John Benjamins Publishing Company

Introduction

The branding of political entities as discursive practice

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1. Branding in global-local dialectic

Contributing to the ongoing discussion which explores the complex nature of global-local dialectic, this special issue focuses on discursive aspects of global brands and branding (discourses, images, techniques and strategies) and the ways they are materialized in a variety of local contexts. Investigation of the negotiation between the global and the local involves exploring the effects of globalizing tendencies in local contexts (e.g., tensions and conflicts in discursive practices); appropriation of global discourses, strategies and techniques; recontextualizations of global discourses and emergence of new discursive practices; legitimation of practices in the process of localizing the global as well as globalizing the local. First, however, we need a conceptual framework to approach the global-local dialectic. Amin (1997) replaces a territorial idea of the local, national and the global, as separate spheres of social organization and action, with a relational understanding of each as a nexus of multiple and asymmetric interdependencies, and he suggests that the resulting interconnectedness, multiplexity and hybridization of social life constitute the most distinctive aspects of contemporary globalization: "Viewed in this way, to think of the global as flows of dominance and transformation and the local as fixities of tradition and community is to miss the point, because it denies the interaction between the two as well as the evolutionary logics of both" (ibid: 129), he argues.

In another account of globalization, that of cultural political economy, which defines 'New Capitalism' as a new form of capitalism emerging from contemporary transformations (Jessop 2004), global processes are seen to affect local processes and vice versa immediately and deeply, shifting relations between different scales (local, national, regional, global) of social life. Globalization is here not to be understood as a simple replacement of "a national or local economic dynamic by a global one, but a shift in the relation among global, national and local economies" (Fairclough 2002: 163). Dependence on information and communication

technologies, dominance of English as the language of global capital, prevalence of cultural and discursive hybridity, emphasis on new ways of learning and increasing importance of micro practices and strategies, such as brands and branding, are some of the main characteristics of the present era which have brought about changes and have affected the activities of particular categories of social agents in specific contexts. Before, however, we engage in exploring the effects of brands and branding in the various fields of the political domain and their impact on local practices, we need to develop an understanding of the concepts in the fields from which they originated.

In marketing and business terms, a brand is often defined as a unique and identifiable symbol, association, name or trademark which serves to differentiate competing products or services and to protect the consumer from counterfeit goods (Aaker 1991: 7); a physical and emotional trigger to create a relationship between consumers and the product; a cohesive identity of a product; a summary of expectations, thoughts, feelings, associations that we carry in our minds regarding a product (Lindsay 2000).

As early as 1940s, there was an awareness that a brand name is more than the label used on a product (Klein 2002) and since then various definitions of brands have differentiatied a brand from the product. For King (1973: 7): "A product is something that is made in a factory: a brand is something that is bought by customers. A product can be copied by a competitor: a brand is unique. A product can be quickly outdated: a successful brand is timeless". In 1955, Gardner and Levy defined a brand as a complex symbol that represents a variety of ideas and attributes telling the consumers many things "via the body of associations it has built up and acquired as a public object over time… The net result is a public image, a character or personality that may be more important for the overall status (and sales) of the brand than many technical facts about the product" (Gardner & Levy 1955: 34).

According to these definitions, a brand is not a product, but the product's essence, its meaning, its identity in time and space (Kapferer 1992: 11). It is a mixture of tangible (e.g., the product) and intangible (e.g., brand name) values and attributes (Clifton & Maughan 2000: vii). Moore (2003: 331) suggests that unless we analyze the complex interplay of materiality and the 'intangible' in the actual form and functioning of brands, we cannot possibly understand how brands are produced, circulated, and received in our society. But how are these 'intangible' values being selected for a product, a company or a corporation? First, starting from a 'brand essence' or core ideology, ideas are developed to create a set of core values with which a company or a corporation wants its products or services to be associated. A story is then created around these core values. According to a brand expert, the method is *storytelling*: you construct a story which you leave unfinished in order

for the customers to finish and think of it as their own (qtd. in Moore 2003: 340). The created story employs myth, symbols and metaphor. The use of the metaphor is particularly important, Bernstein (2003) argues, as it allows a brand name to associate the physical product with the values of something else.

