

Between empires: Globalisation and knowledge

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ABSTRACT

This discussion investigates processes of framing knowledge in globalised knowledge economies through tracing historical and present processes of empire. Seeking to understand the present and future conditions of knowledge-empires, it aims to shed light on the relations of power and knowledge in terms of the nation state, which is already framed by the empire of globalisation. It considers the imperatives to drive efficiencies of knowledge transfer in education and the shaping of the human subject within global constructions of knowledge. When one traces the idea of empire alongside that of globalisation then it could be said that we are situated between an empire past and an empire yet to come; and in both the technologies of knowledge are aligned with the technologies of power.

The day of small nations has long passed away. The day of Empires has come.

Joseph Chamberlain, Birmingham Speech, May 1904.

Between empires

It was a hundred years ago that Joseph Chamberlain spoke of “the day of Empires” yet perhaps this rhetoric is transferable to “the day of globalisation”. Empire and globalisation: each rings with a certain universality echoing imperialist power and expansionism. There may be different dispositions through which power is exercised in the empires of territorial domination and the globalised empires of deterritorialised movement of information and finance, but similarities may be found. When one looks at the post-9/11 War on Terror the similarities start to become apparent as nationalism(s) reappears albeit in new guise. In this respect we might heed a question asked by Tom Nairn (2005: 249): “what is it that we should be addressing today?” when we look at knowledge and nationalism, knowledge and globalisation, knowledge and research.

When one traces the idea of empire alongside that of globalisation then it could be said that we are situated between an empire past and an empire yet to come; and in both the technologies of knowledge are in alliance with the technologies of political power. What we need to do is excavate a critical history of the present so we may understand these conditions with more clarity as we discursively construct the future.

Empires of the past positioned logic in the higher realms of knowledge embedding meaning in metaphysical premises that assumed the superiority of certain races and languages, systems and histories, moralities and virtues. By the adoption of these dominant positions, there could be a continuation of superiority through deeming other places and races, systems and beliefs as

inevitably inferior and therefore necessarily open to colonising processes in the interests of progress. Historical processes of liberal democracy and Marxian socialism would mark these moves of “progress” in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Francis Fukuyama (1992) reflected on these utopian principles arguing that the Hegelian and Marxian evolution of human societies was not open-ended but would come to an end. This end would be identifiable when humankind had satisfied its fundamental yearnings and therefore achieved its utopian goals. The “end of history” would come when the Hegelian liberal state and the Marxian communist society had reached its ultimate coherence. Then the historically endorsed institutions that had upheld these processes would have achieved their work.

Empires of modernity were characterised by that assurance of utopian goals to be achieved via knowledge as a rational order of progress. Upheld by society’s institutions, knowledge was based on logical erudition or informed learning, coming to recognise truth through provability. Likewise the privileging of conscious awareness or informational fact about an objective field and understanding of the world according to logical deduction and cognitive acuity was an underlying tenet. Today knowledge is positioned in a fundamentally different way. Knowledge is a core element in an economic system that is now global; and this is the new and emergent mode of production for the exchange of capital. Thus knowledge now operates as capital, something that can be produced, invested and exchanged via information and financial networks, supporting technologies of information transfer, capture, investment and management. Fundamental to the mobilisation of these operations, and no less concerned with notions of progress, is the corralling of “knowledge workers”, including those in education and research, into the economies of knowledge use, exchange and exploitation.

Methodologies for understanding the present

Such changes demand theorisation in order to understand them with greater clarity. There are diverse methodological procedures that can be employed to understand the present conditions of globalisation in respect of knowledge, power and policy formations, and the effects of these on the human subject. At a UK conference on globalisation in 1999, Martin Albrow defined globalisation as “one of the lynch terms of the current age ... the discourse of our times ... a new world order”. We are certainly immersed in, and constructed by, this discourse, but there are differences in the globalisation of 1999 from the globalisation of 2006. The focus on fluid capital, technology transfer, and the efficiency of new market investments characterising the “new world order” of globalisation pre-9/11, is now shot through with newly entrenched forms of nationalism in the War on Terror, post-9/11. The forces and shifts of power are by no means clearly identifiable, and as Tomlinson (2000: 14) writes, “globalizing phenomena are ... complex and multidimensional, putting pressure on the conceptual frameworks by which we have traditionally grasped the social world”.

The nation state and individual human subject are conditioned, and ultimately measured and valued through the exercise of these political and technological matrices and networks of power. The task of enquiry must be to tease out identifiable relationships of political power and knowledge in the empire of globalisation; and to look at the way the human subject is conditioned in these global knowledge economies.

