

## Escaping the Groove of Globalisation: Disentangling Description, Discourse and Action

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### Abstract

This paper offers a way through the orthodoxy of the globalisation debate, providing a fresh way of thinking about how globalisation might be understood in a particular setting. It stems from the recognition that the term globalisation is often employed at a macro level to trace broad patterns, but proves inaccurate or unhelpful if anchored to a specific temporal and spatial context. By contrast, starting with empirical historical and ethnographic research in New Zealand, the author developed a conceptual framework that helps make sense of the globalisation debate by drawing an analytical distinction between understandings of globalisation as a *description* of contemporary reality (whether or not it is accepted as such); and understandings of globalisation as a *concept* that can be explored in terms of its discourses. As a description, the notion of globalisation is infinitely contestable, although historical research suggests that many of the themes now labelled “globalisation” have a long history. Noting that parallels with the past persist is however necessary but insufficient, for the term globalisation is nonetheless *used* to refer to contemporary circumstances by influential decision-makers whose views have practical consequences. Thus also analysing globalisation at a conceptual level as a set of discourses demonstrates how it has become reified and naturalised, receiving widespread acceptance as a super-human external force determining New Zealand’s options. This imagery conditions the context within which policy decisions are made, privileging the global, novel and generic over the local, enduring and specific, and bringing into being the very conditions the term appears to describe. This double approach makes it possible to escape the conceptual constraints of globalisation, permitting reassessment of the possibilities for action.

## Introduction

The overarching concept of globalisation has become increasingly fashionable, channelling analyses of contemporary reality. While the concept has been studied extensively, much of the analysis proceeds at a macro level, tracing broad patterns that often prove inaccurate if anchored to a specific temporal and spatial context, resulting in long-standing debates over the utility of the concept. By contrast, this paper offers an alternative perspective on how globalisation might be more specifically understood, through an empirical examination of what it might mean in the context of New Zealand. Anchoring the term in this way leads to the conclusion that globalisation is more than simply an over-used buzzword, for unthinking use of broad concepts or metaphors results from and in “grooved thinking”. My doctoral research (Baragwanath, 2003c) suggests that globalisation and its related concepts have become accepted amongst policy-makers in New Zealand as an unproblematic description of contemporary reality. Through being invoked repeatedly, the term globalisation has become reified, naturalised and internalised, receiving widespread acceptance as a super-human external force determining New Zealand’s options. This imagery conditions the context within which decisions are made, emphasising the importance of the global context, the novelty of recent developments and the way that these are held to be generically applicable; and thereby trivialising the local, enduring and specific. Because this image of globalisation has been widely accepted in policy-making circles, globalisation thus acts as a constitutive discourse, bringing into being the very conditions the term appears to describe.

The paper first presents the conceptual framework that I developed in my doctoral thesis (Baragwanath, 2003c) for understanding globalisation. To reach an understanding of what globalisation might mean in the context of New Zealand, two levels of analysis are necessary. The first examines globalisation as a *description* of contemporary life, while the second assesses the implications of *understanding* globalisation in this way. Approaching globalisation using my framework makes it possible to escape the groove, allowing present circumstances to be viewed from a different perspective, and thus permitting reassessment

of the possibilities for action.

My doctoral research into globalisation and New Zealand (Baragwanath, 2003c) comprised two components. First, I undertook an analysis of government budget statements, trade agreements and strategy documents from 1935 to 2002, and private sector annual New Zealand company reports from the same period. Second, I conducted 30 in-depth interviews with people in influential decision-making positions in a range of organisations across different sectors of New Zealand's economy and society, targeting influential "opinion-shapers" in New Zealand whose views are regularly reported in the media, and whose views consequently affect the policy-making climate. I examined my material using ethnographic and historical analysis techniques and Fairclough's (2003) critical discourse analysis.