The technique of branding is thus based upon certain simple principles. First, a brand should reflect a corporation's strengths, commitments and values – the core brand values of a corporation – and create a set of associations in the consumers' minds. Second, a brand is a corporation's promise to the customers (external branding); it is also a way of behaving inside a corporation as well (internal branding), giving a sense of direction and purpose to an organization's staff. In this sense, branding is also about managing identity, loyalty and image (Van Ham 2002: 255). Finally, a brand adds an emotional dimension to the products with which people can identify. In fact, it is this emotional dimension which differentiates branding from other marketing techniques.

Today branding has become a global industry with its own highly paid experts, its branding consultants, its own academic literature (see, Aaker 1991; Keller 1993, among others) and journals (such as the *Journal of Brand Management, Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, the Journal of Product & Brand Management*). Moreover, brand thinking does not only permeate corporations (see Balmer 2001; Balmer 2003; Bernstein 2003; Harris & de Chernatony 2001; Hatch & Schultz 2003; Knox & Bickerton 2003; Koller 2007, 2008, forthcoming; Leitch & Richardson 2003; McDonald, de Chernatory & Harris 2001; Urde 2003, for accounts of corporate branding) but it has extended to all kinds of products and services and has invaded all aspects of public and private life, since *anything for which one can construct a mental inventory is a brand*. Consequently, brands are increasingly being defined in financial terms as 'intangible assets', and the lack of brand name practically means exclusion for corporations aspiring to play a global role.

Even individual people are encouraged to behave and position themselves like corporations. Books on personal brand building (see, for instance, Stedman 2001, Peters 1999) encourage employees to consider themselves as individual brands which radiate value and energy. The activity of branding is also taken up by cities (Flowerdew 2004), by political parties and leaders (Fairclough 2006), by whole countries (Ollins 1999; Pride 2003) as part of a political project (de Michelis 2008).

It becomes therefore clear that branding is inevitably located at the heart of global-local dialectic. It is also clear that it has a profound effect on political life today, and this explains the presence of a special issue on branding in a journal which explores the various dimensions in the interplay of language and politics (Chilton 2004; Wodak 2006). The papers in this special issue explore how political

entities, be they political leaders, local governments, cities, nations and NGOs, in a variety of local settings, deal with branding techniques and strategies by appropriating global discourses and genres. They also investigate the types of identities which are construed, since, after all, branding is about identity construction: of personal, social, regional and national identities, among others.

2.   Branding as recontextualized discourse

One of contemporary transformations identified above refers to the shift of emphasis from material to semiotic production. Branding, according to Flowerdew (2004: 584), signifies such a shift since it inheres value not only in the commodity itself as a tangible thing but also in something less tangible, the brand. Moore (2003: 331) argues that the attempt to replace value with symbolic meaning has grown out of a sense that production has been transformed, or replaced, by signification. He maintains that brands and branding constitute a particular mode of objectification in which a branded product is partly a thing and partly language. Advertisements, for instance, provide "rich textualized, often narrative, representations of branded products in a wide range of imagined contexts and universes" (ibid: 334).

The importance of language and semiosis in contemporary transformations has been widely acknowledged in conceptualizations of current societies as knowledge and information-based societies. Taking into account that knowledges are produced and circulated as discourse, and that the new ways of acting and interacting include new linguistic (and semiotic) forms (e.g., new genres and discourses), we could suggest that current transformations (in organizations, local governments, cities, nations etc) are, to a great extent, semiotic and linguistic transformations (Fairclough 2002). After all, branding is encoded in identifiable linguistic and visual features and thus brand communication can be conceived as a translation of the set of core values into multimodal texts, such as vision statements, logos and brand claims. Flowerdew (2004: 585) points to the discursive nature of branding:

> These discursive processes, developing from the linguistically defined core values, are directed towards the creation (the semiosis) of an image or set of images, along with a logo that will define the brand. The purpose of this semiotic process is social action, to persuade people to buy the product or service represented by the brand.

