BRANDING, POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY

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Branding and franchising, which are common features of commerce (for a review see Keller, 2003; for a critical approach Klein, 1999) have, more recently, permeated into politics in a number of ways, although this development has received limited academic attention. Yet, it is not self-evident that the branding of politics is a positive development which improves governance and enhances democracy. Indeed, as we shall see there are a number of authors who would take strong issue with such claims. As such, this article has two aims. First, we develop a heuristic identifying the ways in which branding interacts with politics, before turning to the broader question of the the relationship between political branding and the changing nature of contemporary governance and, more broadly, to the question of whether it enhances or constrains democracy. We begin however with a brief introduction to branding.

1. Branding

The word brand derives from an Old Norse word meaning 'to burn' and reflects the way in which producers burnt their 'trade marks' into their products (cattle brands being the most obvious example, well-known to lovers of Westerns). While trademarks have existed since Roman times, mass-marketed brands date from the 19th Century and reflected industrialization and the development of packaging.

However, brands are clearly not just logos. Indeed, much of the branding literature distinguishes between the experiential and psychological aspects of a brand (as just one, recent example see Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2010). The former is normally termed the brand experience and covers all aspects of the consumers' link to the brand. The latter is the brand image and refers to knowledge, emotions and expectations that the consumer has about the product; the way the brand is constructed.

The key point for us here is that, increasingly, brands are seen as crucial aspects of identity rooted in social relationships. So, McDivitt argues (2003, 13): '(a) brand is not simply an identifier (..), it is an identity. (...) A brand initially can be viewed as a seed; it must be designed, positioned, and driven to grow.' Similarly, Basu and Wang argue (2009, 78): 'Branding is a process of creating identity for a product; in other words, creating consumer equity and thus contributing to the greater uptake of a

product in the market place.' Here, the argument is that branding is less a way of improving the quality of the product and more a way of marketing it to the consumers.

Of course, this immediately raises issues about the use of branding in politics and, in this context, it is perhaps surprising that the concept of branding has been little applied in the area of social or political marketing (Plant *et. al.*, 2008: 2), although that may be changing¹ and, certainly, the political marketing literature is becoming voluminous.

Perhaps, Holt (2006, 300) makes this point most effectively:

Today branding is a core activity of capitalism, so must be included in any serious attempt to understand contemporary society and politics. Yet, despite its social significance, branding has rarely been subject to concerted empirical examination and theoretical development outside of business schools.

The point is that, even those, like Savigny (2008), who argue that marketing and branding hinder democracy, recognize that because political actors are increasingly using the techniques of marketing and branding, we need to understand and critically analyse these processes.² As such, our initial aim here is to examine how the concept of branding intersects with politics.

One other point is important here and that is the relationship between marketing and branding, which is not an uncontentious issue in the marketing literature.³ We see branding as an aspect of marketing and one which is a key feature of political marketing. In most of the cases discussed in the next section, the branding of a city, party or policy is key feature of the marketing of it, but that is not always the case.

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¹ In fact, French and Smith (2009, 210) assert: 'Branding is increasingly used in non-traditional, social markets such as politics. For example, branding has been considered in such 'unlikely' organizations as the London Metropolitan Police (BBC, 2005), the Roman Catholic Church (Zinkin, 2004), and universities (Jevons, 2006).'

² We are grateful to Heather Savigny for this point.

³ We are grateful to both Catherine Needham and Heather Savigny for drawing our attention to the need to, briefly at least, make this point.

2) Branding and Politics

Branding is a feature of number of areas of politics, notably in the fields of electoral and party politics and public policy. Here, we identify 5 main areas in which branding and politics⁴ intersect, although the last two are clearly related:

- Branded products/services are used within government, particularly in the IT and HR areas.
- Countries, states, cities or even government Departments are branded;
- Parties are viewed as brands in the political marketing literature and this is closely related to the branding of politicians and governments.
- Branding of Public Policies either by international organisations or agencies, particularly in the area of public health, where, for example, the World Health Organisation (WHO) or similar body has sponsored and branded programmes for dealing with AIDs etc, or by Governments, when the policies are then transferred by that Government to other jurisdictions.

Here, we examine and highlight some of the issues and research relative to each of these areas.

a) Using Branded Products

There are various examples of public sector organizations using branded products and services originally developed in the private sector, particularly in the HR, IT and finance sectors. For example, the trademarked European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model was first developed by industry in 1988, but it has since been adopted by public sector agencies in various countries, including the UK higher education sector (Hides *et al.* 2004; Temple 2005), UK local authorities (George *et al.* 2003) and the Dutch (Nabitz *et al.* 2000) and Basque (Sanchez *et al.* 2006) health care sectors.

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⁴ Of course, there is a broader question here about what we mean by politics. In this piece we are adopting an arena, rather than a process definition of politics, although we recognize the limitations of such an approach (on arena and process definitions see Hay, 2007).

Branding has also been used in the public sector as a way of recognizing excellence. For example, the Investors in People standard was originally sponsored by the UK government as a way of acknowledging employers that had adopted good practice in people management (Emberson and Winters 2000). This scheme was recently named a business superbrand and IIP UK, the organization responsible for promoting and developing the standard, has licence agreements with over 20 countries that use the mark worldwide.

b) Branding Countries, Sub-National Governments and Government Departments/Agencies

i) Branding Countries

Place branding is a growing area of academic interest and that was reflected in 2005 by the creation of a journal devoted to the study of place branding, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*. Here we focus on nation branding only given space constraints.

