A Situated Perspective on Cultural Globalisation
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Introduction

In 1993, the Office of Royal Literature in Thailand commissioned a team of business leaders, journalists and academics to debate and officially define 'globalisation' (Reynolds 1998, 126). After a vigorous two-year exchange between advocates and opponents of globalisation, between economic and cultural positions, the Office of Royal Literature decreed the new word and definition into the Thai Royal Dictionary. Robertson and Khondker (1998, 35) describe the outcome:

> The official translation of this word [globalisation] is *logapiwatanam* which combines the Thai 'world' with the word *apiwatana*, meaning 'to spread, to reach, to win over'. This official meaning, which is not readily accepted by those committed to a unidimensional economic meaning,...means 'the expansion of the world, spread around the world, and change and effect all over the world'.

This chapter is a situated account of cultural globalisation. We provide an alternative reading of dominant discourses on globalisation which, we will argue, are based on a Euro-American authored "capitolocentrism" (Gibson-Graham 1997). That perspective accounts for the effects of globalisation in determinist, causal, and uni-directional terms: north→south, west→east. Our discussion here of the impact of globalisation on social, cultural, and educational change in south-east Asia, and Thailand in particular, makes a simple point. We maintain that only through situated, local and self-critical analyses can we begin to see the two-way, mutually constitutive dynamics of local-global flows of knowledge, power and capital, of systematic as well as unsystematic and uneven 'effects', and of local histories that always embed 'the new' in existing and generative material-economic and cultural conditions. Our intent is not to refute accounts of the hegemonic effects of fast

capitalist consumption and production, but to offer a counterpoint by arguing that homogenising effects are always rearticulated in social fields where they are subject to local and regional force and power.

We begin with a narrative of our exchanges with Thai educators, explicated with links along the way to contemporary and historical "situational logics" (Prattis, 1987, 11). These situational logics serve as maps which, we hope, will represent the multiple embeddings of culture, history, economic and social change that frame and punctuate the uses and effects of globalisation. These same logics shaped our encounters 'from afar' with the Thai educators and social scientists who had invited us to collaboratively address the educational issues of 'New Times'.

Next, we situate our local narratives within the context of regional and Thai social and economic, cultural and educational change. Here we provide a localised critique in order to reappraise global claims and assumptions about the efficacy of McCulture: the allegedly tenacious grip of western hegemony over hapless 'victim' nations and cultures. The final section of the paper concludes with an argument for the urgency of tempering the pull of grand-narrativising, of totalising the other yet once again from the perspectivism of western 'us' and 'them' epistemology that, in effect, globalises the discourses of globalisation, and globalises claims about effects and processes of globalisation. We locate this counter-argument in a discussion of competing discourses about the role of education in 'development'.

Our perspective, analysis, and 'take' on globalisation is itself local and localised. As Australians, we are part of the region, although geographically on its south-eastern periphery. Only ocean separates this continent from the Antarctic, East Timor and Papua New Guinea are our nearest northern neighbours, and Fiji, our eastern neighbour. Australia and New Zealand consider themselves as part of the intellectual and geopolitical west, yet our relatively isolated location on the globe in the 'far south' and 'far east' situates us very much on the geo-political and cultural margins.

Australia historically was invented as a white diaspora at the edges of Empire, often treated by Empire in little more benign terms than our Asian counterparts. Over the past decade, Australia has deliberately attempted to redefine and realign itself as part of Asia, unsuccessfully seeking membership of the ASEAN

economic/political bloc. Australia is not ethnically or culturally Asian, but we are a nation-state of some 17 million with an Anglo-Celtic majority in the midst of a complex Asian diaspora (Luke & Luke, in press). For our northern/western readers, then, our localised account can be read as a commentary of the margins from a margin, albeit a materially privileged one. In a region where Singapore and Hong Kong are financial and information centres, Sydney, Melbourne and certainly Perth and Brisbane must work very hard to represent themselves as world cities worthy of participation in global capital and information flows.

Yet questions of cultural globalisation are at least in part questions of optics and standpoints. All of these peripheries – Asian, Australasian and others – consider their histories and futures very much at the centre. Neither existentially, economically nor politically are these histories and futures taken by locals, including cosmopolitan locals, as mere footnotes in an inexorable or unproblematic process of globalisation and homogenisation driven by New York or London, Tokyo or Beijing. In this regard, while we and our Thai colleagues could be accused of a local myopia – it is equally problematic to generate a 'far-sighted' perspective solely on the basis of one's myopia, as is often done through what we will here term the *inside-out theorising* of the West.

We turn now to a narrative description of the micro-politics of the little habitat – the overlapping complexities and concurrent relations of local site, community, nation, and region. If all the recent lessons about the fundamental importance of situated analyses of the micro-capillaries of power, of strands of histories within histories, of archeologies of discursive sites, have failed – then we risk reverting to a new kind of Western intellectual colonisation: a pathological ethnocentrism of inside-out theorising, doomed to grand-narrativising and, this time, on an even grander scale. Globalisation: the mother of all metanarratives. Our aim in this Chapter, then, is to provide one case as a cautionary note against polemics of globalisation as "a brakeless train wreaking havoc" (Harvey 1989, 8).