We could claim that branding constitutes a case of recontextualized discourse. A double process of recontextualization seems to take place here. One the one hand,

branding is taken away from its original social context and relations (i.e., marketing) and is recontextualized in other contexts (i.e., politics), impacting on public action and behaviour but also on private values, attitudes and senses of self-identity. On the other hand, branding, as a global strategic discourse, carrying with it new ways of acting, interacting, new ways of being and personal and social identities, is employed at local contexts. Due to this double recontextualization process, the research agenda of branding would benefit from looking both at the ways a global technique is incorporated in local contexts, and at the ways a marketing technique is incorporated in fields which have not been traditionally associated with marketing and business. However, recontextualization is not to be seen as a one-way process, but as an active process of colonization and appropriation within new contexts, "where circumstances, histories, trajectories, strategic positions and struggles within these contexts shape the ways in which recontextualized elements are appropriated" (Fairclough 2006: 167). Approaching branding as recontextualized discourse allows us to take all of the above complex factors into account.

3. Political branding

"We're selling a product. That product we are selling is democracy". The words are attributed to former US Secretary of State Collin Powell when defining American diplomacy (qtd. in Van Ham 2002: 250). Political branding, like the application of branding strategies in other areas, is currently becoming global. Its emergence has been linked to the minimization of differences between the left and the right political ideologies (Fairclough 2006: 106–107) and to reduced reliance on ideology in campaigning and governing (O'Cass 2001). Since there is consensus among different political parties on many issues, differentiation during election periods is now often based on the image and the personality of leaders. The importance of political branding has often been summarized in the following arguments: branding adds emotion, offering clues that make voter's choice easier, since political ideologies have become so alike; the emotional relationship ensures loyalty to the brand (the political party); by creating an aspiration lifestyle, branding offers a kind of Ersatz for ideologies and political programmes that have lost their relevance (Van Gelder 2002). If this shift in political paradigms, from the modern world of geopolitics and power to the postmodern world of images and influence, continues, it is expected to have a pronounced impact on both the nature of international politics and on the character of nationalism and democracy (Newman 2001: 970; Van Ham 2002: 252).

The use of marketing techniques in politics though is not something new since they have been employed since the beginning of the twentieth century (Wring 2001)

with focus groups, opinion polls, market analysis (parties and voters, interest groups and participants) etc. Political marketing is based on the premise that the marketing principles that apply to selling a product or service may also apply to politicians and their campaigns. O'Shaughnessy (2001) claims that there are parallels between the selling of politicians and the selling of products, with the most obvious being the fact that politics sell an abstract and intangible product, which is value laden and which embodies an attractive life vision and a promise about the future. Political marketing then conceptualizes voters as customers and places emphasis on market-research policies, since it assumes that market research provides candidates and parties with a better understanding and perception of their voters. Quantitative and qualitative analyses offer useful information for political parties. For instance, when analyzing the 1999 Greek European elections, Harris, Kolovos & Lock (2001) noted inconsistences in political campaigns as far agenda setting by political parties, the press and the general public are concerned. Australian political parties have been found to prioritize party union, cohesion and dynamism and to devote time to discussions of their integral organization, democracy and representation (O'Cass 2001). Results from market analysis have also led to a claimed need for political parties to be in a state of a permanent campaign (Newman 2001; Sparrow & Turner 2001), affecting the way politics is conducted and shifting emphasis of party strategy towards image and presentation.

A distinct strategy in political marketing, branding, as "a form of condensed meaning" (O'Shaughnessy 2001), has gained ground in the marketing of political parties, governments and political leaders alike. A well known example is the rebranding of the Labour party in Britain as New Labour (Fairclough 2000; Wring 2001) in the late 1990s. Adopting the principles of a market-oriented party (Lees-Marshment 2001), the branding of the New Labour focused on providing a 'new product' which took into account people's needs and wants, ensuring in this way voter satisfaction. The branding was particularly successful and the Labour won the elections in 1997, attracting a considerable percentage of traditionally conservative voters.