#### **A conceptual framework for understanding globalisation**

The term globalisation is frequently employed in an indiscriminate way to refer to contemporary developments. A comprehensive review of the globalisation literature lies well beyond the scope of this paper but can be found in Baragwanath (2003c). Briefly, Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (1999) and Scholte (2000) seek to clarify the positions within the globalisation literature by distinguishing between "globalists", who argue that globalisation represents a novel departure from the past; and "sceptics", who reject the idea that globalisation is anything new. Between these polar extremes there exist myriad permutations, for which Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (1999), and Scholte (2000) use an intermediate category of "transformationalists". This describes those who are convinced that globalisation is the central driving force behind rapid social, political, and economic changes that are reshaping modern societies and the world order (Castells, 2000; Giddens, 1999; Held et al., 1999; Scholte, 1993). Those in this category accept that societies are having to adjust to a world where there is no longer a clear distinction between international and domestic, external and internal affairs (Cammilleri & Falk, 1992; Rosenau, 1992; Ruggie, 1993; Sassen, 1996), but reject the "globalist" assertion that the trend is linear or leading necessarily to "globality".

My categorisation of the globalisation debate (Figure 1), by contrast, stems from an initial distinction that I have seen nowhere else, between those who use globalisation as a *description* of contemporary reality; and those who analyse globalisation at a conceptual level as a *discourse* (or *set of discourses*). Each is discussed in turn.

Held et al. and Scholte tend to focus on the descriptive aspects of the globalisation debate. Within this descriptive category, Scholte (2000, p. 16) notes a division between whether globalisation is seen as “fact or fantasy”. Based upon his terms, I divide those who view globalisation as a description of contemporary trends in two: first, “global-factualists” (labelled “hyperglobalists” by Held et al. and Scholte) who consider not only that globalisation is happening, but that it is *the* defining feature of contemporary life, affecting people the world over, with economic, political and cultural implications. Iconic examples of this genre include Castells (2000); Friedman (1999); Greider (1997); Ohmae (1995) and Reich (1991). Within the global-factualist group, I make a further distinction, between *defenders* who view globalisation as both real and positive (stereotypical examples include Ohmae and Reich), and *detractors* (such as Goldsmith and Mander (1995) and Klein (2000)) who depict it as both real and sinister. Secondly, “global-fantasists” (labelled “sceptics” by Held et al. and Scholte) are those who refute the idea of globalisation as a description, retorting that *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*: little has changed, we have seen it all before and globalisation is nothing new (see for example Chase-Dunn, 1997; Hirst & Thompson, 1996, 1999; Hirst, 1997; Ogborn, 2000; Williamson & O’Rourke, 2002). Each position is summarised in Figure 1.

Both global-factualist and global-fantastist positions can be, and are, strongly defended and contain elements of truth, although the insights gained are inevitably partial, for all consider globalisation as a description. At this descriptive level, it is possible to enter the globalisation debate on the basis of an empirical case study, in order to examine just what, if anything, is different about the present.

My analysis of government documents and annual company reports reinforced the continuities between past and present. New Zealand remains small and sparsely populated, isolated, internationally trade-



*Figure 1: Categorisation of the globalisation debate*

dependent, and globally connected, just as it has always been. In the same way, since 1935, decision-makers in both private and public sectors in New Zealand have been preoccupied with very similar issues. These include New Zealand's small population and hence constrained domestic market prospects; its heavy dependence on international trade and hence vulnerability; its narrow range of export commodities and hence need to diversify; its distance from other countries, and hence the tendency for hopes to be pinned on technological advances to overcome the tyranny of distance; and the need to increase its economic growth in order to maintain and improve quality of life.

Yet despite the evident continuities, my research uncovered widespread adherence to a global-factualist notion of globalisation that causes past experiences to be dismissed as obsolete or irrelevant to New Zealand's present or future. This in turn leads to an underestimation of the ongoing importance of both history and geography, both of which continue to influence contemporary New Zealand in fundamentally important ways. It is, however, insufficient simply to draw attention to the persistence of parallels with the past, for whether or not these exist, the term globalisation is nevertheless used to refer to contemporary circumstances by influential decision-makers whose views have practical consequences.