Postcolonial Agents and Market Relations

For the past three years we have been working closely with teacher educators and social scientists in two areas of Thailand: in the Eastern Seaboard Industrial Region

outside of Bangkok, and in the Northern provinces of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. The latter province straddles the Mekong River adjacent to China, Myanmar and Laos in what is popularised in media folklore as the "Golden Triangle", home of the opium trade. But for regional economic planners and the local population alike, it is seen as a geographical nexus that has long connected these countries through cultural and spiritual events and histories. The Triangle – in reality a quadrangle of four countries - has been the ground of indigenous empires and border conflicts that stretch back over four centuries. Since the 1980s, it has been projected in regional development plans as an economic corridor that – with the overthrow of the military government in Myanmar, openings of borders with China, and better bridge systems to Laos - would join Thailand's extensive exporting, transportation and telecommunications infrastructure with new labor and consumer markets. It is also viewed as a prime corridor into southern China for European and North American tourists, who can already take a short flight to the ancient Chinese walled city of Kunming which, during the last millennial era of high colonialism, was a favoured gateway for French missionaries, traders and soldiers.

Our work has been to assist in research projects and doctoral training at several of the Rajabhat Institutes, regional colleges that offer vocational, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and whose Royal mandate is community development. We were invited to participate after institute delegations surveyed and visited numerous Australian, British, US and Canadian institutions looking for what they considered appropriate collaborators -- quite literally shopping on a globalised educational marketplace. In Australia, successive economic rationalist governments have pushed for the replacement of state funding of universities with "revenue-substitution" strategies based on increasing domestic fees and a burgeoning educational export industry focused principally on Asia. The educational export industry is one of the fastest growing sectors of the Australian economy.

When we began our work in 1997 we had an interesting dialogue with one of our Australian colleagues who was also about to embark on teaching in Southeast Asia. He warned about the need to avoid "exploiting the Thais", urging us to apply critical pedagogical principles to the development of our curriculum in ways that might lead towards more "emancipatory" and "empowering" outcomes. There was

something both idealistic and naïve about his view. It presupposed a particular historical set of subject/object relations at work between us and the Thai, with our potential power as cultural imperialists taken for granted. It was not so much that he was 'wrong' about the situation per se, for the dangers he warned of certainly factored into our negotiations and subsequent exchanges. But his understanding was a product of a particular historical era, material and political contexts that Freire, Fanon and others had so accurately described two and three decades earlier.

Prevailing neomarxian and postcolonialist theorisations of centre/margin relationships were historically produced to explain the postwar decolonisation and sites of genocide and economic exploitation (Moore-Gilbert 1997). Such analyses remain relevant in many contexts, particularly those still making the transitions from agrarian to industrial economies, and, obviously, those still engaged in throwing off neo-colonial or repressive governments. Yet for us the sobering prospect was that the relationships and spaces we were venturing into were the products of a very different context and epoch. Many of the axioms derived from what we would term *point of decolonisation analyses* did not seem to hold in these new, unprecedented conditions and shifting "flows of power" and "power of flows" (Castells 1989, 171). Consider, for example, the ideological positions favoured by historical figures like Mahatir and Suharto in the face of the recent crisis. They too tended to recite coloniser/colonised, centre/margin dualisms that simplified responsibility for the economic situation, and ignored or concealed intra-national, transnational and regional dynamics of class, culture, generation, and corporate alliances.

For us the issue was not principally whether and how we were positioned as the 'exploiters' or 'colonisers' from the West. Indeed, the Thai delegation had "contracted" us to deliver a specific curriculum product on their terms. Thais, Malays, Indonesians, Chinese and others shopped for educational partners on a marketplace where supply outstripped demand and, no doubt, they could select partners from a diversity of institutional types, histories and, indeed, ideologies. This was the new globalised marketplace of culture, knowledge and power, a field of new exchange relations, new commodities and different flows of economic and cultural capital. There was no central determination of its key players, nodal points, or consequences 'in the first instance'.

We were on new ground. New questions emerged about which intra-national and regional social fields we would be playing in, which institutions, which agencies, which class and cultural interests within the 'contracting' nation-state would be using us, to what particular ideological agendas and ends, in what configurations of power, around which nodal points, and in whose interests. In this way, as the educrats, bureaucrats and aidcrats in newly and rapidly industrialising countries have long known, the exchange of flows in postmodern conditions (as against early postcolonial conditions) has long been a case of 'the tail wagging the dog'.

Thai Encounters: A Narrative

During one of our first meals with the local educators in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, our partners in a joint training program, we had an animated discussion about what 'New Times' meant to Northern Thailand. They spoke at length over the unprecedented educational problems facing Thailand: government schools had a poor track record in promoting the success of the indigenous "Hill Tribes" – the Karen, Hmong, Ha, and other indigenous peoples whose tribal homelands straddled the borders between these nation states. These children tended to fail in schools and have difficulty with Thai literacy, despite high profile pedagogy and cultural maintenance projects sponsored by the Thai Royal Family.