Another well known example of political branding is the rebranding of the USA after September 11 as a 'compassion hegemon' and the development of messages which capture the essence and value of US freedom and democracy (Van Ham 2002: 250). To achieve their aim, experts turned to public diplomacy, whose key element is the building of personal and institutional relationships and dialogue with foreign audiences (through films, television, music, sports, the Internet, among others) by focusing on *values* (rather than *issues*, as is the case in classical diplomacy). Riordan (2002) argues that the theory and practice of public diplomacy are part of a wider discourse which involves strategic communications and branding, and he suggests that public diplomacy embodies a new direction in

the evolution of diplomacy that is taking place in a novel technological and political context. However, as is the case with branding in other areas, a problem arises when a brand does not live up to its promises. The failure of US foreign policy to live up to its own promises, for instance, not only arose the anger and frustration of millions of people, and Muslims in particular (Klein 2002), but it also undermined the credibility of the brand itself, as was the case with the US-led military attacks on Iraq (Van Ham 2003: 438).

Branding, however, does not only affect political parties and governments, but it also affects individual politicians who now realize that they must develop their own personal brand. At a basic level, the branding of politicians is made up of the subjective understanding citizens have of the person and his surroundings. Not only elements of a candidate's personality, but also elements of a candidate's appearance, such as hairstyle and clothing, provide vivid illustrations of a candidate's image. Newman (1999) suggests that most winning US politicians in recent years, from Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, have worn cowboy boots, portraying a John Wayne-like hero image, which political marketers thought would positively affect voters. In addition, he notes, all recent presidents in the USA were leaders who conveyed a sense of compassion, and at same time a sense of strength. Moreover, since television has become the primary communication vehicle that politicians use in order to brand themselves, it is not surprising that elements of speaking style are included in branding messages. For instance, President Bush has been promoted as someone who *says what he means and means what he says: a plain-spoken man who speaks directly, plainly, forthrightly and wise*. The lack of oratorical eloquence has been turned by brand experts, according to Newman (2001), into a strength of his personality (i.e., being authentic and real).

Politicians though do not only have to worry about creating their personal brands; they also need to develop an understanding of doing their job in a different way. As Van Ham (2001) put it:

> The traditional diplomacy of yesteryear is disappearing. To do their jobs well in the future, politicians will have to train themselves in brand asset management. Their tasks will include finding a brand niche for their state, engaging in competitive marketing, assuring customer satisfaction, and most of all, creating brand loyalty.

Moreover, it should be noted that in addition to political parties and politicians (see Iețcu-Fairclough, this volume) other political entities, such as organizations and institutions, have also developed their own brands and logos. NATO, for instance, stands for military security; the EU stands for the idea of Europe and has a powerful logo (its blue flag with twelve starts) (Van Ham 2005). Even NGOs adopt

branding strategies (see Vestergaard, this volume). Furthermore, other political entities, such as states, regions and cities, are being branded (through logos, mission statements etc) in an attempt to reposition themselves, as we shall see in the next section.

4.   Place branding

Territorial, location and place branding are a few of the terms used to describe the branding of states, regions and cities. When managing their location brand, politicians and local authorities are suggested to be doing two things: externally, they aim to attract more clients and generate economic and political advantage for their location; internally, they aim to give their citizens a sense of belonging and a clear self-concept (Van Ham 2003: 434). The challenge of effective branding is to attract and satisfy the needs of these two different audiences through a coherent set of images and messages.

Issues concerning the branding of countries and states have been discussed and investigated in detail (Caldwell & Freire 2004; Kottler 2002; Ollins 2002; Papadopoulos & Heslop 2002). Studies have explored the branding of countries such as Spain (Gilmore 2002), New Zealand (Lodge 2002; Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott 2002), Croatia (Martinović 2002), Wales (Pride 2003) and Norway (Supphellen & Nygaardsvik 2002). A famous example of state branding has been the attempt to rebrand Britain in the late 1990s and to replace its outmoded image as a country of cricket and warm beer with an image of a country which is a global centre of the media, design, music, film and fashion business. The need for this rebranding resulted from an analysis of a London-based branding agency which concluded that with devolution and the EU, multiculturalism and an imperial past, Britain as a nation appeared to have a highly confusing self-image. Its rebranding then focused on a discourse which projected its rich complexity and identity (de Michelis 2008). However, branding may be targeted to a specific audience for a specific purpose. The branding of Britain in Malaysia for business purposes was somehow different and focused on the core values of innovativeness, dependability, professionalism and stylishness (Temporal 2000).

