



# Global reputation building

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# PD in South East Europe

- Why countries fail at PD



- Why best PD is unintentional



# 'Branding' as prevalent approach

- Tempting for policy makers
- Anything goes if presented in a nice way
- Magic wand, detached from reality, comes at the end



## Problems with branding: Capacity

- “Information is abundant, attention is scarce”
- It takes no less than amazing to grab people’s attention
- Do we have the resources, skills, expertise, etc?



# Problems with branding: Credibility

- Even if we did have capacity, would people believe us?
- Eurobarometer & Gallup indicate decline in trust in governments



# Problems with branding: Ethics

- Countries should be doing public good, not selling things!
- Any ethically questionable behavior likely to backfire

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- This is why we fail, but how come best PD is unintentional?
  - An example...



# After the breakup



# Worst floods in living memory Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia



# Lives lost, homes destroyed...



# Roads ...



... and railroads ruined





# Region reunited

- Old political divides no longer mattered
- People sent food, clothes and supplies, offered accommodation
- Governments sent financial aid, rescue teams, cheap electricity and waived taxes on relief
- Some of Europe's poorest countries collected millions of euros in relief in just days

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- *“The slaughter separated us, but the drowning has reunited us...”*, Vedrana Rudan
  - Empathy and care in difficult times meant more than hundreds of political statements



## Lesson learned...

- Governments alone lack resources, skills and credibility for effective PD
- Projecting images/broadcasting policies not most effective
- Actions speak louder than words!



## ‘Heretical’ conclusion...

... in order to do well, countries need to do good!

- Countries are forced to offer more than a self-congratulatory image of themselves

“If you want to become something you have to be it, if you want reputation you have to earn it!”, Simon Anholt



# What does this mean for PD?

- Clearly bad news for ‘branding’
- But good news for true public diplomacy, intentional or unintentional
- Bringing countries together through meaningful interaction and shared values



# SEECOM rationale

- SEECOM – govt communicators from 13 countries of South East Europe
- Public comms more than saying nice things about policies or leaders
- Meaningful dialogue creates new value, better policies and more democracy



## Role of PD

- Inspire meaningful dialogue with individuals of other nations
- Push countries to contribute more substance
- Earn reputation by contributing more to the common good of humanity



# Thank you!

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