Jensen (2008, 125) argues that nation branding emerged with the end of the Cold War and flourished because globalisation meant that the market replaced ideology as the dominant narrative. As such, the prestige, and indeed power, of a country became increasingly judged by: 'its performance in the marketplace rather than the battlefield'. From this perspective, a national brand is: 'thus no longer seen as an optional nicety nor should nations simply accept the brand conferred on them by the vagaries of history; increasingly branding is becoming a key competitive asset' (Institute of Policy Development, Research Unit, 1).

The branding of countries was taken to another level when in 2005 Anholt-GfK Roper began to produce an annual nation branding index⁵ based on 1,000 interviews with people over 17 in each of 20 core countries (US, Canada, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Russia, Poland, Turkey, Japan, China, India, South Korea, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Egypt and South Africa).⁶ The top 10 nation brands in

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⁵ They also produce a City brand index,

⁶ The index is based upon 6 criteria: people; governance; exports; tourism; culture and heritage; and investment and immigration.

2008 and 2009 are reproduced in Table 1 and probably the most interesting a finding is the elevation of the USA from 7th in 2008 to 1st in 2009; a result commonly credited to the Obama effect

Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index^{SM}		
Overall Brand Ranking		
(Top 10 of 50 Nations)		
	2009	2008
1	United States	Germany
2	France	France
3	Germany	United Kingdom
4	United Kingdom	Canada
5	Japan	Japan
6	Italy	Italy
7	Canada	United States
8	Switzerland	Switzerland
9	Australia	Australia
10	Spain, Sweden (tie)	Sweden

Source: 2009 and 2008 Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index^{SM}

Much of the work on place branding is rooted in an argument about the putative move towards a post-modern, or late-modern, world, an issue we return to below. As van Ham's (2002, 252) puts it:

The importance public relations has taken on in public diplomacy implies a shift in political paradigms, a shift from the modern world of geopolitics and power to the postmodern world of images and influence. If this trend continues, it will have a pronounced impact on the nature of international politics. It will also affect the character of nationalism and democracy, and emasculate power orientated geopolitics.

Certainly, place branding has an obvious political dimension as Nimijean emphasizes (2006, 69):

branding Canada has had an explicitly political dimension. Reframing debates about public policy in terms of "Canadian values" had effectively reduced the scope of ideological diversity in Canada.

Of course, there is the broader question of whether it is possible to use branding in the same way for all countries at all times.⁷ National differences based on religion, ideology etc. may make it more difficult to brand a country ‘successfully’ and, perhaps more importantly, make countries more, or less interested in their brand. So, branding North Korea or Iran may be difficult, but these countries are unconcerned with their brand when compared to Canada or Australia.

ii) Branding Government Agencies

The UK Office of Government Commerce provides a good example of a Government agency which has used branding extensively. It is also a particularly relevant case here because it is the parent organization of the Gateway Review Process considered in more detail below.

According to its website, OGC has six key goals:

- Delivering value for money from third party spend
- Delivering projects to time, quality and cost, realising benefits
- Getting the best from Government estate
- Delivering sustainable procurement and sustainable operations on the Government estate
- Supporting the delivery of Government policy goals
- Improving central Government capability in procurement, project and programme management and estates

In some cases, the OGC has used branding as a way of promoting the specific initiatives that underpin each of these six goals. We consider the Gateway Reviews in further detail below, but other examples include the OGC’s Best Practice Portfolio and the recent rebranding of OGCBuying.solutions, which is an executive agency of OGC. We briefly discuss these two examples given their relevance to OGC’s operations and, thus, the concerns of this paper.

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⁷ We are grateful to Heather Savigny for this point.

OGC owns and maintains a portfolio of Best Practice guidance (OGC, 2007), which includes the following products:

- PRINCE 2 for project management
- Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) for programme management
- Management for Risk (M o R) for risk management
- ITIL for IT service management

All of these products have been created by, or on behalf of OGC, which owns both the intellectual property and trademarks in each case. OGC has also introduced a generic swirl logo, which is used in all of the promotional and guidance literature that forms part of this portfolio. The swirl logo remains the same in each case, but the colour of the logo changes according to the particular product. Contracts have also been awarded to The Stationery Office, which acts as the OGC's official publisher, and APM Group Ltd (APMG), which acts as its official accreditor. In turn, APMG oversees and provides accreditation to those providers that use OGC's best practice products, including training and consultancy firms as well as examination institutes.

Three of these products, PRINCE2, MSP and M_o_R, provide best practice guidance on programme, project and risk management and are collectively known as OGC's Programme and Project Management products. PRINCE 2, which stands for Projects in Controlled Environments, has been the most successful of these products. The methodology underpinning PRINCE 2 has undergone a number of iterations since it was first developed in 1989 as a way of standardizing central government's approach to IT project management with the latest revision being launched in June 2009. As a result of these changes PRINCE 2 has evolved into a generic project management tool that is now used by the public and private sector in both IT related and non-IT related projects. The method itself focuses on the planning, delegation, monitoring and control aspects of six different dimensions of a project, namely: costs; timescales; quality; scope; risk; and benefits. As with all of its best practice guidance, OGC owns the methodology underpinning PRINCE 2 and it has also trademarked both the name and the purple swirl logo that is seen on all of the promotional material associated with the system. This logo has not been used in the case of the Gateway Review

process, but PRINCE 2 is designed to complement both Gateway and OGC's other guidance on procurement.