Additionally, teachers had to deal with migrant children from Myanmar and Laos who "didn't speak proper Thai", and whose parents and families live in extreme poverty. Some are refugees housed in camps, others guestworkers in bottom-end labor markets such as rice production, construction and fishing. Not coincidentally, migrants, refugees and guestworkers were the first to be blamed by the national press for taking "Thai jobs" at the onset of the 1997 economic crisis and subsequent IMF intervention. At the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, educators said they felt unprepared for the first generation of Thai youth – the children of the emergent middle class – who were impatient with traditional Thai and Buddhist values, and seemed to be more preoccupied with MTV, video games, Michael Jordan, the Spice Girls and hanging out in shopping malls. New times, we were told, had generated new educational problems and new identities.

In response, Thai federal government policy pushed for the hallmarks of educational modernity: extended compulsory education, standardised and commodified curriculum, increased retention rates, privatisation of the tertiary sector, all based on a strong human capital rationale. The anachronisms, riddles and shortcomings of hierarchical and patriarchal educational administration, traditional rote curriculum, "chalk and talk" pedagogy, and formal examinations seemed more glaring than ever. Nor did many of the imported Western technocratic solutions on offer since the Vietnam war[1] – from psychologically-based approaches to instruction, counseling and testing, commodified curriculum packages, to educational managerialism - appear to be solving these dilemmas.

But new conditions also had generated new alliances and partnerships in pursuit of solving complex problems – including ours - that didn't necessarily entail the superimposition of technocratic, progressivist or neoliberal educational solutions on local and indigenous contexts. In fact, the break in the financing of many government-funded projects caused by the economic crisis generated a host of ambivalent effects, enabling a space for the critique of scenarios for the importation, expansion and exploitation of capital. It triggered a search for more cost-effective, local solutions to social and economic problems. [2] The army was enlisted in the cultivation of foodstuffs and the development of market gardens on military bases. Newspapers ran feature articles on self-sustaining Buddhist temple communities and the King appeared on national television with a traditional, native drum to extol the virtues of traditional culture as a productive resource in the face of the crisis. One of

[1] It is notable that during and following the Vietnam War, Thailand, as a US client state benefited through educational scholarships and aid programs. Many of Thailand's current university Administrators and educational researchers were trained in American universities in the 1970s and early 1980s on US and Thai government scholarships. The shift towards working with Australian, Canadian and UK institutions has only occurred with the marketisation of education in the 1980s and 1990s and the availability, before the 1997 crash, of Thai private and government funds to support study abroad. In 1998, the government placed a moratorium on all overseas travel of government employed educators and researchers.

[2] When we first began working in Thailand and Malaysia in 1996, we would often query our hosts about the apparently uncritical embrace of rapid development with disastrous ecological and social effects. One response that we repeatedly heard was something like "capital only comes around once". Ironically, the economic crisis has generated some skepticism towards technocratic panaceas. The Malaysian government, for example, has been forced to scale down and delay its ambitious multi-million dollar plans for "smart schools" with computerised school administration and computer-assisted instruction.

our colleagues explained to us how the crisis had encouraged some local communities to reexamine the use of traditional medicines, community and spiritual ethics of care in the treatment of HIV-positive patients. This in the context where western medical treatment and prevention campaigns were proving extremely costly and ineffective.

Standing from afar, many of the axioms and claims of the literature on globalisation clearly are at work in northern Thailand, with rapid growth, large scale capital investment (and disinvestment) in tourist infrastructure, and cross-border trade and population movement all leading to deleterious effects: urban crowding and pollution in Chiang Mai, one of Thailand's most beautiful and historic cities, and industrialisation and tourism that has disrupted agricultural productivity and community life styles. In some areas, it appears that community development is being addressed through a grocery list of modernisation.

At the same time, globalisation has generated new kinds of identity, new forms of intercultural communication and new forms of community. On the Myanmar-Thai border, kids wear Chicago Bulls hats back to front, pirate copies of Hong Kong videos and CDs are on offer, and Thai made Toyota pick-up trucks rule the road. We take these also as signs of cultural globalisation. They include the emergence of 'world kids' in the context of a new middle class based on western models of consumption and desire (cf. Hewison 1996; Robison & Goodman 1996), the same phenomena which place indigenous cultures and local cultures 'at risk'. The apparent similarities to the issues confronting Australian education are striking: immigration and population movement; unruly forms of identity; youth with cultural knowledge and technological multiliteracies that exceeds that of their teachers; and consumer and media culture extended to more traditionally-oriented rural, indigenous, and isolated communities.