Anholt (2007) notices that it is difficult for countries to brand themselves through a single discourse due to fragmented and uncoordinated communication activities which the various different organizations of a country often undertake. Similarly, O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy (2002) argue that it is difficult to maintain a coherent brand for a country, since its image is complex and fluid due to current political events which may change parts of its identity.

It should be noted that the branding of political entities constitutes an essential component in a state's strategic equity and comes at a time when the role

of states and the importance of national identity are changing in the prevailing late modern condition of world politics. In Europe especially, the construction of a brand state, on the basis of a small number of core values which draw on the state's history, geography and ethnic motifs, has been seen as a factor which marginalizes nationalism and contributes to European integration (Van Ham 2001).

However, Koller (in this volume) notes a tension between increased homogeneity of brands, products and practices around the world on the one hand, and heterogenous local adaptations and meanings on the other, which she considers as an instance of glocalization. Taking the example of city branding, a global phenomenon which draws on globalized corporate discourses, she claims that city brands embody global corporate values and discourses which are adapted to and communicated in local contexts. She further argues that a possible transfer of these brand values and branding would point towards a changing relationship between councils and citizens at the level of local governments. Moreover, since city brand communication is at the same time directed at multiple audiences, i.e., residents, tourists and investors, a question raises whether one brand discourse can reach both internal and external groups.

Tourism has become one of the fastest growing and highly competitive industries in the word today, which urges holiday destinations to create powerful travel destination brands in order to position themselves as niche players in the global tourism industry (Gnoth 2002; Harrison 2002; Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott 2002; Urry 1995; Yeoman et al. 2005; also Caldas-Coulthard in this volume). Simply put, a location is for brand experts a destination, a place which people will visit. Destination brands are seen as having two dimensions: *representational* (value-expressive attributes linked to individual self-expression) and *functional* (actual characteristics of the destinations which create a pleasant experience). An interesting case study conducted by Caldwell & Freire (2004) has revealed that, when imagining a destination, people tend to visualize the *representational* characteristics of regions and cities (e.g., the type of people who visit the region, how they themselves would be perceived if they went to that destination etc) while they tend to place emphasis on the *functional* characteristics of countries. This at least seems to be the case with the branding of Wales (Pride 2003) as an honest, welcoming, romantic, atmospheric and mystical yet down to earth country; a land of nature, legend and myth which draws from a heritage of poetry and mystery; a land with natural beauty of the countryside with Welsh castles which appear to be part of the solid natural Welsh landscape.

In fact, tourism has been seen a privileged contact zone where a nation's brand building efforts may be tested, and its cultural 'brand equity' (the set of assets determining a brand's worth) (Keller 1993) may be evaluated. Most importantly, tourism today tends to be seen as a frontline asset of a nation for global visibility,

and its emotional and culturally charged discourses and visual appeals are often considered as part of national brand management strategies (de Michelis 2008), to an extent that destination branding may be confused with nation branding (Anholt 2005: 118). Aspects of place branding are analyzed in two of the articles in the collection, the first on city branding by Koller and the second on tourism and destination branding by Caldas-Coulthard.