Another example of the importance of branding to OGC's operations can be seen in OGCbuying.solutions, which is both an Executive Agency of the OGC and a Trading Fund, which means that it is run on commercial lines and returns any profits that it makes back to the Treasury. Whereas OGC is responsible for procurement policy and best practice guidance, OGCbuying.solutions' primary role is to deliver procurement solutions for nationally sourced commodity goods and services to customers in both central civil government and the wider public sector, including central government departments, NHS Trusts, local councils, and schools. In doing so, it provides access to over 500,000 products and services through more than 1000 suppliers in ICT, property and office solutions, energy, travel and professional services. It therefore exists in a competitive environment in which public sector agencies can select where to procure their goods and services from over 40 Professional Buying Organisations (PBO), although Buying Solutions does have certain institutional advantages in that it is not only the largest PBO, but also the only one with a legal remit to trade across the whole of UK public services.

It is in this relatively competitive context that Buying Solutions has recognised that its ability to attract and retain its public sector customers partly relies on how well it brands itself. A recent example of this can be seen in Buying Solution's rebranding strategy, which was launched in April 2009 and led to the creation of Buying Solutions as one 'master' brand in place of OGCbuying.solutions and its sub-brands 'Catalist' and 'Managed Services'. Their website claims that this rebranding will: 'simplify the corporate brand and make it more meaningful to customers' (Buying Solutions 2009d). It will also create 'a single, unified brand with immediate market recognition', reduce confusion in the market place, help Buying Solutions differentiate itself from the OGC, and provide a focus for the organisation's marketing activities (Buying Solutions 2009c). Buying Solutions has listed the successful implementation of its rebranding strategy as one of its 'key risk factors' and a major determinant of its future success (Buying Solutions 2009a, 53).

Both corporate and product-based branding have therefore featured as important aspects of OGC's ongoing operations. As indicated, this may partly reflect an increased awareness and acknowledgement of the importance of branding within the public sector, particularly in those areas where the public sector competes with private and third sector suppliers. In what remains of this paper, our attention turns to the branding and franchising of a relatively new OGC product, the Gateway Review Process. This public policy deserves particular attention for several reasons not least because it is an interesting example of the interplay between policy transfer, policy branding and policy franchising, a set of relationships that remains under-explored in the extant literature.

c) Branding Parties, Leaders and Governments

The literature on political marketing has grown rapidly in the last decade and we can only touch the surface here. While much of this literature doesn't directly address the issue of branding, it is implicit throughout. Certainly, there is broad agreement that the political parties have increasingly used marketing techniques, often with a particular focus on branding, and thus have been heavily marketed (see, for example, Lees-Marchment, 2001b, 2004). However, as we shall see later, there is much less agreement about the consequences of this branding for both governance and democracy. Actually, there are three separate, but clearly related, aspects of this literature, which deal with the branding, respectively, of parties, politicians and governments. O'Shaughnessy and Henneberg (2007) make the same point slightly differently, arguing that political brands have three clearly distinct elements: a trinity with the party as the brand; the politician as its tangible characteristics; and policy as its core service offerings. This section looks at these three aspects of political marketing, and particularly branding, in turn.

i) Marketing and Branding Parties at Elections

The analogy between elections and points of sale is obvious. As Needham argues (2005, 346):

Drawing on commercial marketing analogies, an election can be seen as the moment of sale: the point of choice, where voters employ the knowledge they have about a candidate or party and make their choice.

Here, French and Smith argue (2008, 211) that: 'parties are brands because they act as brands to consumers (...) consumers have knowledge structures of political parties in much the same way they have for brands.' As such, as Smith (2005, 212) puts it, the political brand is defined as an associative network of interconnected political information and attitudes, held in memory and accessible when stimulated from the memory of a voter. So, political marketing aims to build: 'positive relationship between party and voter' (French and Smith, 2008, 214). To put it another way, the implicit argument here is that branding is crucially related to the development of partisan alignment, although this is not explored empirically and the decline in partisan alignment may through doubts on the efficacy of such branding.

iii) Marketing and Branding Party Politicians

French and Smith also argue (2008, 217) that voters use political brands as a way of reinforce concept of self, through a 'relationship' with the leader. Smith (2009) follows this insight empirically in a study of the branding of UK parties and personalities emphasising (2009, 212) that: 'Recent market research in the United Kingdom confirms that the leader's and party's images were more influential in attracting voters than the policies they espoused.' Smith (2009, 218-224) surveyed 183 undergraduate business studies students at an English university, asking them to identify the positive personality traits they looked for in politicians.

Smith found (see Figure 1) three major differences between political and commercial markets. First, honesty was a much more important positive personality trait in the political sphere (Smith, 2009, 223). Second, strong differentiation from other brands, termed uniqueness, was also important (Smith, 2009, 223). Third, overall, personalities (politicians) had a greater impact on brand personality in the political, than in the commercial, field. Of course, this immediately re-raises the question about how analogous commercial and political branding are and, more crucially, whether the ideas of branding taken from Business Studies have utility in the electoral/political arena.

FIGURE 1: Brand Personality Scale for U.K. Political Parties (traits are shown in ranked order, highest item to total correlations at top).