Yet there is more than meets the western eye to globalisation in Asia. It is analytically tempting and rhetorically powerful to describe the practices and consequences of globalisation principally around the metaphor of the Golden Arches (Watson, 1997). The signs and wrappers of American McCulture have spread to cosmopolitan areas like Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, which have become meccas for European and North American ecotourists. Certainly, an emergent middle class youth

culture is reconstructing itself around images and text that are Thai appropriations of western rock and popular culture. Yet such a position risks flattening out, one-dimensionalising the complex processes of globalisation. These processes are not simply acritical reproductions of western cultures. Rather, their formation flows out of (1) a hybridisation and reappropriation of western cultures; and (2) long-standing incorporations and appropriations of other Asian and regional cultures.

Consider, for example, Thai folk, pop and rock'n'roll. None of these are carbon copies of the genres of the western music industry. Indeed there is evidence that Thai popular music, like rock on the Indian subcontinent, has taken on a substantial life of its own, not only shaping youth culture but providing a space for innovative forms of social comment and cultural expression. The most popular songs include ballads that emulate Thai traditional folk music. Arguing against both dominant ideology and resistance theses common among western cultural studies of music/pop culture, Siriyuvasak (1998, 206) claims that Thai pop music is "the product of a complex articulation between Thai folk music and Western pop/rock".

We visited one popular folk/rock club in Phitsanulok, a northern city off the tourist trail – where a visibly 'countercultural' crowd, dressed like North American hippies, bikers and alternatives, played music which blended Dylanesque folk with traditional Thai folksongs, which themselves owe a great deal to Chinese music. The instrumentation was a mix of Western folk instruments and traditional Thai instruments. Yet no English-language songs were played. Here the blending of both traditional Thai music and Western countercultures was used as a local generational and cultural nationalist statement against new middle class values and, ironically, crass Westernisation. Several kilometres down the road at a Thai-owned 5 star hotel was a house band playing note-perfect copies of easy listening classics for European expats and tourists. In this community, we saw both a hybrid mode of critique side-by-side with a simple economy of musical importation and reproduction.

Hybridity, then, is not an invention of postmodernism, globalisation and postcolonial theory. Rather it is a social and cultural formation borne out of complex and intersecting histories that often predate direct contact with the industrial and imperial West. Given their histories as blendings of indigenous/Chinese/Khmer cultures, northern and central Thai cultures are already hybrids, products of

hundreds of years of complex cultural change and exchange. In fact, many Thai intellectuals argue that it is this capacity to absorb, hybridise and appropriate that has enabled Thailand to survive war without colonisation, and indeed, will enable it to give a particular slant to globalisation (Reynolds 1998).

Population mobility is a further hallmark of globalisation theories. Travel, displacement and "border crossing" are often cited as indicative aspects of globalisation, with population movements across national borders in search of work and improved quality of life. In south-east Asia such movement predates late 21st century globalisation and late 19th century industrialisation. In the case of Thailand, "central Siam in the nineteenth century was accustomed to a polyethnic population long before the term 'multiculturallism' was invented...[and] the massive numbers of Chinese who migrated to Siam, beginning in the eighteenth century via the junk trade, ...has been a key to Thailand's post-World War II economic expansion" (Reynolds 1998, 121). Chinese migration, in fact, is integral to the historical development of almost all south-east Asian nations before, during, and after various regimes of colonisation, including Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, and peninsular Malaysia, including what would in the 1960s become the independent nation-state of Singapore. It is interesting to note that most Western explanations of globalisation do not take into consideration the constitutive role of diasporic Chinese in the economic and cultural formation of countries in Asia and the Pacific, a pattern that has shaped Asian and Pacific nation states, economies and cultures for centuries (e.g., Ong 1996).

Since the early 1980s, during the economic 'take-off' decades that saw the emergence of the Asian 'Tiger' and 'Cub' economies, countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore built their economic success stories using migrant labour from Myanmar, Indonesia, Laos and Bangladesh. Before the 1997 crash, migrant guest workers filled the jobs that Thais were no longer willing to do: working on construction sites and in factories, on fishing boats, loading and processing rice (Phonpaichit & Baker, 1998). Likewise, the subsumption of indigenous and migrant cultures by a dominant central Thai culture – based on Chinese/Buddhist principles – has been an ongoing process that dates back to the 1920s and 30s. Then "racist" and "assimilationist" policies (Reynolds 1998, 121) sought to ward off any racial

conflict that might emerge out of a potentially dangerous "threefold social division: Thai peasants tilled the land; Thai bureaucrats ran the government; Chinese merchants and labourers ran the urban economy" (Phongpaichit & Baker 1996, 15).

Another hallmark of globalisation is the assumption of western "capitalocentrism". Yet flows of power, capital and control do not necessarily begin from or end in the west. In 1986, for example, Vietnam introduced economic liberalisation (*doi moi*) and two years later, "the [Thai] prime minister proposed to 'turn battlefields into marketplaces', to stop treating Indochina as an enemy, and start treating it as an economic opportunity. Thai businessmen immediately become lyrical about *suvannaphum* (golden land), an old fantasy of Southeast Asia as a land of prosperity focused on Siam" (Phongpaichit & Baker 1998, 49). And this is the point: Asian capitalisms, economic power and regional control within their own local social and economic fields are as pervasive and distinctive in their characteristic configurations and aspirations, hybrid values, identities and practices as Western capitalisms. The Thais "eagerly seized the opportunities presented by the age of globalisation" (53), envisioning 'Siam' as the centre, as the focus of regional prosperity based on a platform of global investments, human capital development and export production.