It is therefore essential to undertake a closer examination of the term globalisation. As a description, globalisation is misleading, as it

seems to ascribe unity and specificity, masking the fact that it is used in a multiplicity of ways to refer to widely differing phenomena: globalisation is not simply a neutral expression, but a profoundly value-laden interpretation of contemporary events. My research suggested, however, that the difficulties inherent in using globalisation as a description can be transcended if an analytical distinction is drawn between the analysis of globalisation as a *description* of contemporary reality, and the analysis of the *discourses* of globalisation at a conceptual level. This leads to the unmasking of globalisation as a powerful concept that has acquired its own causal efficacy.

### Globalisation as a concept

The widespread use of the term globalisation suggests commonality in meaning. Yet “the surface similarities language can present should not distract us from the important differences in the way concepts are used” (Moore, 2000, p. 226). “We remain unconscious of the prodigious diversity of all the everyday language-games because the clothing of our language makes everything alike” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 224). The diversity of phenomena labelled globalisation makes it necessary to examine the *ways in which the term is used*, by whom, and to what effect. This is the element missing from many analyses of globalisation, which seek to trace broad macro patterns rather than starting with analysis from the “ground up”. Anchoring my analysis in the specific historical and geographical context of New Zealand and the region of Canterbury in particular led me to recognise the way in which the context fundamentally influences the way that globalisation is interpreted. This has implications for both the material context of daily life, and the discursive climate within which options are discussed.

To analyse globalisation as a concept, the term must be anchored in its specific spatial and temporal context, so that the different ways in which it is used can be examined, and the consequences of understanding or interpreting it in these ways can be understood. My analysis emphasises that New Zealand’s historical development has been inevitably influenced by the global context since earliest European contact, and this conditions the path-dependency of contemporary New

Zealand in both material and discursive terms.

Materially, there have been vast changes in New Zealand – as elsewhere – since the 1970s. Technological advances, in conjunction with cultural, political and economic changes, exacerbate the sense of disjuncture with the past. The term globalisation provides a useful shortcut to refer to these developments, but this is in turn but a short step from viewing globalisation as a causal influence responsible for them. Discursively, my research revealed a prevalent sense of impending crisis regarding New Zealand's future prospects. An impression of disjuncture with the past is reinforced by powerful metaphors regularly employed by influential commentators which heighten the perception of impending doom: “we're at the crossroads”, “we're at a watershed”, “there's an escalator moving and you have to get on it”, and “every indicator demonstrates that New Zealand is running the risk of sliding off the first world” (Brash, 2001; Clark in Edwards, 2000; New Zealand Government, 2002; Interviews, Chief Executive, Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce, Canterbury Development Corporation). This lends urgency to the calls for economic transformation, and reinforces the notion of globalisation as a qualitative departure from anything that happened before.

Interweaving both discursive and material aspects is New Zealand's history, which not only established New Zealand's economic profile and (through the Imperial connection) enabled the achievement of living standards far higher than those of most exporters of primary produce, but also helped to engender a set of discourses through which material developments are interpreted. Recurring examples of these discourses include what I have come to label (agri)cultural cringe (the persistence of widespread embarrassment at New Zealand's “unsophisticated” pastoral heritage); the prevalence of Fortress New Zealand imagery (in which New Zealand's past is categorised as insular, parochial and isolationist, and hence irrelevant to the “globally connected” present); and the obsession with international competitiveness (“putting ourselves on the map”). This attests to the entwining of material developments and discursive interpretations, which together condition the way in which the concept of globalisation is understood and acted upon.