Source: Smith, G. (2009, 220).

ii) *Marketing and Branding Parties in Government*

Party images/brands can clearly affect how citizen's view policy. Smith gives an example of a YouGov study on how party images/brands affect the way in which people react to policies (2009, 210):

Researchers asked two groups of people whether they agreed with the Conservative Party policy on immigration. One set was told it was Conservative policy, and the other just had the policy described to them but unattributed. The unattributed policy's net approval rate was 12 points higher than the attributed one, which strongly suggests that "the Conservative Party's image was so bad that people suddenly stopped liking policies when they found out they belonged to the Conservative Party.

In fact, the literature has increasingly pointed out that: 'there is no stark distinction between campaigning and governing given that the personnel, tactics and tools of the election campaign followed the successful candidate into office (Blumenthal, 1982). Indeed, this point is enshrined in the idea of the 'permanent campaign', which involves more than a recognition that politicians start gearing up for re-election well before the official campaign begins. Rather, it is a claim that campaigning is 'nonstop' (Heclo, 2000, p. 17). In fact, Heclo takes the point further arguing that it is a: 'process seeking to manipulate sources of public approval to engage in the act of governing itself' (Heclo, 2000, p. 17).

It is commonly argued (see Needham, 2005, 347-8 for an introduction to this literature) that there are six attributes of successful brands: brands simplify, so that customers need less detailed knowledge about product; brands are unique and differentiated from competition; brands reduce perceived risk for consumer; brands are aspirational, evoking promise of a better future; brands symbolize the company values, offering reasons why consumer should buy this product, rather than others; successful brands are seen as credible, delivering on promises.

Needham (2005) uses this framework to assess the extent to which Clinton and Blair governments succeeded as brands. She concludes (2005, 355):

As incumbents, Clinton and Blair sought to sustain their relationships with their winning coalitions of voters through projecting aspects of leadership which are analogous to branding. Both leaders strived to develop simple, reassuring and credible messages, which distinguished them from their opponents and resonated with the aspirations and values of voters. These premiers were particularly effective at differentiation and aspirational appeals but their ability to deliver simple, credible and reassuring messages varied over time. The value dimension was particularly problematic for leaders who much of the time looked too eager to please.

d) Branding of Public Policy

i) Branding of Public Policy by International Agencies

Here, the majority of examples appear to be in the public health field, where it seems to be a developing feature of policy making. As Basu and Wang (2009, 77) point out:

it is not difficult to envisage a public health campaign as a “product” in the health consumer market. (...) a public health campaign involves a systematic communicative process that aims to persuade a relatively large collection of individuals to adopt certain prescribed health messages and/or behaviours.

They argue that every year new public health campaigns seek attention in an increasingly competitive media environment, so: ‘given the cluttered health product market, a public health campaign should be infused with brand attributes so that the target audience is able to experience the “Product” and its value’ (Basu and Wang, 2009, 79). Consequently, in their view (2009, 80): ‘(the) contested marketplace demands the creation of distinct propositions for products.’

Basu and Wang (2009) follow the broader branding literature by distinguishing between three aspects of brand strategy: brand definition; brand communication; and brand management. Brand definition involves designing the identity of the brand; as Basu and Wang put it (2009, 84): ‘(the) power of brand resides in the minds of the customers’. However, they (2009, 86) contend that the non-profit world is characterized by ‘fuzzy brands’ that don’t sustain interest or retain loyalty. For Basu and Wang (2009, 85), brand communication: ‘refers to devices that serve to identify, express, and share the meaning of the product with consumers.’

There are two aspects of brand communication: a. brand identity system (logos, brand names etc.); and brand meaning and dialogue (integrating various modes of market communication). In their view (2009, 85) public health communication is: ‘biased towards one-way, top-down promotion; it relies on standard communication tools, and lacks tactical excellence and effectiveness.’ In addition, they suggest (2009, 81) that: ‘the dominant health control frameworks fail to accommodate the culture and context of the target audience in planning, designing and implementing these campaigns.’

Brand management involves the ways in which organizations are structured in order to promote, protect and sustain the brand. For Basu and Wang (2009, 85), effective brand management involves 'organisational resources and managerial commitment' and that is often missing in public health campaigns.

The most cited case study in the public health literature on branding is the Truth Campaign, designed to establish an anti-smoking brand with teenagers. As Evans *et.al.* (2007) argue, the Truth Campaign :'(s)ought to produce a: 'youth-orientated aspirational brand built on appealing social images.' They continue (2007, 187):

cultural branding strategies were effectively used in this endeavor. Cultural symbols or values associated with youth or related to youth aspirations, such as being "cool", being empowered to take control of one's life, and being an opinion leader – were integral to the Truth brand.

At the same time, the campaign is widely seen as a success, although, of course, assessing 'success' is not easy, an issue we have dealt with elsewhere (Marsh and Fawcett, 2010a; see also Marsh and McConnell, 2010): 'there is empirical evidence to suggest the potential benefits of the Truth campaign. There was a marked decline in youth tobacco use associated with the Truth Campaigns in the states of Florida and Massachusetts' (Evans *et.al.*, 2007, 188).