In 1994 for instance, Thai overseas investment (principally into ASEAN countries, Myanmar, China and Hong Kong) was two-thirds of inflow of foreign investment. Thai hotel chains (e.g., *Dusit Tani*) bought into the U.S. market, Thai telecommunications and media expansion moved into India and China, and in the late 1980s diversification carved inroads into petrochemicals and oil refining, utilities, manufacturing, retail and real estate – much of it in China and brokered through Hong Kong. In their 'post-boom' retrospective, Phongpaichit and Baker note that globalisation in Thailand was seen as a huge opportunity to get on the Asian Tiger bandwagon. Given the lack of political and government restrictions on a growing private sector, one which had already seen profound growth over the last four decades, and "because this private sector was oriented outwards, [it] responded nimbly to the new opportunities of the globalizing decade" (54):

This, then, is not a victim narrative, not a story of economic brute force exerted by Wall Street, Ford or News Corporation. From this particular vantage

point, from this particular 'optic' – globalisation has been about regional, national and inter-Asian agency and capital, class and cultural interests, as much as it could be said to be about an extension of American or Western hegemony.

We have argued thus far that any assumed educational or cultural effects or anomalies raised by globalisation are never straightforward, unmediated consequences or mirror images of the 'west', or the 'north'. No western product, cultural symbolism, or social practice maps onto *blank slate* indigenous or national cultures. Rather such forces dovetail in unpredictable and unsystematic ways into local histories and relations. Globalisation, then, is neither a story of rapacious western multinationals nor hapless eastern victims. Clearly, fast capitalism must contend with *local prehistories of other forms of economic activity*, other kinds of regional and local exploitation, other fields of class struggle and cultural domination.

Globalisation and Development: Inside-Out Theorising

It should hardly be surprising that much of the theorising about globalisation has come from the west. In this regard, discussions of cultural globalisation have tended to be forms of 'inside-out' theorising – that is, versions of the impact of the extension and articulation of the economic formations and cultural practices of dominant economies and cultures upon regional diasporic, emergent and, simply, smaller and less influential economies and cultures. As a result, there is the risk that such intellectual work on globalisation risks reproducing the very forms of academic writing and discourse that the Western academy and, more specifically, the Anglo-American disciplines are so proficient at: theorising the other, and therefore extending a kind of ostensibly benign intellectual surveillance of the other, and of theorising the effects of us on 'them'.

Thus far, our focus has been on the cultural politics of the local. We have attempted to show, by reference to one local site, the complexity of the multi-directional traffic of "flows", of homogenizing and heterogenising forces that are mutually implicated in the dynamics of so-called globalisation. In this next section we turn briefly to some of the theoretical issues implicated in what several scholars have identified as the globalisation of discourses of globalisation (e.g., Lee & Wills 1997; Reynolds 1998; Robertson & Khondker 1998). The term globalisation has

rapidly gained theoretical prominence and intellectual 'cache' in the last decade, often used to characterise or indeed supplant the equally slippery and catch-all term postmodernism. Whereas postmodernism is now widely accepted to characterise both a philosophical standpoint, as well as a shift in cultural and economic activity and social relations, globalisation is less of a philosophical position. Yet it shares two analytic features with postmodernism, namely a focus on the economic and cultural.

The most widely accepted definition of globalisation is that it is a feature of late capitalism, or *the* condition of postmodernity, and more importantly, that it is characterized by the emergence of a world-system driven in large part by a global capitalist economy. This "capitilocentric" epistemology (Gibson-Graham 1997), this focus on the economic as the principal force driving cultural, social, and educational change on a global scale, fails to recognise that "economic activity always takes place and is embedded in a culturally constructed context" (Crang 1997, 10). Such economic determinism drags culture along as causal outcome, not as context or a broader social field of cultural circuits of signification, identities and power relations.

Robertson (1992, 1995), Waters (1995) and Appadurai (1990) argue against simplistic economic-driven models of globalisation. Waters, for instance, takes a more culturalist position and defines globalisation more along the lines of a global change in consciousness about changing global conditions – whether local contributions and/or solutions to global (environmental) problems (Mazur 1998), the global drift to the information and electronic age (Castells 1997), or trends toward mega-alliances in corporate or nation-state management (EU, ASEAN, NAFTA, or Daimler Chrysler). As Waters (1995) sees it, globalisation is

> a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding" (3)... A globalized culture is chaotic rather than orderly...it is not centralized nor unified...the meanings of its components are *relativized* into one another but it is not unified or centralized (125; emphasis added).