To explore the concept of globalisation further, then, these material and discursive strands must be disentangled, and here Fairclough's critical discourse analysis provided a useful framework. Fairclough's approach stems from a realist view of social ontology, which proposes "a dialectical relationship between social structures, social events, social practices, spacetimes, the material world and language" (Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer, 2001, p. 10). This suggests that texts are implicated in the processes of meaning-making, and that they also have causal effects, bringing about changes (Fairclough, 2003, p. 7). Fairclough (1989) suggests that text, interaction and social context are the three critical elements of a discourse, encouraging the three levels of analysis that critical discourse analysis entails: micro-level description of text (textual analysis), meso-level interpretation of relationships between text and interaction (interdiscursive analysis), and macro-level explanation of relationship between interaction and social context (social analysis). These three connected levels of analysis enable my historical and ethnographic material to be interpreted for both its descriptive content (in terms of describing "what happens"), and for its interpretative content (how changes are represented and understood by the person, whether the "author" of the text, or the interviewee).

Analysing the research using Fairclough's approach led me to the suggestion that while several discourses of globalisation exist, over the past decade one particular globalisation discourse has become hegemonic in New Zealand policy-making. This emphasises *novelty*, *generic applicability*, and the *global scale*. Whether in technological, political, cultural or economic terms, the overriding impression is a sense of a qualitative disjuncture with the past, evident in the repeated distinction between contemporary New Zealand as a "global player", as opposed to the insulated, isolated "Fortress" of the past. Consequently, I label this discourse "hyperglobalism", as it closely reflects the hyperglobalist position identified by Scholte and Held et al., noted above.

Emphasising the discourses of globalisation risks the implication that globalisation is "simply talk", a fashionable buzzword extrapolated too far. Sayer (1989: p. 670) suggests that buzzwords are initially attractive because they offer the promise of escape from old concepts whose

limitations are all too familiar and whose strengths bore rather than impress, but that they quickly die because their promise proves to be false, and their unities and generalisations full of holes. Yet viewing globalisation as simply a buzzword is to misunderstand the materiality of discourse through its dialectical link to practice. The fact that the concept of globalisation conditions the framework within which influential policy-makers evaluate options influences the way in which problems are defined and policies developed, encouraging the chronocentric (Standage, 1998) implication that we are experiencing something qualitatively different to anything that went before. This causes a narrowing effect: as Maslow observed, if the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail. If the dominant concept is globalisation, alternative interpretations are limited by the “new planetary vulgate” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2000).

Hence a critically important aspect of the discourse of hyperglobalism is the link between language and power. “The exercise of power, in modern society, is increasingly achieved through ideology, and more particularly through the ideological workings of language” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 2). While power is not *only* a matter of language, this is an important dimension. Foucault proposed that power and knowledge directly imply one another, for “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). Foucault directs attention to the dichotomous “othering” process whereby the negative is obscured, marginalised, and the positive is privileged; but also emphasises the *constitutive* effect of language and power.

We must seek once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (Foucault, 1977, p. 194)

My selection of key informants reflected the fact that some “talk” matters more than others because of the way power relations operate

in society: opinions are differentially weighted depending on “who says it”. In New Zealand, politicians have power as policy-makers in the public interest and business-people as decision-makers in the private sector. Their views therefore “matter” more, in the sense that they are more able to influence the policy agenda, than those of groups or individuals whose views are marginalised through the operation of power relations. I thus selected interviewees whose opinions are not only aired publicly but are also accorded weight because of the person’s position in society, and which consequently affect the climate within which policy decisions are made. In addition, the views held by these “influential people” are reported in the mass media, which are an important source of information for most New Zealanders. Through such influences the discourse of hyperglobalism has become naturalised and accepted as “common sense”, and has come to dominate discussions of New Zealand’s contemporary prospects. This dominance is reinforced through an “othering” process, as globalisation is frequently depicted by influential people as novel, inevitable and qualitatively distinct from the insularity of the past, as each of these quotations demonstrates:

Labour as a party accepts globalisation. It’s not only inevitable, but it has a lot of desirable features (Prime Minister Helen Clark, in Clark expects..., 2000, p. 2).