5.   The discursive construction of brands

While marketing research studies on brands and branding abound, discourse analytic accounts are limited to a few recent publications (see, for instance, de Michelis 2008; Fairclough 2006; Flowerdew 2004; Machin & Thornborrow 2003; Koller 2007, 2008, forthcoming). Contributing to the corpus of relevant literature, this special issue focuses on the discursive effects of brands and explores how branding has been incorporated, contested or appropriated in local contexts in a variety of settings: Sweden, Denmark, Romania, Britain, Brazil, Germany. By conceptualizing brands and branding as a local expression of a global trend, the papers of this volume explore the incorporation and the effects of corporate practices and strategies in various facets of political life. They particularly deal with the branding of political entities, and specifically the branding of political leaders (Iețcu-Fairclough, Hornscheidt), of local governments (Farrelly), of NGOs (Vestergaard), and of specific locations (Koller, Caldas-Coulthard). To do so, they draw on a variety of theoretical perspectives, such as critical discourse analysis, cognitive CDA, social-semiotics, critical Occidentalism, argumentation theory and analytics of mediation. The analyzed themes involve different legitimation practices employed in the branding of political leaders; effects of the integration of feminism as a core value in political branding; representations of social actors and actions in branding democracy in the structure of a local government; representations which inform text production and reception in city branding; representations of the human body used as a key branding strategy in multimodal tourism texts; and rebranding strategies in ethical messages by a nongovernmental organization.

In these accounts, brands are variously conceptualized as strategies, as cognitive structures jointly held by members of a particular group, as social representations or as social processes. Despite the different conceptualizations of the notion, all authors point to the importance of exploring the discursive nature of brands and their materialization in multimodal texts. They therefore engage in an analysis of the verbal as well as the visual.

In the first paper of the collection, *Branding and strategic maneuvering in the Romanian presidential election of 2004. A critical discourse-analytical and*

pragma-dialectical perspective, Iețcu-Fairclough opens up the discussion on the branding of political leaders. The author explores differences in the legitimation strategies and the varieties of populist discourse drawn upon by the two presidential candidates in the Romanian elections. Argumentation analysis of extracts from the final TV debate and 'supporters' video-clips reveals absence of brand thinking in the campaign of one candidate, and effective employment of branding strategies in the campaign of the other candidate, which build upon features of his personality. As the author suggests, "Băsescu's success was partly ensured by the way in which, in his manner of talking, in his behaviour, he seemed to embody or enact the (moral-political) values of the brand that was created for him". The author describes the different legitimation practices employed by the two candidates and argues that these differences in fact indicate different assessments of the political culture of the Romanian population by political advisors and campaign staff.

This paper illustrates how branding strategies are recontextualized and appropriated in a local context, taking on a distinctively local form in the particular structural and historical circumstances and in the particular field of strategic political struggle in Romania. Most significantly, the author suggests that building a brand upon a candidate's political personality and communicating this image leads to 'personalization of politics' (Ramonet 1999; Fairclough 2006), which backgrounds discussion of ideas and ideologies and foregrounds character and personality features of the political leaders as well as their ability to sound convincing. In Băsescu's case, effective strategic maneuvering in argumentation included key decisions on what issues to address during the pre-election period, how to address them coherently and how to adapt to different audiences by drawing on certain varieties of populist discourses.

In the second article on the branding of political leaders, *Sweden - the world's most feminist society: An analysis of current Swedish media debates and person appellation forms as a tool within CDA*, Hornscheidt argues that the integration of feminism as a core value in recent Swedish political debates has created an image of Sweden as liberal and progressive with respect to gender issues, and has led to the inclusion of feminism as one of the core values in Swedish national branding. By using the term in hegemonic contexts as a self-evident positive value, politicians have integrated feminism in political mainstream and have made it a positive element of their political image. However, she argues that the incorporation of feminism in mainstream politics, where all politicians claim to be feminists, has entailed a strong homogenization of a certain form of feminism and has reduced feminist ideas to gender equality. Pointing to the effects of this branding strategy on feminist political movements, the author notes changes in how feminism is understood in Swedish public discourse, exclusion of other real and possible voices and, most importantly, the neutralization of feminism as a resistant political movement. According to Hornscheidt, when resistance to conventional norms

is powerfully incorporated into mainstream discourse, it becomes a form of 'correct' social behavior, loses its political potential, and "is thus neutralized as part of mainstream politics".