The core feature of an economic conceptualisation of globalisation is that the forces and flows of capital sweeping the world and sucking up difference and diversity originate principally in 'the west'. That is to say, there is a sense that globalisation is isomorphic with a kind of high-tech, multi-mediated economic and

cultural imperialism which in an earlier age might have been termed 'westernisation' -- read Americanisation -- or else a postmodern mutation of colonialism. In that regard, globalisation, like its parent term postmodernism, has pejorative connotations in the sense that the metaphors and images associated with global markets and capital, and a global sweep eradicating or at least normalising diversity and difference, paint a picture of a monstrous grotesque of Godzilla-like proportions voraciously gobbling up labour, markets, cultures and traditions (T. Luke 1996), bringing NICs and aspiring NICs to heel. In short, it is generally used to signify a terrifying compression of the world – "a brakeless train wreaking havoc" (Harvey 1989, 8), a shrinking if not elimination of time and space, and the erosion of 'the local'.

What has long counter-balanced this negative appropriation of globalisation is its conceptual opposition to the beleaguered local whether at the level of nation-states, communities, cultural 'traditions', or identities. This fundamental polarity between local and global, macro and micro, is at the heart of much current debate about globalisation in the social sciences (cf. Waters 1995; Robertson 1992; Wallerstein 1980, 1991; Featherstone 1993; Featherstone et al. 1995). Here the local is cast in a victim narrative, robbed of agency, stripped of authenticity, and reduced to nothing more than a hapless consumption machine. Robertson and Khondker (1998), quite rightly we believe, have picked up a connection between proponents of the 'globalisation-equals-western-hegemony' equation and an historically shaped and culturally located intellectual position: namely, the intellectual defense team of the subaltern. They write:

> This perspective centers on the proclamation that the West enjoys what is often called a hegemonic position in the world as a whole. In a certain sense, then, it is in the interests of those who maintain that they are representing subaltern or oppressed groups to cast the West as very dominant and thus to conceive of globalisation as a form of westernisation or as imperialism or colonialism in a new guise. In this perspective many non-Western societies are regarded as *victims without agency* and 'globalisation' becomes simply the pejorative symbol of all things that are allegedly contaminating or disrupting these societies (32).

We would add that the 'subaltern' is a contested intellectual construct and is not an identity Asian cultures identify with, nor do they feel particularly "contaminated" or disrupted. Here Featherstone's (1995, 186) comment about what the characteristic local response to "self-appointed guardians in the West" is relevant: "Don't other me". As we noted earlier, many countries in the region currently undergoing economic and political/social upheaval are using elements of globalisation (e.g., the 'new' finance sector accountability and corporate transparency, and the new global visibility via media and telecommunications) to challenge "internal" problems. Indonesia and Malaysia are currently witnessing pro-democracy *reformasi* social movements that challenge longstanding *internal* political and economic structures and processes.

At the same, time, there is neither a homogeneous 'west' or 'east', or indeed a singular academic, intellectual or corporate voice on cultural globalisation. In what follows, we explore two aspects of current discourses on globalisation and development: (1) the diversity of agents of globalisation; and (2) the diversity of competing, often divergent, discourses of globalisation.

First, the issue about the very agents and objects of globalisation. The irrefutable fact is that the United States has the world's largest economy and, via world language English, its intellectual industries, scientific and military systems, mass media and publishing, exerts substantial control over dominant modes of representation and communication. Yet there are other varied agents and objects of globalisation acting upon and deployed from the smaller regional countries and economies including obviously Japan, and, increasingly China – but as well Canada, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and others. The extension of these forces into newly industrialising economies does not necessarily have the self-same ideological or cultural effects as that of American companies and NGOs. Simply, globalisation and even, more specifically, westernisation do not necessarily mean Americanisation.

Second, there is an increasing complexity and diversity within governmental, academic, and corporate discourses of globalization. That diversity is evident in academic scholarship where disciplinary differences and differences of position within disciplines abound. Corporate and governmental discourses on globalisation usually promote an agenda to legitimate economic expansionism and development.

These include the official statements, annual reports and trend analyses by multinationals, investment banks and trusts, and as well by transnational bodies such as the World Bank, Asia Development Bank, the EEU and others. Yet these do *not* necessarily read as discourses of exploitation and rapacious development, but have deliberately incorporated discourses on the prevention and amelioration of negative social, cultural and environmental effects of rapid and unplanned development (e.g., Asia Development Bank 1996). In such accounts the problems with economic globalisation are increasingly recognised and are said to lay with unplanned, unmonitored and unregulated development. In the field of education, likewise, the developments of NGOs and transnational forms of governance range from basic education, rural access, informal education, women's programs, indigenous education and literacy, nutrition and special education, and school restructuring and decentralisation planning (e.g., Sharma 1991).