[G]lobalisation is not something that may happen... It is not something that can be avoided. It is something that has happened already (Sutton, in New Zealand must stick... 2001, p. 21).

Globalisation. We all have to play – it’s an increasingly integrated world out there (Interview, CEO, Canterbury Development Corporation).

We are really right at the crossroads at the moment, in terms of where we are going, and that’s really the interesting part from my perspective, is the future, and what we need to do as an economy and as a community to embrace globalisation, and how we can do that and be successful. At the moment we are not doing very much successfully as a country (Interview, CEO, Canterbury Employers’ Chamber of Commerce).

While the emphases vary, my sources unequivocally imply that “things have fundamentally changed” over the past twenty years. My data reveal a battery of images disseminated through the media, business, government and academic writing which reinforces the impression of globalisation as an inevitable external force affecting New Zealand. “The global” has come to dominate the way that decision-makers consider New Zealand’s position vis-à-vis the rest of the world, and this understanding is coloured by a sense of novelty and inevitability. It has become commonplace among policy-makers to define New Zealand’s options as externally determined. A dominant image that emerges in the public and private sector, and amongst my interviewees, is of contemporary New Zealand as “globally connected”, unlike the “Fortress” of the past. This presents a substantial contrast to past interpretations of New Zealand’s external connections which depicted New Zealand as affected by external forces, but emphasised the considerable scope and indeed the *need* for government action to determine the terms on which external relations were conducted. My historical research demonstrates that policy-makers from 1935 onward recognised that New Zealand’s fortunes were inextricably linked to the international context, *but considered it possible to mitigate the excesses of the global economy through a range of policy instruments*. New Zealand was, for example an enthusiastic early supporter of the GATT, in the belief that this would help to circumvent the agricultural protectionism of other countries. Minister of Finance Arnold Nordmeyer noted for example in 1958:

New Zealand argues that there is no justification for industrialised countries to continue that protection of agriculture because this causes a deteriorating balance of payments problem in agricultural exporting countries and leads to industrial product protection. (Nordmeyer, 1958 B6, p. 20)

Many of the external circumstances confronting New Zealand bear strong resemblance to past circumstances. A decisive change has however been discursive, re-framing the realm of the possible for New Zealand policy-makers (Baragwanath, 2003c). The global-factualist notion of globalisation is thus reinforced and disseminated by figures

with the power to influence New Zealand's policy-making prospects, shaping them in such a way as to emphasise *novelty*, *generic applicability* and the *global context*, over continuity and local specificities, regardless of New Zealand's highly unusual circumstances.

Yet whilst the discourse of hyperglobalism is hegemonic, it is not unresisted. While my interviewees specifically used the term globalisation to describe the differences with the past, as the interviews progressed, the disjuncture was often blurred as people reflected upon the nuances of contemporary circumstances, often resulting in a reaffirmation of the similarities of past and present. My historical analysis further elucidated the parallels that persist for a small, isolated country with a small population aspiring to high living standards, whose income is perennially inadequate to cover its wants. Yet amongst contemporary sources, the sense of *difference* overrides. Changes since the 1980s reinforce the sense of disjuncture, which has come to be understood as externally driven, and is frequently attributed to a process called globalisation. This has the effect of minimising the relevance and significance of factors that do not fit these parameters, removing from consideration New Zealand's uniqueness and peculiarity, and similarities with the past that persist.

My argument is supported by my analysis of the Government's "Growth and Innovation Framework", launched in 2002. The strategy, code-named *Growing an innovative New Zealand* (New Zealand Government, 2002) is circumscribed by the hegemonic discourse of hyperglobalism, with the consequence that the strategy has considerable shortcomings. It seeks to reposition New Zealand as an "innovative" economy through encouraging biotechnology, information and communication technology, and the "creative industries"; but represents an explicit attempt to distance New Zealand from its "old-fashioned" image as clean, green, and safe. In doing so, the strategy undervalues the ongoing and fundamental importance of these very traits to New Zealand's continuing competitive advantage, given their long-established "brand equity" in terms of international recognition, and their rarity amongst New Zealand's trading partners. The emphasis on novelty and the global context, and the implicit acceptance that

generic solutions developed elsewhere will suit New Zealand's specific circumstances overlooks New Zealand's highly distinctive circumstances, belittles the role played by past innovations in achieving economic prosperity, and insufficiently acknowledges that similar strategies are being pursued world-wide by countries with vastly greater resources and political commitment (Baragwanath 2003a; 2003b; 2003c; Baragwanath, McAloon & Perkins, 2003).