The author explores how the term feminist, as a form of person appellation, is appropriated, (re)-adapted and (re)-claimed through an 'explicit fight for words' in Swedish political discourse. Elaborating on Said's notion of *orientalism*, she places her analysis within the paradigm of *critical occidentalism* which suggests that the construction of the self is closely related to the construction of the others. In this context she views the integration of feminism in Swedish political discourse as a branding strategy which aims to normalize and universalize a white Western concept of self, through an identity process of a positive European self-conceptualization. As a result of this process, western feminism is universalized (as the legitimate form of feminism) and conceptualized as a given western value.

The tendency towards 'personalization of politics' identified by Iețcu-Fairclough is also found in Hornscheidt's paper. The author here talks about an 'individualizing feminism' which considers being a feminist more of a personal matter and less of a political or social strategy, and she claims that there are strong parallels between new liberal economy and a changed ideal for being a feminist on the personal level.

The next two papers deal with branding at the level of local government. In *"Global" Discourses of Democracy and an English City*, Michael Farrelly investigates the branding of democracy in the newly established institution of Area Forums in Preston. The author conducts an analysis of representation of social actors and actions in the context of CDA tradition and he concludes that although the Area Forums have been established with the proclaimed aim to increase democratic participation of local people by involving them into Council matters, they have failed to bring "democratic renewal". Arguing that democracy has been one of the core values of political branding in the construal of a global imaginary, the author notes a contradiction between the branding of political entities as democratic, on the one hand, and the construal of democratic identity, on the other. Area Forums, viewed as an attempt of the Labour party to create a kind of a local imaginary, constitute such an example, according to Farrelly. The identity found in his linguistic analysis of official documents represents the public as a group of individuals, rather than as a collective (an integral element in definitions of democracy), passive social actors with an adjunct role in the Forums. On the other hand, the council is systematically represented collectively as having an active role in the Forums. Other related reasons which may account for this failure and which are related to the findings of the representations analysis are the following: the area of Preston was divided into geographical sections which did not correspond to any sense of collective identity in the city; Forum meetings took place in settings

such as schools and church halls, which are not associated with debate; the seating arrangement, with the audience sitting in rows facing the front table of councillors, assumed lower prestige of the people; people were mostly silent while officials did most of the talking.

The identified imbalance in the representation may be important if transferred to political practice, Farrelly warns, and he suggests that the case of Area Forums be seen "in terms of branding projects as democratic in the UK which fail to account for authentic democratic identity". This type of democratic branding, according to the author, is part of a wider creation of global and local imaginaries which manages to conceal the contradictions between discursive representations, on the one hand, and lack of democracy in practice, on the other. Farrelly employs the term *democratism* to refer to the appropriation of democratic discourses which may not be democratic in practice but which manage to be legitimated as such. He also notes in his data the existence of some alternative discourses drawn on by city officials which assign people a collective identity, yet a politically passive one, and he urges towards the development of other alternative discourses which will bring genuine change.

In *"The world in one city": Semiotic and cognitive aspects of city branding*, Veronika Koller deals with city branding as the local expression of a global trend and engages in an investigation of the ways local governments conceptualize cities, boroughs and towns as brands in their attempt to establish an ideal self in the minds of stakeholders (residents, investors or tourists, among others). Adopting a cognitive critical approach which views texts as vehicles of the producers' mental representations, the author defines brands as social representations, cognitive structures jointly held by members of a particular group which provide a shared frame of reference and constitute assumed common sense knowledge in hegemonic discourses, so that communication can take place. In her attempt to infer the structure of assumed representations that inform text production and reception and to explore the extent to which global brand values are adapted to local contexts, Koller conducts a close linguistic and visual analysis of a corpus of city logos and vision documents by an English borough and a German city.

The findings are quite revealing. Although there are some culture-specific differences in the branding of the two towns, on the whole Koller has found that global competition among cities has led to the appropriation of corporate discourses and practices, and to a generic and interchangeable global brand representation that is characterized by the corporate values of dynamic movement, future orientation and confidence in one's strengths. Moreover, decontextualized logos represent a shift from denoting concrete entities and objects (which, for instance, relate cities to their landmarks or history) to connoting a limited set of brand values. At this point the author warns that the impact of these corporate discourses entails the risk of reducing complex histories and relationships to just another marketable

brand value. Furthermore, a changing relationship is signaled in the data between citizens and local councils with the former being respresented as customers and the latter as service providers. This will not only redefine the relationship between council and citizens but it will eventually depoliticize the polity, Koller argues.