Ogden, Walt and Lush (2003) undertook an interesting study of the Direct Observation of Treatment, Short-Course Chemotherapy Programme (DOTS) for tuberculosis control. The World Health Organisation (WHO) produced a 'Framework for Effective Tuberculosis Control which contained: 'nine key operations and five main elements as the basic policy for effective TB control.' DOTS was strongly contested and resisted by academic and scientific communities, but Ogden, Walt and Lush argue (2003, 184) that: 'The Global TB Programme explicitly intended to develop a policy package that was simple and marketable to policy makers and programme implementers.'

One of the most interesting aspects of the branding of health policy is that the programmes are often, perhaps usually, franchised, as well as branded⁸ and DOTS was branded and franchised by WHO. As Ogden, Walt and Lush argue (2003, 186):

a strongly political approach characterized what is usually thought of as a technical health policy process. The DOTS campaign was extremely successful in emphasizing advocacy and the marketing of an idea. (...) the Global TB Programme managed effectively to exploit an important window of opportunity (a TB outbreak in New York) in order to come up with a branded solution by which to solve it. Their success can be measured in the number of countries adopting the DOTS policy to date – 127 out of 211.

However, the putative success of DOTS was not unquestioned, as Ogden, Walt and Lush (2003, 185) point out: 'While the marketing of DOTS was, in many ways, hugely successful, in terms of attracting attention and resources for TB, branding had disadvantages and led to further contestation.' They continue (2003, 186): 'the overt political approach of branding and marketing DOTS led to considerable contestation within a normally technical and relatively consensual policy community, with disagreements between academic, scientists and programme managers at WHO.'

ii) Branding of Public Policies by National Governments and Policy Transfer

Ogden, Walt and Lush article uses policy transfer as a frame and, indeed, they argue (2003, 180): 'these two phases are particularly important for policy transfer: the mobilization of interest and resources for a particular issue, followed by policy development, 'branding and advocacy.' This is interesting because the last example of the relationship between politics and branding considered here is directly concerned with the transfer of policy from one jurisdiction to another.

Policy transfer is an increasingly important feature of public policy developments (see Dolowitz and Marsh, 1995; Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Evans, 2008). However, the

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⁸ Franchising involves using another company/organisation's business model. Almost always the franchisor charges the franchisee a percentage of the sales for the right to distribute products/services. Franchising dates back to the 1850s, but the first big growth occurred in the 1920s and 1930s in the US with first fast food outlets and subsequently motels being franchised.

focus in this literature has been on why and how a country *imports* policy models from another country to solve a policy problem; both the DOTS case, and even more obviously the Gateway case below, turns our attention to why and how a country (or international agency) tries to *export* its policies.⁹

Policy transfer can clearly involve branding as in the DOTS case examined in the last section. Ogden, Walt and Lush (2003) use the DOTS case to examine some of the issues of transfer and it is clear that, as Lush and Ogden (2003, 18) stress:

One of the enduring discussions in international health policy over the last decade has revolved around the extent to which national policies are influenced by the international policies of aid agencies or multi-lateral organizations.

So, a number of international agencies are transferring branded policies to less-developed countries.¹⁰ However, there is also the transfer of branded policies within and between developed countries. Here, the Gateway case, which we have considered in more detail elsewhere (Marsh and Fawcett, 2010a and 2010b), is particularly interesting. It is a case which is different because it involves the branding of a policy, and indeed its franchising, to other jurisdictions inside and outside of the originating country.

Three major UK Government reports on public procurement policy between 1995 and 1999 brought the issue of public procurement policy into the mainstream of UK public policy, as it was increasingly realized that it had a significant impact on public expenditure outcomes. The 1999 Gershon Review led to the establishment of the UK Office of Government Commerce (OGC) in April 2000 and this, in turn, resulted in

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⁹ We are grateful to Carsten Daugbjerg for this important point.

¹⁰ Sometimes these involve public-private partnerships, as in the case of the Global Fund, initially established by the UN in 2000 to provide money for agencies to work with local communities with branded policy initiatives to deal with AIDS. Originally, the money came from UN member countries, but the global financial crisis led to major reductions in funding. Subsequently, the RED campaign was launched in 2006, which involves companies like American Express, GAP, Apple, Nike and Starbucks signing up to produce RED-branded products and committing a proportion of their profits on those products to the Global Fund. This campaign had been criticized; see, for example, Rosenman (2007) who argues that it is an: 'example of the corporate world aligning its operations with its central purpose of increasing shareholder profit, except this time it is being cloaked in the patina of philanthropy.'

the introduction of Gateway Reviews (henceforth Gateway) in February 2001 (see Marsh and Fawcett, 2010a for more details on Gateway).¹¹

The Gateway process reviews projects at six key decision points (six 'gates', hence the name): start up; business justification; procurement strategy; investment decision; readiness for service; benefits evaluation. The reviewers are individually accredited by the OGC, with many drawn from the private sector. A risk profile is created for all procurement projects by the Department's Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), using a common spreadsheet. The end result is a score, which determines the projects level of risk; high, medium or low. For projects seen as potentially high risk, the Gateway Reviews are conducted by independent teams, nominated by the Gateway Unit; medium risk projects can have departmental representatives on the team; low risk project reviews are undertaken by the Department. The Reviews are brief, lasting three to four days, during which time the emphasis is upon reading documentation and interviewing all stakeholders. Subsequently, a short report is produced for the SRO. Initially, the projects were graded Red, Amber or Green in these reports, although that process has subsequently changed (see below). The report is discussed with the SRO and forwarded to OGC within seven days, with all actions agreed before the Gateway team departs. Effectively, a red rating meant 'fix the problem quickly'; it did not mean that the project was stopped. However, red ratings at subsequent reviews triggered a letter to the relevant Department's Permanent Secretary.

