodity fetishism, the slave that embodies alienated labour, the faceless representatives of corporate power with which the game opens—are all, in some sense, emptied out—of content, of historicity, of subjectivity, and of agency. Our own insertion into this line of alienated figures forces us to consider how we, too, may be robbed of our agency by the workings of late capitalism. Through its use of mock trademark symbols, remixing of phrases, mobilization of images of alienation, and, ultimately, imbrication of the user in the work, *Radikal karaoke* provides a critique of the status of the individual under late capitalism and corporatism, and works to denaturalize the hegemonic discourses of corporate capital.

As has become increasingly clear, branding involves an ongoing struggle over economic, political, cultural, exotic, and affective capital between multiple actors, from the individual to the collective, and from both inside and outside. Moreover, this is clearly a struggle that takes place on uneven ground: a terrain shaped by the past (preconceptions, stereotypes, and history) and the present (existing systems, networks, and political economies). For the governments of countries such as Chile, Peru, Colombia, or Mexico, the tools associated with practices of nation branding, public diplomacy, or soft power have—since the late twentieth century, offered a relatively cheap way of allegedly projecting a positive image of their country for mostly economic, but also political and cultural goals. Several authors have rightly observed that these practices attempt to craft a relatively homogenous version of national identity, thus flattening out diversity and minimizing potential conflict (Kaneva 2011; Aronczyk 2013). However, as our sixth contributor points

out, in an age of 'new visibility' (Thompson 2005), no party can completely control the messages, images and narratives that circulate through the media. Despite branding experts' insistence that the efficacy and consistency of national image rests on the combined and correlatory efforts of many actors, it is also granted that the nation brand 'owner' does not have control of how it is received externally (Anholt 2008, 3). Furthermore, and beyond the reception of the brand in the global space, actors may also interfere with attempts to create specific national images and narratives as they reshape them for their international audiences. As such, César Jiménez-Martínez warns, nation branding does not take place in a vacuum and should be seen as only one of several narratives or images attempting to gain visibility in the media space.

Focusing on the tensions surrounding the protests of June 2013 and the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, Jiménez-Martínez's chapter, titled 'Protests, News and Nation Branding: The Role of Foreign Journalists in Constructing and Projecting the Image of Brazil during the June 2013 Demonstrations,' empirically examines some of the beliefs, perceptions, and practices surrounding the struggles behind the crafting of the image of a country for foreign audiences. Drawing on over sixty interviews conducted with Brazilian journalists, foreign correspondents, activists, and authorities, this chapter argues, firstly, that the attempts to promote the image of a nation abroad are far from being consensual and monolithic, but are rather characterized by a series of struggles among and within organizations, institutions, and individuals. Secondly, it proposes that the political economy and practices of media organizations play a key role in determining the kind of images or narratives that receive more attention, as well as the timing in which this occurs. Finally, it points to a spectacularization of visual politics due to the role played by images—in their most literal sense—in giving more mediated visibility to the demonstrations and, at the same time, in contributing to the emptying out of the protests of the purposes that originally drove them.

Jiménez-Martínez's analysis of what he names the 'struggle' for the national image in the context of international visibility and consumption draws our attention to the ways in which branding can result from external imaginings and impositions, as well as from international economic and cultural exchanges or collaborations. Examples from the context of so-called 'World Music' include the Buena Vista Social Club phenomenon—a term used to describe the visibility of Cuba and international popularization of its culture following the release of the eponymous *son* album (Cooder 1997) and music documentary (Wenders 1999). The sequels, tours, recordings, and spin-off albums generated by Buena Vista Social Club speak to the unprecedented visibility that artists of Hispanic descent have achieved in the West in recent years, drawing from and contributing to the establishment of a broader 'Latin'

brand—a strategic (and often stereotypical) identity that has been used to market not only music but also other cultural products such as cinema, and television. In successfully selling themselves and their work, these 'Latin' musicians have fulfilled one of the recurrent aspirations within Hispanic cultures of the modern period: to be once more considered significant by others, especially in powerful countries. The mainstream artist who most exemplifies this assertion of international relevance is Pitbull, whose 'Mr. Worldwide' brand and persona is the focus of Andrew Ginger's contribution: 'International Love? 'Latino' Music Videos, Pitbull, and the Hispanic Brand of Universality.'

It is easy to show that many recent depictions of Latin artists—and most obviously the Pitbull character—both draw on established stereotypes of 'Latins' and flauntingly reinforce gender stereotypes. Equally, a video such as 'International Love' can be viewed as a provocation: the Latin male employs the very stereotyping that brands him as the basis of apocalyptic world success, as a 'brand.' In its broad outlines, Ginger argues, the brand is a reinvention of long-term strategic aspirations in Spanish-speaking cultures, whose primary concern was to alter the balance of power back in their own favor. Thus, in his music video 'International Love,' Pitbull, a Hispanic artist, towers over the world. The relevant trends, from Vasconcelos to Rodó, might be summarized as follows: (a) to claim that cultural specifics attributed to Latins are what give them universal importance; (b) to reject, in so doing, any equation between the identification of cultural specifics and the notion that these are confined to a context of place and time; (c) in some instances (for example, Vasconcelos) to link the Latin's sexualized body to this universality. Wittingly or otherwise, and saving the obvious differences, Pitbull's 'International Love' echoes the amorous Universópolis of Vasconcelos. To borrow Alejandro López-Mejías's description of *modernismo* (2009), then, all this can be seen as an inverted conquest: what was subjected returns to take over.