It is highly significant that influential decision-makers up to and including the Prime Minister are framing their decisions through the lens of hyperglobalism. Opinions are shaped through this process because of the power that such figures command which ensures that their views are not only reported, but are authoritative, and come to be acted upon. This has the effect of marginalising opinions that do not correspond to the dominant discourse, affecting what is given credence and what can and cannot be discussed. The practical implication is that views that emphasise continuity rather than novelty, the local context rather than the global, or New Zealand-specific experience over generic international advice, are subjugated and rejected as obsolete, irrelevant, or "anti-progress".

The discourse of hyperglobalism encourages a focus on *novel solutions*, thereby effectively dismissing New Zealand-specific experience, despite the persistence of many past constraints. This emphasis is exacerbated by the "strange rage for novelty" that has long characterised New Zealand policy-making (Siegfried, 1914, p. 61). Dissatisfaction with New Zealand's agricultural reputation account for the attempts to distance the country from its past, leading to the determination to follow policies being pursued elsewhere. Yet the notion that economic decline can be reversed through the application of novel technologies – ICT, biotechnology and the "creative industries" – turns out to be a generic formula similarly being pursued by the British Government (1998; 2003), while iterations are evident in policies in contexts as diverse as Hong Kong, Singapore, the Netherlands and Australia<sup>1</sup>.

The discourse also implies that the circumstances facing countries in an "era of globalisation" are *generic*, evident in the comparisons with

other countries seen to be performing more successfully in the “international competition” (such as Ireland or Singapore), and in the use of international management consultants in the development of public policy. This trivialises the significance of New Zealand’s highly distinctive circumstances – its competitive advantage in the exploitation of natural resources, the small size of the domestic market, its high living standards – and dismisses the relevance of New Zealand-specific expertise to the country’s current and future prospects. In emphasising the historical context and the ongoing salience of New Zealand’s location, my analysis necessarily draws attention to the *dissimilarities* of New Zealand compared with the rest of the world. This challenges the tendency toward generic solutions, calling into question the value of generic management consultancy advice if this is not balanced against New Zealand-specific analysis; and raises questions over the value of external comparisons that fail to consider the differences between New Zealand and the countries considered.

Finally, the discourse emphasises the *global* scale. Of course, its external context is necessarily an important consideration for a small, trade-dependent country such as New Zealand. Yet focusing upon the apparently novel conditions wrought by globalisation induces long-sightedness that occurs at the expense of understanding local conditions. Politicians have for twenty years focused more or less on the global context, viewing the world as a seamless whole governed by the principles of general equilibrium theory. Yet the world remains as segregated and partitioned as ever, despite free trade rhetoric and the image of global connectivity. The global focus has blinded New Zealand policy-makers in recent years to this ongoing feature of the global economy and global society, with profoundly detrimental effects. For many of my interviewees, single-minded pursuit of free trade agreements in a context shaped by the idea that “there is no alternative” to globalisation has occurred with scant regard for New Zealand’s own self-interest. A frequently-cited example was the dubious benefits of

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<sup>1</sup> A snapshot of the similarities of policies being pursued across diverse contexts was clearly evident in presentations made at the “Creative Clusters” conference held in Brighton, UK in April 2004.