Our point here is not to condemn or support the politics of aid, which have been roundly critiqued in 1970s dependency theory (Ley 1996). We wish to point out that NGOs, nation-state aid programs, and corporations alike are moving rapidly into heteroglossic discourses. This is particularly the case in educational planning and projects. Basic education projects in Laos, Vietnam and elsewhere or advanced educational aid/trade relations with Thailand, Malaysia and China function, inter alia, to develop Western-sympathetic human capital for economic 'take off' or consolidation. In the wake of the crisis, educational aid projects in Indonesia shifted from specialised kinds of curriculum or program enhancement (e.g., special education, teacher education, higher education expertise) to basic nutritional programs for school children. Malaysia scaled down ambitious information technology planning for schools, and refocused on basic education issues. In these and other instances, NGOs and government aid agencies have taken a dual role in the processes of globalisation: both setting out enabling conditions for the cooperative development and extension of capital into new labor and consumer markets, and mopping up or ameliorating the negative effects of these same processes.

Competing discourses deployed by governments and corporations in the processes and practices of globalisation necessarily are increasingly complex and

heteroglossic, achieving both/and effects that are not clear-cut and often ambiguous. The ambiguity of both/and effects is epitomised in market-driven versions of 'democracy' that are redefining governmentality and economics in the region, setting out new conditions for the expansion and exploitation of capital, but also enabling ameliorative and progressive reforms. Without exception in the rapidly developing countries of south east Asia such reforms target education as a cornerstone of whatever vision of political, social or economic change governments and corporate sectors decide upon. Educational policy, therefore, can be seen as a flashpoint – a nodal point – of competing discourses, all focused on issues of knowledge (curriculum), power (access/equity), and the human subject (teacher/student/citizen).

We have attempted here to describe and analyse but a few facets of the complexity of cultural globalisation, but in a way that also suggests an alternative, situated perspective. That is, one that neither takes the privileged position of the centre and presupposes the efficacy of that centre, nor romanticises heroic agency or the material, cultural and social effects at the level of the local. The lenses through which we have come to understand the push-pull dynamics of local-global circuits, or what is now often referred to as the "glocal" (Robertson 1995) have been shaped by our varied experiences along these concentric hinterlands of Australasia and southeast Asia that are both/and: centre and margin. And it is our locale and location which have moulded our analysis of and engagement with the "little habitats" – the communities, the schools, the colleges – where aspects of globalisation seep in at different rates, in different colours, contours and guises. We will now trace out a last contour and 'colour in' what a pedagogy and curriculum purpose-built for problematicising globalisation and New Times can look like. This, in the context of one project in the Thai tertiary education sector, in one locale, in post-IMF times.

A   Postscript: On   Educational   Heterodoxies
We return to the dinner. After our Thai hosts had finished describing the problems for which they were seeking solutions, they outlined some potential areas for research and training. We were somewhat surprised when one department head

asked us: "What do you know about performance indicators, quality assurance, school based management?" The policy response of the Thai government to New Times had been to adapt aspects of a technocratic, neoliberal educational agenda. This included an increased focus on assessment, comparative analysis of school, college and university outcome measures, partial privitisation and increased marketisation of post-secondary education, and the "devolution" of management to local regions and schools. In 1997, the Thai Ministry of University Affairs established a formal body to establish quality assurance mechanisms for evaluating and comparatively ranking universities; similar moves were underway in Indonesia.

If the principal premise of our argument here holds -- that the effects of globalisation unfold locally, regionally and nationally in uneven and not always centrally predictable ways -- then any educational solutions by definition would have to entail amalgams and blendings, requiring the on-the-ground generation of heterodoxic strategies. Many Asian countries have turned to emulate economic rationalist approaches to education, such as those prototyped in Britain, New Zealand, and, more recently, Australia. Not surprisingly, these policies complement IMF fiscal programs that call not only for increased financial transparency, but also the reform of key state institutions to simulate corporate bureaucracies and to enter in direct competition with each other and with emergent private sector providers of services and goods. As it has in the west, this has set the conditions for tighter "one-line" budgets, downsizing of staff, casualisation and work intensification, intra-system competition between educational institutions, and increased reliance on non-recurrent self-generated funding.[3] All of the Rajabhat Institutes we have worked with have been enabled by recent legislation to independently set fee levels and to establish businesses to subsidise educational operations. These enterprises range from stores, restaurants and hotels, to craft and manufacturing activities, cleaning and catering services, and water-bottling facilities. Following the 1997 crisis, these educational 'reforms' were accelerated, with the Universities and Rajabhat Institutes absorbing funding cuts of between 25-50%. Hence, the tendency across Asia has

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[3] Similar moves were recently part of Jiang Zemin's 1998 Chinese civil service reforms, that have led to the 50% phased-in downsizing of administrative staff in Ministries of Education, the emergence of a marketplace for private educational institutions, and the introduction of student fees.

been for central governments to attempt to emulate western systems' responses to decreased funding, new curriculum demands, and changing student populations.