Pitbull's Mr. Worldwide brand makes evident that cultural forms, as much as the concerted campaigns designed by marketing experts and typically associated with the phenomenon of nation branding, are significant in our attempt to explain the narratives and images that sell places, cultures, and even individuals. Cultural forms with international reach and aesthetic appeal, such as cinema and music, function by balancing creative expression and commercial imperatives. As such, they can both reinforce existing perceptions and contribute strategic representations that (re)brand more than just the artist and their work. A brand can therefore be formed not only through but also, and perhaps more often, quite apart from official promotional campaigns. It is this alternative reading of a brand that is explored by Dunja Fehimović, whose

chapter 'The Paradoxes of the 'Cuban Brand': Authenticity, Resistance, and Heroic Victimhood in Cuban Film' explores how two recent Cuban films have perpetuated the key characteristics of an unofficial Cuban brand. Despite a political context that makes it impossible to adopt branding discourses or practices in any overt way, a Cuban brand—forged by external representations, market imperatives, and internal political shifts—has emerged through the images of and narratives about the island that started to circulate in the early 1990s.

The new geopolitical context triggered by the collapse of the Soviet Bloc saw official discourse reconfigure the Cuban imagined community along cultural and identitarian rather than strictly political lines, as the country renegotiated its position in the world and reinserted itself into global flows of capital. Artists were among the first to be encouraged to sell their work abroad for hard currency, while filmmakers were forced to turn outward in search of foreign co-producers by the wane of the national film institute. This new reliance on international partners and markets reshaped a previously politicized, thoroughly national cinema according to neoliberal demands and foreign expectations. Fehimović argues that the effects of this situation are evident in two recent films: *Habana Blues* (dir. Benito Zambrano, 2005) and *La película de Ana* (dir. Daniel Díaz Torres, 2012)—international co-productions that embody, in narrative and production, the coexistence of compromise and resistance. Both films tell stories of creative Cubans who must decide on the terms of their personal and professional relationships with foreigners, reflecting Cuba's uncomfortable accommodation with(in) a global neoliberal order. In analyzing these films, Fehimović's chapter shows that from these political, cultural, and market imperatives a paradoxical Cuban 'brand' has emerged, defining the island in terms of authenticity and selling its culture on the basis of a local refusal to 'sell out.' Speaking to Cuban experiences of hardship and resilience whilst also advancing national economic agendas that rely on cultural exports and tourism, this 'brand' raises a question of urgent broader relevance. If the Cuban brand derives its coherence and competitiveness—its very success—from a central paradox that allows it to assimilate resistance into its very core, it forces us to ask: what forms can resistance take in the face of an overwhelming neoliberal logic that threatens to swallow our protests whole, only to sell them back to us?

While the majority of this volume's chapters deal with the way in which individual Latin American states, through both public and private initiatives, strive to 'brand' the nation via the advancement of positive images and signifiers, the final chapter by Brett Levinson attempts to tackle the possibility that this academic scrutiny of branding on the part of Latin American literary and cultural studies—a scrutiny that is not at all reducible to this

volume—rather than exposing the neoliberal impetus of the Latin American nation, stands in complete complicity with this enterprise. The campaigns cited in this book target the *domestic* public in the interest of a neoliberal consensus, that is, the production of the populace's general conviction that, through the market, the nation is moving in the proper direction, that is, toward a more perfect democracy. Similar, or even the same maneuvers take aim at an *international* audience in the name of tourism and investment. The idea pitched, implicitly or explicitly, is that globalization, multinational enterprises, and democracy pertain to a single movement. The signs of branding translate the injustices of neoliberalism, in which a pluralist multitude enters into an unforced and non-violent accord by virtue of a free market, and which is the cradle of knowledge no less than wealth, into global democracy: a democracy whose signature is consensual agreement rather than brutal imposition or aggressive dissensus. Levinson's chapter, 'Branding, Sense, and Their Threats,' argues that critique buttresses the neoliberalism it would undermine. Latin Americanism or Latin American studies are no less grounded in branding processes than is the state itself. Or stated differently: academic knowledge, and knowledge in general, *perform* the influence and power of capitalism as much as advertising does.

As Levinson's self-reflexive examination of the field of Latin American Studies suggests, and as this volume as a whole proposes, the study of branding need not be limited to the study of literal, concrete brands and branding campaigns. Instead, the brand—an identity deliberately (re)defined according to the principle of competition and strategically (re)oriented towards the market—can function as a lens through which to reexamine notions such as identity, citizenship, and governance, and branding can become a point of entry for the analysis of contemporary developments spanning politics, economics, and culture. Rather than venturing premature conclusions in a new field, then, the epilogue proposes a series of questions and suggestions for further investigation. It indicates how awareness of branding discourses and practices may offer a new perspective on existing objects of study, including phenomena such as the Latin American literary 'Boom' of the 1960s and early 1970s or the global popularity and spread of Brazilian telenovelas (soap operas), as well as sparking new studies in diverse fields such as anthropology, history, and geography. It asks how practices of branding and discourses of competitive identity may continue to influence Latin America in the future, shaping both internal dynamics and international perceptions. Finally, the epilogue offers a reflection on how the free-market logic of the brand and its attendant practices may shape the fate of Latin American Studies itself, as higher education and the academy become increasingly subject to neoliberal forms of management and evaluation.

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