New Zealand's commitment to the GATS agreement, which extends far beyond that of most of New Zealand's trading partners (Baragwanath, 2003c). This implies the need for a re-valuing of local conditions, and a reappraisal of the remaining room that policy-makers in both public and private sectors in New Zealand have to manoeuvre, albeit necessarily within the context of the global.

By emphasising the novel, the generic and the global, the hegemonic discourse serves to distract attention from the *really existing situation* in New Zealand. Yet New Zealand's future options can only be usefully discussed if the specificities of its historical and geographical context are acknowledged, along with the recognition that the government can and does maintain an active role in determining the future for New Zealand, just as it has always done. Options are foreclosed by the hegemonic discourse of hyperglobalism. To tackle the issues confronting contemporary New Zealand, my research suggests the need to acknowledge its distinctiveness – indeed its uniqueness – in terms of its remote geographic location, the path-dependency of its economy, its small population size, its competitive advantage (both tangible and perceptual, in terms of the “clean, green and safe” image), and the effects of government activity over the past twenty years. These factors remain as relevant to New Zealand's contemporary prospects – social, environmental, political and economic – as at any previous point in its history, but are masked by the discourse of hyperglobalism.

#### Reappraising the options without the globalisation imperative

The term globalisation requires careful reappraisal, demanding more than simply a redefinition of what it *is*. If globalisation is understood as a concept rather than a description, its performative power can be recognised through the analytical device of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001; 2003; Thrift, 2001). Recognising and providing for the constitutive effect stemming from the nominalisation of globalisation, it becomes possible to re-evaluate the options confronting New Zealand. The concept cannot be understood unless it is contextualised in the specific history, discourses and domestic and international conditions within which it is used. Each of the dimensions of globalisation can be

elucidated if the discourse of hyperglobalism is recognised and resisted.

First, the implications of technological advances shift if the effect of the discourse of hyperglobalism is recognised and provided for. Recontextualising recent developments within a historical trajectory of increasing interconnections injects a note of caution into the techno-optimism that accompanies discussion of “high-tech” solutions to New Zealand’s problems. While international communication and travel have been enhanced by recent technological developments, time-space compression (Harvey, 1989) and time-space distanciation (Giddens, 1990) remain intensely relative, the “tyranny of distance” continues to operate in New Zealand both materially and discursively, and location remains of pivotal importance in determining New Zealand’s prospects (operating as both an advantage and a disadvantage).

Secondly, New Zealand’s contemporary political circumstances can be better understood if globalisation is divested of its causal efficacy. This encourages questions over how New Zealand’s self-interest might best be pursued within the inextricably global context, and permits assessment of the remaining autonomy of the state in facilitating this process and the agency that remains. Removing the external imperative of globalisation enables the power of “global institutions” such as the WTO, IMF and the OECD vis-à-vis New Zealand’s domestic government to be reappraised, encouraging debate over what stands to be lost or foregone as well as gained by further political commitments, for example to freer trade. This broadens the arena for debate such that alternative perspectives can be encompassed and considered, rather than rejected as obsolete or irrelevant in an “age of globalisation”.

Thirdly, the tensions that exist between cultural homogenisation or hybridisation and the cultural differentiation of New Zealand can be explored if an overriding external imperative of globalisation is rejected. Attempts to promote “New Zealand culture” within a context shaped by globalisation have led to the current emphasis of aspects that are visibly different, evident in the construction of tenuous links between authenticity, identity and “indigenous”, or rather Maori, culture (Baragwanath, 2003c). Refocusing on the inevitable and historical connection between local and global leads to a more inclusive

appreciation of the *cultures* of New Zealand and the multiple identities that exist, enabling these factors, as well as fears over encroaching commercialisation, to be discussed in a context that takes regard simultaneously of the global and local contexts.

