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The Politics of Macromarketing delivered as part of the Plenary Roundtable on Macromarketing and Politics

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Proceedings of the 36th Annual Macromarketing Conference

Held at the Mason School of Business, College of William and Mary

Williamsburg, Virginia, USA

June 2011

The New World: Macromarketing Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

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2011 Macromarketing Conference

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Roundtable Session on Macromarketing and Politics

Alan Bradshaw, Royal Holloway College, University of London, UK
Detlev Zwick, York University, Canada

The purpose of this roundtable is to generate a critical debate about the politics of macromarketing. Looking at the various track options to which one can submit a paper at this conference, we recognize the broad range of interests of macromarketing scholars. Macromarketing is, indeed, an inclusive discipline and, as the landmark essay by Mittelstaedt, Kilbourne, and Mittelstaedt (2006) on macromarketing as *agorology* plainly illustrates, it is also one that cannot but recognize the political economy of marketing practice. How else can we understand the correct observation that the choices of agora participants have consequences far beyond themselves? As the authors state, the Agora – used as a metaphor for what macromarketing is and does – cannot be reduced to the notion of the market. The agora was also the center of (city) life *tout court*, which is to say the birth place of rules and regulations of determining what living together means; in short, of politics. The agora was the place for *Parrhesia*, which Foucault (2001) describes as a mode of discourse in which one speaks fearlessly, boldly, and truthfully about one's opinions and ideas without the use of rhetoric, manipulation, or generalization. Parrhesia, hence, was a fundamental component of the democracy of Classical Athens and it was performed in the agora (and elsewhere). So, to say that macromarketing is about politics is to take seriously Mittelstaedt, Kilbourne, and Mittelstaedt.

Yet, while many tracks clearly allow for papers that make political statements, we do not have a track that explicitly invites political analyses of macromarketing. We wonder why not? Is macromarketing afraid of parrhesia? We don't think so because fearless speech about marketing's systemic, heterogeneous, social, cultural and political effects is exactly what makes this discipline different from its hegemonic brethren (mainly micro-marketing and economics). Indeed, we would argue that politics is at the heart of macromarketing and that being a macromarketer and doing macromarketing are fundamentally political enterprises. In particular as the subject area addresses issues of development and where the market and forms of marketing are used as a the lens with which to analyze issues relating to justice, quality of life and beyond, it is vital that critiques of neo-liberalism, financialization and beyond are incorporated into the field otherwise there is a risk of a naturalized idea of how states, consumers and corporations should function. We propose this roundtable to explore the future role of political discourse in macromarketing – if in fact there is one – and the role of “us” as macromarketing scholars and as a field of thought and practice to deal with the political nature of our discipline.

Participants

Ray Benton, Loyola University Chicago, USA
Alan Bradshaw, Royal Holloway College – University of London, UK

Janice Denegri-Knott, University of Bournemouth, UK
Sanford Grossbart, University of Nebraska, USA
Pia Polsa, HANKEN School of Economics, Finland
Ben Wooliscroft, University of Otago, NZ
Detlev Zwick, York University, Canada

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