Body branded: Multimodal identities in tourism advertising by Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard deals with branding strategies in promotional discourse. The focus here is on how countries and specific locations brand themselves through tourism brochures and web pages. The author draws on a discursive/social semiotic perspective and she conducts a multimodal analysis of the verbal and the visual in order to explore representations of the human body in tourism advertising texts. Caldas-Coulthard supports the view that local tourism advertising discourses, produced by global and local corporations, promote particular forms of commoditised lifestyles. In this context, she argues, the human body is employed as a key branding strategy which has an impact on the construction of gendered identities. Through the employment of multimodal resources, she continues, tourism texts construe a particular version of reality with pictures of people in particular settings which are put forward as real. Such recontextualized identities are, according to the author, conditioned by the social practices of the advertisers and their stereotypical views of the advertised countries. Analysis reveals different representations of the human body. In British texts, for instance, there is a prominent discourse of *doing*, i.e., travelling and going to places. In Brazilian texts, on the other hand, emphasis lies on discourses of action, adventure, entertainment, as well as discourses of availability and sexuality. The author argues that multimodal analysis of this type points to hidden agendas which may not be explicit at first sight and raises an awareness of the employed semiotic resources, something which may lead eventually to changing the ways readers interpret representations of people and locations.

Interesting findings in Caldas-Coulthard's study also include a noted shift towards educational and informative discourses (a reverse process of technologization, cf. Fairclough 1996) and use of celebratory discourses where everything that is represented has a positive value. These discourses constitute elements of a branded *rhetoric of desire* (Van Leeuwen 2005) and personal involvement, in which people are primarily defined as consumers in a *possible* not *real* world which only has positive meanings and evaluations.

The last paper in the collection *Humanitarian Branding & the Media. The case of Amnesty International* by Anne Vestergaard deals also with branding in media political discourse. Emphasis lies on analysis of the rebranding strategies employed in ethical messages by a non-governmental organization, Amnesty International (AI), through an analysis of a promotional TV spot produced by the Danish section of the organization in 2004. The author argues that the high degree of suffering in the media, which leaves the spectator indifferent and causes compassion

fatigue, has urged AI to rebrand itself and to create a new kind of legitimacy, which is not compassion based. Vestergaard then turns to explore the features of this rebranding in the marketized ethical discourse and to discuss its effects in the construction of morality by the AI. She elaborates on the methodological framework of the analytics of mediation and conducts a multimodal analysis which illustrates how suffering is removed from representation and substituted by action and agency. Instead of a traditional documentary appeal, in which people in need are exemplified and the audience is urged to make a donation, the Danish TV spot consists of a collage of fictional moving images drawing on a blend of the genres of advertising, news and horror film, thus replacing compassion with fear. The multimodal analysis also reveals an interesting contrast between the verbal and the visual which, according to the author, points to a separation of action from representation: whereas the verbal part of the spot presents a simple discourse of social action and achievement, the visual part incorporates discourses of observation, communication and exclusion which reflect the frustration of the public towards mass communication, acknowledging the problems of mediation identified above (i.e., overexposure to suffering) and taking on the side of the viewers. By doing so, according to the author, the spot places AI outside of the circle of representation, and succeeds in constructing a form of a meta-appeal, escaping the problems associated with representations of suffering while at the same time signaling AI aims and urging people to act. As the author puts it "Their mission is as simple and straightforward as their syntax". The branding strategy employed here relies on 'possibility' pointing to a reality outside representation in which social action is possible.

Vestergaard argues that since NGOs, with Amnesty International being a leading case in point, cannot function without relying on the media for the promotion of their cause, they must find new ways of using the media to create visibility and to compel the public to act. By participating in consumer culture, NGOs have to adhere to the logic of marketing that consumers must feel their values and ideal identity mirrored in the advertisement and to make appeals in line with the consumers' desires.

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