In turning to us to contribute to educational exchange and development, our Thai colleagues put us in a profoundly difficult situation. For we knew that (a) such reforms had not generated the kinds of productive results promised in Australian contexts and elsewhere and had exacerbated inequality (A. Luke, in press); and (b) that the *local* and *regional* impacts of economic and cultural globalisation would be best addressed by locally driven curriculum development, instructional innovation and institutional reorganisation.

Yet there is already evidence that, like the other aspects of globalisation we have discussed here, the Asian implementation of technocratic and neoliberal educational policies has been idiosyncratic and heteroglossic. For instance, school-based management and decentralisation is taken in the west as an archetypal Thatcherite move towards, devolution, disinvestment and "steering from a distance" (Lingard 1996) via indirect control mechanisms (e.g., quality assurance, performance indicators, corporate systems of accountability). Yet even this most overtly ideological of educational policy moves becomes a hybrid when transposed to other national, regional and local contexts. In the Philippines, the agenda for educational "devolution" is linked closely with overall policy moves towards reform of a hierarchical and bureaucratised system, reform that includes moves to "indigenise" the curriculum by bringing in more community, local and ethnic content, to find alternatives to rigid standardised testing-based approaches to instruction and assessment, and to introduce vernacular and minority languages as media of instruction.[4] In the case of Thailand, the attempt to move to school-based management and devolution is concurrent with moves to extend universal compulsory education beyond grade 6 into secondary schools, and to develop programs for dealing with cultural diversity and special education needs. There are, as we have argued here, complex local histories, political economies and material conditions enabling and disabling these developments. Here particular policy

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[4] Personal communication, Fr. Andrew Gonzalez, Secretary, Department of Education, Culture and Sports, Manila, 5 October 1998.

discourses and practices that are affiliated with, for example, neoliberal market orientations in the West, reappear in differing configurations, with different ideological collocations, in what appear to western eyes unexpected juxtapositions with progressivist, classical liberal and even radical educational alternatives.

It would seem, then, that even direct attempts to import and reproduce the most problematic of western educational strategies are processes fraught with local inflections and adaptations. Policy makers are confronted with, for better and worse, an implementation nightmare. Hence, in analyses and development of local educational policy responses to cultural globalisation, we side with Robertson's (1995, 27) observation that:

> It is not a question of *either* homogenisation but rather of the ways in which both of these two tendencies have become features of life across much of the late 20th century world. In this perspective the problem becomes that of spelling out the ways in which homogenising and heterogenising tendencies are mutually implicative.

There is little doubt that the patterns of rapid development are straining and buckling the capacities of traditional (e.g., religious, community), postwar, and in some instances postcolonial institutions of government and the civic state to cope. In many countries in south east Asia, the schooling and higher education systems – complex blends of inter-Asian, secular and non-secular, colonialist and postcolonialist remnants, many redesigned under the auspices of postwar Western and East Bloc intellectual and material aid during the Cold War – do not seem well equipped to deal with New Times. At the same time, many of the educational, social or cultural problems ostensibly produced by globalisation have little or nothing to do with an irresistible, hegemonic American, 'world' culture at the service of multinationals. As breathtaking as the scope and rapidity of these developments may appear, they have 'other' complex histories.

What is to be done locally? We were in a difficult pedagogical situation, where the acritical transfer of these normative models – whether managerialist models of educational governance, technocratic models of pedagogy, or radical models of critical literacy, feminist pedagogy and so forth – would have been at best extremely problematic. If there is an activity that epitomizes the western logos and high

modernity – it is indeed critical literacy. And attempts to teaching Thai students to 'be critical', in the contexts of an emergent but at times tenuous move towards an 'open' public sphere for debate and dissention, and in the face of longstanding Confucian and Buddhist traditions of reverence of pedagogic authority, generated as many questions as they might have addressed.

Finally, after many more meals with our Thai colleagues, we had collaboratively built a curriculum that was about the identification and solution of local, regional and national educational problems through the development of hybrid models of institutional development and community-based research. The foundational content of that curriculum was the study of cultural and economic globalisation and the principal theme of all of our studies was 'New Times'. We have begun each of our programs by reviewing and distributing key western work on globalisation, much of it cited here. But instead of treating these texts as accurate analytic and descriptive tools, we have tabled them with a simple pedagogical framework, stating: "This is how the 'west' is theorising 'you'" and then moving towards the critique of those positions, and reworking those texts with students' local analyses of the actual discourses, practices, and effects of globalisation on Thai life. Moving from world to local representations, we have also discussed local media reports on the economic crisis asking: "How is the 'reality' of the crisis constructed by Thais people for other Thais? What isn't said? Whose interests do these competing accounts serve?"

This chapter is, at least in part, a snapshot of the kinds of problem-solving pedagogical and conceptual work that we have been able to construct – literally from 'the ground up' – with our colleagues and students over the past three years. It is a work in progress, a kind of knowledge formation where meanings and analytic vocabularies have been exchanged and mobilised locally by our Thai colleagues – college and university teachers and researchers -- mobile phone toting, 'wired' global citizens but local agents in and of their communities.

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A Situated Perspective on Cultural Globalisation

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