Finally, shedding the globalisation imperative enables questions to be reintroduced relating to New Zealand's economy that are overlooked within the discourse of hyperglobalism. Beyond question, New Zealand will remain dependent on international trade, if its living standards are to be maintained, as has always been the case. At the same time, there is considerable room for debate over the way in which international trade is to be conducted, and my approach suggests the need for further analysis of how markets *should* be regulated. This requires consideration of normative questions relating to ends as well as means, such as *why* we want GDP to increase, whether other goals might be more apposite, such as economic *development* rather than growth, and how much New Zealand's quality of life is valued. The debate is currently artificially restricted. Because hyperglobalism is hegemonic and unquestioned, trade discussions are dominated by the neo-liberal perspective that "open markets" are the only possibility, despite empirical evidence to the contrary. For the same reason, non-democratic actors such as APEC and the WTO continue to set the parameters for New Zealand's domestic regulations through the acquiescence and encouragement of government in the absence of the possibility of alternative perspectives, binding the future New Zealand state to particular courses of action. The New Zealand Government presents these as the inevitable consequence of globalisation, sustaining the focus on the global rather than the local, on generic propositions rather than locally-developed alternatives, and on novel developments rather than enduring features of New Zealand's economy and society. Yet each aspect can be contested, if the imperative of hyperglobalism is resisted. My appraisal challenges the notion of a novelty in the global focus, emphasising that for New Zealand at least, this is nothing new, for, indeed, New Zealand's development can only be understood in the global context. At the same time, this suggests attention to New Zealand's existing conditions and self-interest, rather than a generic view of the world as undifferentiated.

This implies a turn toward the local in understanding what is happening, *necessarily within the context of the global.*

My argument draws attention to the chronocentricity inherent in many invocations of globalisation. Examining the historical parallels demonstrates that many of the issues confronting contemporary New Zealand governments have in fact emerged repeatedly throughout New Zealand's history. This is hardly surprising, for many of New Zealand's characteristics have remained the same: its small population, its remote location, its competitive advantage, the high expectations of its citizens, the difficulty in matching earnings with outgoings. Policy-makers in the post-war era operated within a context conditioned by a discourse of constrained autonomy, making decisions that influenced the way in which the external context impacted upon New Zealand even if they could not *control* it. Contemporary policy-makers operate within very similar conditions, yet the options considered are artificially restricted by the discourse of hyperglobalism, which has brought into being both discursive and practical limits on government action.

In offering an alternative perspective from that which dominates policy-making in New Zealand, a wider range of options emerges that the hegemonic discourse obscures. This not only provides new possibilities for action, but also raises the possibility that still other perspectives exist. That calls for an ongoing critical consideration of and engagement with dominant policy discourses, in order to explore what they obscure, what they constitute, and what are their results. Instead of relying *exclusively* on the wide-open lens of globalisation, my analysis suggests a reappraisal in which globalisation emerges as *one* of the concepts through which we can understand what is going on in contemporary New Zealand society, but not the only one. A consequence of this thinking is to recognise the existence and value of distinctiveness, of the multiple layers of contemporary reality as it is experienced in New Zealand, shedding light on the way globalisation is understood and acted upon. My analysis demonstrates the way in which the discursive constraints operate and how they might be otherwise constructed, offering an alternative point of view and thereby broadening the options available for consideration.

Deconstructing the concept dethrones globalisation from its position as *the* quintessential characteristic of the contemporary world. Viewing globalisation as a set of discourses within which hyperglobalism is hegemonic, it becomes possible to resist the image of globalisation as an externally imposed force demanding New Zealand's acquiescence, and to escape the conceptual groove dug by the concept of globalisation. This requires examining where we are, so we can then decide where we want to be and how to get there, which in turn requires a close examination of the existing circumstances, and a strong distinction between rhetoric and practice. This process can be assisted by ideas imported from elsewhere, but these must be evaluated critically in light of New Zealand-specific analysis stemming from our own particular experiences. This requires an understanding of our history, which is not as irrelevant to our present and future as is frequently implied. My analysis offers the possibility of jumping the rails and escaping the groove by recognising and resisting the constraints of the concept of globalisation, which remains an important representation of contemporary life in New Zealand.

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