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“From ‘Made in China’ to ‘Created in China’”: Nation Branding as Policy, Discourse, and Cultural Production

This paper interrogates the political-economic and cultural conditions that necessitate the twenty-first-century project of nation branding in the People’s Republic of China. I understand nation branding in this particular context as a state-sponsored campaign to protect the globally implicated “Made in China” brand, a discourse intertwined with broader initiatives to upgrade the brand name into “Created in China.” A growing body of literature has begun to examine this policy shift from the perspectives of cultural policy studies, working to identify the institutional agents and channels that helped shape the discourse. Taking these accounts as my point of departure, I wish to analyze the historical forces that give rise to nation branding as a cultural product, co-produced by the state apparatus and the brand-mediated global culture industry. In doing so, I hope to reveal the transnational power dynamics that delimit the cultural visions which inform policy makings of this kind.