Gateway was conceived as a brand from the outset, after a brand consultant gave a three-hour presentation to its first head, Ian Glenday, (2007) and his colleagues. Given it was branded, it is clear that it was intended to 'market' Gateway, initially to UK partners and then overseas. As such, franchising was also a key element of Gateway's strategy. These two features of Gateway are clearly reflected in the trade-marking of the Gateway brand and in the quality of the promotional literature which they produce, which is adopted, and adapted to varying extents, by all the franchisees.

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¹¹ Gershon, Peter, *Review of Civil Procurement in Central Government*, available online at <http://archive.treasury.gov.uk/docs/1999/pgfinalr.html>, April 1999. For more details of the case see Marsh and Fawcett, 2010a and 2010b.

In the UK, Gateway is overseen by the Gateway Unit in the OGC and operates in central government, local government, the NHS, the Ministry of Defense, the Police Force, and in the sub-national governments in Scotland and Wales. It is widely seen as a success in the UK (see Marsh and Fawcett, 2010a, for a discussion of its putative 'success') and has been transferred to Australia, first to Victoria and, subsequently, to NSW, Queensland and WA.¹² In addition, in 2008 it was introduced in New Zealand and the Netherlands.

The crucial thing here is that, as we argue at more length elsewhere (Marsh and Fawcett, 2010a), there is strong prima-facie evidence that the branding and franchising is a major reason for both the success of the transfer process and the success of the policy in those jurisdictions to which it has been transferred.¹³ Certainly, our interviewees in the Gateway Units in the UK and Victoria emphasized this point (see Marsh and Fawcett, 2010a). Interestingly, Gateway wasn't branded and franchised in order to raise revenue, as would clearly be the case in the private sector.¹⁴ Rather, the initial intention was to ensure that, when Gateway spread through the UK public sector and the hubs, this was done in a consistent and comprehensive manner. When the transfer became international, it was regarded as crucially important to 'preserve the brand' and to franchise for two main reasons: first, to ensure that failures, which might reflect back adversely on the process in the UK, were less likely; and, second, to allow for the exchange of best practice within a common framework.

The importance the OGC attached to Gateway as a brand was most clearly demonstrated in 2007 when it established a Brand Assurance Team in 2007. This team's task is to protect the integrity of the brand in any transfers that take place, as

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¹² There has also been transfer to other, sub-state jurisdictions in Australia, notably Brisbane City Council which has established itself as leader in this area and is attempting to market itself as a centre of information and advice about Gateway among councils in North Eastern Australia.

¹³ This is not to say that other factors were not important, particularly: the extensive contacts between UK Gateway and Victoria; the strong interpersonal relationships that developed; and the fact that the UK and Australia share a language and a Westminster political system.

¹⁴ However, OGC is becoming more conscious that the intellectual property involved in Gateway is valuable and has been exploring ways of raising revenue in this way.

well as dealing with requests for information about Gateway from other jurisdictions¹⁵ and encouraging the exchange of best practice, or lesson drawing from hubs, including international hubs. More specifically, the franchising of the process means that the UK Brand Assurance team reviews the process in the hubs every three years. To date, only Victoria of the international hubs has been reviewed. This occurred in 2007 and was a light touch review. The franchisee bears the cost of the review, but no other payment is involved.

As emphasised, Gateway is franchised, as well as branded. Again, franchising is more common in the private sector. Alon (2005) argues that franchising in the private sector is most successful in the case of companies with strong and continuing profitability and for businesses which can be easily duplicated. There has also been considerable work identifying the putative advantages and disadvantages of franchising for both franchisors and franchisees. Most of these factors are not relevant in relation to franchising in the public sector, but some are important. So, it is argued that franchisers benefit from the opportunity to spread their business model at limited cost and from the fact that franchisees have more incentives than employees to make a brand work. The main disadvantage is that franchisers lose control unless they have a careful vetting procedure and regular checks on performance. As far as franchisees are concerned, they are seen as benefitting from the knowledge of, and the training by the franchiser, but the main disadvantage is the loss of control, compared with launching their own brand.

These arguments about franchising have some, if limited, resonance in the case of Gateway. Gateway UK has been able to spread the model with limited cost, but the benefits it has enjoyed have not been financial, rather the putative 'success' of the Review Process abroad has, at most, reinforced Gateway and OGC's claims about its success in the UK and, to a limited extent to date, benefited through the exchange of best practice. As far as the borrowing jurisdictions are concerned, the benefits are more obvious. Their costs were reduced by the fact that the Gateway model and the accompanying documentation were already available, and indeed tried and tested. In

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¹⁵ In 2008 and 2009 the UK was approached for information and advice on Gateway by over 30 jurisdictions, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Israel, Norway, Singapore, Iceland and France.

addition, the fact that it was widely seen as a success in the UK made it less of a risk. At the same time, they retain significant control as UK Gateway has, to date, allowed significant variations in the Gateway models in some jurisdictions.¹⁶

3) Branding, Governance and Democracy

The developing links between branding and politics are probably best understood, as van Ham's (2002), who was quoted earlier, suggested, as part of a longer term process in which political systems and political actors adapt to the technological, social and political change associated with what is most often termed late-modernity. As such, the increased use of branding in politics raises immediate questions about the nature of modern governance and the operation of contemporary democracy. Here, we consider the two issues separately.

i) Branding and Governance

Sociologists argue that we have moved into a period of late-modernity (Lash, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992) characterised by both increased complexity, reflected in changes in economic, social-cultural and political processes, and increased reflexivity.

