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Urban Communication: Production, Text, Context (Critical Media Studies: Institutions, Politics, and Culture)

Timothy A. Gibson, Mark Lowes

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City leaders now confront a global competition for economic investment. Not surprisingly, urban elites have cast about for strategies that promise to secure for their cities a share of this future of global economic growth. What is remarkable, however, is that so many of these urban growth strategies are largely *symbolic* in nature. We see, for example, city leaders competing madly for the Olympics so that they can broadcast spectacular urban vistas to global television audiences. We see officials pouring public funds into tourist amenities, not so much for their tangible economic value, but rather because they help cultivate an image of vitality and renewal. We see, in short, a rich trade in images about "the city," usually for strategic economic reasons. But how are these image-building strategies produced in the crucible of local political struggle? How are the local politics of urban redevelopment intertwined with the global politics of circulating bold images of urban vitality? Who, if anyone, benefits from public investment in such 'image-building' activities? *Urban Communication* brings together a community of scholars from communication, cultural studies, and urban sociology to explore the symbolic dimensions of contemporary city-building, drawing on case studies from around the world.

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