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BOOK REVIEWS: CITY AND REGION MARKETING. CONCEPTS, TRENDS, CASE STUDIES

compiled by Bernd Hallier
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'City and region marketing' is an English-Russian bilingual reader compiled by Prof. Dr. Bernd Hallier (European Retail Academy, Cologne) with contributions from international academics and practitioners. This is a first reader in Russia about city and regional marketing. It is divided into four distinct sections: Roots and development; Case studies of city and region marketing; City partnerships and city promotion; and The role of shopping centers in city marketing.

City marketing or even city management are relatively new issues in Russian literature and fresh discussion points at conferences. At the biannual German—Russian Forum of partner cities (which in June 2009 was organized in Volgograd, Russia) only one out of 60 speakers asked to enlarge on the discussion of specialized topics about the cities' position in the national and international competition to the greater content — which actually will be achieved in 2011 as a special slot at the Forum. Last September at the International Investments Forum ProEstate in St. Petersburg, a speaker from Finland explained that his city was ideal not only for investors of industry and retail, but also for tourists. The speaker did not even see the controversy between the first and third target groups. The ExpoReal in Munich, Germany, is the annual competition for developers to sell space for/ with real estate. Normally, there are only two main stakeholders in Russia involved in city marketing programmes: the local government in the case of a city anniversary or at a foreign exhibition, and private developers who want to attract investors to certain cities.

Many of the activities described by the Russian authors are getting public audiences outside the inner circles for the first time. Beside the Russian authors, articles from Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Great Britain, Poland and the USA are included. That is also encouraging, because owing to the economic situation, visiting foreign cities is not common for the majority of Russian professors and students. During Soviet times, only a limited number of people could go abroad, and after the collapse of the old system, the first priority in the last 15 years has been to have a decent living at home. To travel within Russia to Moscow or St. Petersburg from Novosibirsk or Tomsk is still a dream for many students. Broadly based student exchange organizations such as AIESEC have been active in the West for 50 years, but it is still in the future for an average student living thousands of kilometers away from Russia's international hotspots.

The book contains a mix of ideas and is an example for applied sciences: it retains a clear focus on current practice rather than theory, even though many of the authors are academics. The great mission of the book is to bring together academics and practitioners with the perspective of developing the existing networks for the further knowledge transfer in the fields of city and regional marketing. This remains one of the main ideas of the book. In addition to this, the bilingual format contributes towards ongoing work: a much needed international glossary of terms and definitions in city marketing. The glossary may well also be incorporated into future editions of this work in order to foster international dialogue. Given the need to gain and distribute knowledge about urban planning, architecture, sociology or tourism, the book might become the core of an encyclopedia of place management. Another unique point is the high quality of printing of the illustrations. This book makes a valuable, practitioner-focused addition to the relatively scarce Russian literature on city marketing and complements more academic approaches taken by other publications in Russia, such as G. Sternik's 'Methodological algorithm of the cycle of investment consulting' (2008) or A.P. Pankrushin's

'Marketing of territories' published in 2002. The reader even has a double page in colour with Kandinsky's painting 'Welcome of the merchants', which is included as an eye-catcher at the front of the book. Therefore, it might even be considered as a potential gift for people interested in place management. Anyone involved in place marketing and place branding, especially in academic research on these growing and exciting fields, has faced the challenge of explaining that place branding has little to do with branding as it is understood and applied in the commercial world. The (sub-)discipline is characterised by misconceptions and, sometimes deliberate, misinterpretations. The familiar sentiment of spending 'more time telling people what [the] subject is *not* about than what it *is* about' is expressed in the opening sentences of the most recent book by Simon Anholt 'Places. Identity, Image and Reputation'. Simon Anholt has been at the forefront of the development of place branding for roughly the last two decades in several capacities, including being the founding editor of the first journal devoted to the topic *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* (Palgrave Macmillan). The book is in essence a collection of editorial prefaces that the author has written for the journal. It is encouraging, and particularly welcome in my view, that the most well-known and one of the strongest advocates of place branding is 'fighting' for better understanding, better explanation and better implementation of branding within the management of places.

Several issues are touched on in the book; from terminology (such as the wrong name of the discipline itself as the author rejects the branding part of place branding) to the 'three legged stool' description of the reputation of places, which rests upon strategy, substance and symbolic actions. As an indication, chapter four deals with a crucial question: should places have simple images? The answer provided is largely no. This is an answer rarely found in both literature and practice, which is one of the main reasons for seeing branding 'essentially as a process of reduction': a notion fundamentally problematic for places. A particularly interesting chapter of the book is chapter nine 'Public Sector, Private Sector', a short, indirect discussion of the benefits of cooperation between the two sectors through an insightful account of their differences and the ways in which both attempt to fight for attention in the general 'message fatigue' that characterizes our environment. The success of many NGOs in this environment is also discussed in a manner informative for places. Chapter ten deals with the relation of places to the media, which is based, as argued in the chapter, on the inexperience of government officials (and a certain amount of innocence that comes with it) with the techniques of media sales people. Although the chapter includes a rather simplistic categorization of countries based on their reputation, it does provide guidance for government officials.

Given the fact that most chapters of the book have been published earlier in *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, the loyal readers of Anholt's work (assuming they read the journal) will not find new ideas or ground-breaking solutions in the book. People involved in the place branding discipline are better off reading Anholt's (in my view) best authored piece 'Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions' (2007, Palgrave Macmillan). There is sense, however, in collecting the Editorials in one volume as the book provides useful reading for people new to the field, whether students, researchers, consultants or local authorities. Particularly two types of people should read the book carefully: branding/ communications agencies finding themselves involved in tenders for the development of place branding strategies; and local authorities before they embark on the adventure of finding and hiring the right agency for the place branding projects. The book will provide the former with a clearer evaluation of whether they should be involved in this line of consultancy at all (indeed hopefully discouraging many — I think Simon Anholt would agree on that). It will also provide the latter with a better understanding of the nature of their place branding projects and their expected outcomes. The damage to the discipline and, even worse, to places by the misled implementation of place branding would then be minimized. This prospect alone makes 'Places: Identity, Images and Reputation' a welcome addition to the literature.

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