This debate has permeated Political Science, particularly in the literature on governance (Pierre and Peters, 2000; Bell and Hindmoor, 2009) and its relation to late-modernity. Here, the work of Henrik Bang (2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008; Bang and Sorensen, 2001) is particularly interesting. Bang sees the politics of late-modernity as characterised by: the replacement of hierarchy by networks as the dominant mode of governance; the hollowing out of the state; a move from politics-policy to policy-politics; the increased fluidity of identity, including political identities, coupled with a greater reflexivity; changing forms of political participation; the increased importance of the discursive arena for network governance and the associated rise of the role of the media and celebrity politics; and the changing nature and role of parties. These are crucial claims which, to the extent that they are true, change the nature of politics and the political and, perhaps most crucially, of contemporary democracy.

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¹⁶ Notably in New South Wales which only focuses on two, of the six, gates (see Marsh and Fawcett, 2010a).

We are not concerned with Bang's overall argument here (but see Marsh, 't Hart and Tindall, 2010, Li and Marsh, 2008 and Marsh 2009). However, although Bang doesn't discuss branding, it is easy to see how it might play a role in the move from politics-policy to policy-politics (Bang 2007 and 2008). For Bang, politics-policy was rooted in an input-output model, in which the focus was upon how pre-constituted political agents, individuals, but also classes, gained access to, and recognition in, political decision-making processes. In contrast, policy-politics is rooted in what Bang terms a 'flowput' model, in which the focus is upon how political elites from the public, private and voluntary sectors are networking in order to produce and deliver the policies wanted by the reflexive individuals characteristic of late or high modernity.

Bang further contends (2007) that contemporary governance networks operate in three arenas: parliamentary; corporatist; and discursive. He argues that the discursive arena is becoming more important because it is crucial for attempting to resolve the tension between the complexities of late-modernity and the imperative involved in the need to produce effective public policy. The idea here is that contemporary states are under more pressure dealing with increased complexity and, for that reason, incorporate more elites into the policy-making process.

In Bang's view, in contemporary network society policy emerges through the networking process, as a result of discursive engagement among the network elite which engages in a broader discursive arena, utilising their media expertise, in order to convince citizens that they have the answers to the problems they face. As such, Bang (2007, p. 8) identifies a shift from an input-output model of politics, in which inputs from citizens, via parties and interest groups, were negotiated and aggregated into policy outputs by government (in his terms a period of politics-policy), to a recursive one, in which the network elite, operating through the political system, acts: 'in its own terms and on its own values, thereby shaping and constructing societal interests and identities' (in his terms a period of policy-politics).

Bang also argues that the move from politics-policy to policy-politics has led to a significant change in the nature and role of political parties. In his view, parties are no longer channels of representation, rather they are means by which governments,

and indeed oppositions, attempt to convince citizens that they have the best leaders and the best policies. From this perspective, the branding of parties, politicians and policies is increasingly necessary to convince citizens of the quality of the product produced by the party/government.

If Bang is right, this also raises issues about the relationship between political branding and democracy. To the extent that branding is used to legitimise policy decisions taken in expert networks, this might well undermine representative and parliamentary democracy. Overall, there is no doubt that the growing prominence of political branding politics has implications for the nature and future of democracy and this is an issue which a number of authors have discussed, particularly in the political marketing literature.

ii) Branding and Democracy

Generally the literature on branding, particularly the marketing literature, doesn't address the consequences of the growth of political branding for democracy, although, as we shall see, there are honourable exceptions. So, Moufahim and Lim (2009, 764) argue that the marketing literature: 'has, for the most part, taken an "instrumental" approach to marketing phenomena, i.e., by focusing on practical, rather than methodological or philosophical, issues. Consequently, they contend (2009, 764): "political marketing scholars continue to wrestle with the narrowly pragmatic nature of much of the research conducted by their peers and colleagues.' In contrast, there are two distinct streams in the more critical literature: authors who see branding as involving control by parties/politicians/governments, rather than increased participation/involvement by citizens (Moufahim and Lim, 2009; Savigny, 2008; Smith, 2009 ; and authors who think that branding/political marketing could extend democracy, but, to date, does not (O'Cass 1996; Lees-Marchment, 2001b, 2004).

The mainstream literature on political branding/marketing essentially treats it as almost totally analogous to branding/marketing in the business sector. As Moufahim and Lim (2009, 765) put it: 'Applied to political processes, commercial marketing becomes "political marketing", i.e. the application of business practices to politics and

the mindset of “voter-centeredness”.) As such, it tends to avoid the hard, but very important, question of whether this process constrains democracy. However, the implication in much of this literature is that branding makes it easier for citizen customers to make a choice between parties/politicians/policies etc and, thus, political branding could be seen as expanding democracy because it engages more people into the political process. In addition, treating citizens as consumers means that parties will be more responsive to their wishes, so branding and marketing can contribute to a better representation of constituents (Lees-Marshment, 2001).

O’Shaughnessy and Henneberg (2001, p. xiv) emphasise that: ‘(p)olitical marketing is about the making and unmaking of governments in a democracy’. Many authors are critical of the relationship between branding and democracy and, indeed, the orientation of the political marketing and branding literature. Here, Smith (2009) makes an important initial point by identifying the tension between the focus on voters as consumers crucial to political marketing/branding and the parties need to be ‘responsible’, particularly in government. Indeed, it could be argued, in a way which fits with Bang’s analysis, that this tension is resolved by parties using brands as a means of control, ‘selling’ policies made in expert networks to citizens.

This argument is developed by Jensen, who argues that nation branding normalizes market fundamentalism (Jensen, 2008, 131), with few benefiting. As Jensen (2008, 134) puts it: ‘The primary impetus for branding products, companies and nations, like cattle and slaves, is control.’ As such, Jensen contends that there is little room for democratic control of nation’s brand identity: ‘nation branding is a monologic, hierarchical, reductive form of communication that is intended to privilege one message, require all voices of authority to speak in unison, and marginalize and silence dissenting voices.’ (Jensen, 2008, 134)

This link between neo-liberalism or economic rationalism and political marketing/branding, and particularly the academic study of it, is particularly strongly developed by Savigny (2004; see also Scammell 1999, 726). She also argues, elsewhere (2007b, 124), that:

This 'marketing concept' is used within the political marketing literature to suggest that the consumer [voter] is at the centre of the process, as such parties listen to [targeted] public opinion, providing the electorate with a 'product' that they want. This process of listening and responding is used to support the normative claim that the application of this concept enhances democracy (O'Cass 1996; Lees Marshment, 2001).

Savigny develops this point with a consideration of the use of focus groups by New Labour within the UK (2007b, 132):

Thus, marketing meant encompassing the views of voter groups in key seats. The data generated by these focus groups informed the manner in which the New Labour product was presented and the image that Labour sought to project to the key groups of voters who were significant in influencing the outcome of the election. This was then translated into electoral strategy. Campaigning was limited in 'safe seats and largely ignored where Labour acknowledged it had no chance of winning' (Pattie 2001, 48; see also Seyd 2001), a theme continued and exacerbated in the 2005 election (Savigny 2005).

Overall, she contends (2007b, 133) that marketing, and thus branding: 'is not adopted to enhance the democratic process; rather, it is a means to an end, as such usage does not necessarily entail democratic outcomes.' As such, she suggests that it effectively depoliticizes the democratic process.

More specifically, Smith and French argue (2009, 210) that:

when branding has been applied in the political marketplace, it can produce unwanted effects such as narrowing the political agenda, increasing confrontation, demanding conformity of behaviour/message and even increasing political disengagement at the local level (Scammell, 1999; Lilleker and Negrine, 2003; Needham, 2005). For some at least, political parties are not soap powder brands and should not be treated as such.

In contrast, a number of authors are less skeptical, seeing marketing and branding as capable of extending democracy, but currently failing to do so (Smith and French, 2009). Much of this argument originates from a post-structuralist position and suggests that late-modernity (to some post-modernity), with increased information and reflexivity can give rise to a consumer counter-culture, in which affluence and choice empowers consumers in the marketplace and citizens in the polity.

However, this is seen as posing problems for political parties. The argument, as Smith and French (2009, 219) emphasize, is that:

From the citizen–consumer dichotomy arises a radical requirement from political parties. The latter will have to satisfy empowered consumer citizens who want the political brand not only to do things for them, but also to act as a vehicle for achieving desirable outcomes for themselves. The post-modern consumer of the future will want greater choice between political brand offerings but also ‘self-actualisation, a world of connection, community and authenticity’ (Gould, 2003: 73).

Smith and French (2009, 219) develop this point:

Even accepting that greater pluralism is possible within the system, achieving greater connection (with a distant political elite), a greater sense of community (in an increasingly atomized society) and authenticity (in a combative political system concerned with point scoring) calls for a root and branch re-think as to what the political brand is for. For example, for consumers to see a political brand as authentic requires it to be seen as ‘disinterested’. That is, driven, not by a self-serving motive to achieve power and govern, but core brand values that are of relevance and use to consumers in living their lives and fulfilling their ambitions.

So, the argument is that marketing and branding can improve democracy, but only if the focus of the political brand is upon authenticity (Smith and French, 2009, 220):

The prize of a more connected electorate, involved in politics and gaining benefits at a number of levels from their brand of choice, is critical for the democratic process. The danger is that an increasingly alienated electorate, for whom political brands have nothing of real value, won't engage enough to let them.

Conclusion

This article has had two aims: first, to develop a heuristic for analysing the relationship between branding and politics; and, second, to focus on the relationship between political marketing/branding and governance and democracy. We have developed and discussed a classification of five ways in which politics and branding articulate. Here, our intention is to stimulate discussion and, as with any heuristic, this one will stand or fall depending on whether other researchers find it useful. Of course, the question of the relationship of branding/marketing to governance is much more important. Here, we argue strongly that it is necessary to engage more systematically with these issues. More specifically, we agree with Moufahim and Lim (2009; see also Savigny, 2004, 2007a and b, 2008) that it is essential to develop a more critical political marketing/branding agenda, which is much less instrumental in its research concerns and draws on broader epistemological and theoretical perspectives which allow it to interrogate the relationship between marketing/branding and democracy much more thoroughly.

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