We can look to the French theorist Michel Foucault who works from Nietzsche to advocate a genealogical method to access and clarify the present conditions. Mapping “a certain kind of knowledge of the past”, Nietzsche offers a way to construct a “critical history” of the present (1874, in Breazeale, 1997: 67, 77). Foucault seeks not origins but “the vicissitudes of history” (Foucault 1977, in Bouchard, 1996: 144) for how could we ever locate the “origins” of such historical process? Foucault’s genealogy provides us with a way to locate events and practices in the randomness and discursivity of historical processes without subscribing to a rationalised form of continuity. This is well positioned by Mark Olssen (2006: 16):

Foucault's genealogical histories thus challenge the presuppositions of past histories, the tendency toward totalizing abstraction, toward closure, toward universalist assumptions regarding the human identity or the nature of existence. His approach also rejects the transcendental turn in philosophy and asserts the radical contingency of discourses in their historical context.

If we apply Foucault's method to understand the political moves of power that make up our global present, then we are analysing the events as they occur and the everyday relations between them. Through the methodologies of genealogy we can review the discursive processes of the present conditions in which we live and work, trace and track their movements across specific spaces to open historical conditions of knowledge, not to venerate the past, but so we might understand the present better. By doing so, a critical attitude may be brought to bear upon present social and political conditions.

Modernist empires were founded on formations of knowledge and capital with attention to territorial domination and expansion. "Dominant capitalist values and norms are in the process of being globalized ... increasingly organized around knowledge and information that circulates globally and serves a globalized innovation and profit-making structure", explain Carnoy and Castells (2001: 9) in their discussion of Nicos Poulantzis (1980) who conceptualised the state as the mechanism that concentrates power in the political arena and away from class struggles.

Dicken *et al.* "outline some of the arguments for adopting a network methodology to building an analytical framework for the global economy" (Dicken, Kelly, Olds & Yeung, 2001: 105). Networks become the new unit of analysis of global knowledge and economy rather than individuals, firms or nations (89–112). This must have an effect on the human subject and the individual's relationship to knowledge in and of the social space.

In this sense, globalisation signifies a discursive system that determines the make-up of political struggles that now characterise national governance with its balances of regulation and deregulation. Such struggles are embedded in the realities of increasing global mobility of finance and information transfer, surveillance and insecurity, knowledge and power, managerialism and compliance. At the same time, there is an unreferenced baton advocating the hands-off state devolving responsibility from centre to citizen.

Globalisation and empire: Some definitions and processes

According to standard definitions, *global* is "of or relating to the whole world; worldwide"; from *globus* a spherical object; with *globe* derived from Latin *globus* (Pearsall, 1998: 780). Terms such as *globalist*, *globalise*, *globality*, and *global age* entered the languages of economic, political, social and media discourses in the 1990s (see Castells, 1997, 1997/2000, 1998/2000; Featherstone, 1990, 1992, 1995, 1996; Fukuyama, 1992; Giddens, 1998, 1999; Hirst and Thompson, 1996; King, 1991; Scott, 1997). Following September 11, 2001, globalisation is being re-examined with emphases on *global security* and *global terror*, and renewed interest in the position of the nation and its responsibility for state-violence and personal protection (see Nairn & James, 2005). Nairn (2005: 248–261) discusses with great finesse the re-emergence of *nationalism* in globalising conditions post-1989 and the end of the Cold War, "contrary to every prophecy of the neo-liberal clerisy" (248) ... but this is a nationalism that is "distinct from that of national identities and claims for nationhood or liberation" and, he says, is "more likely to favour a return to national identity politics *minus* – or against – the militarized "-ism" again prominent in post-2001 USA" (248). Thus the nations of modernist empires past are reformulating in new guise for the global empires to come.

A globalised world order, global networks, global capitalism, global economy, global technologies, global citizen, global culture, global terror, global (in)security, global peace, global warming, global socialisation, global music, global media, global sexuality, global connectivity and global integration have become familiar descriptors of the political, economic, fiscal, educational, cultural and social

conditions of the twenty-first century. The human subject as agent of progress and subject of discourse marks the discursive processes of globalisation in new ways. The institutionalised self or the market self as *homo economicus*, courses through a new set of historical tangents, with ethnic coexistence and durable antagonisms.

New forms of nationalism appear through “One Market Under God” (Nairn, 2005: 257) in neo-conservative political rhetoric and national-positioning measures currently exercised in the War on Terror. As capital and information globalises, so state power and control moves inexorably from the borders of the nation state to the fluid, borderless networks of global economy and knowledge transfer, while mapping the frontiers of political protection of the nationalisms.

In spite of promises of global peace and prosperity, dispositions of contemporary globalisation are fully characterised by abject poverty and human terror in much of the world. Joseph Stiglitz, US Nobel Prize-winning economist, argues that this is not inevitable (2006). Free trade and the free market are not necessarily welfare enhancing and with some careful governance of world trade and monetary organisations (World Bank and IMF) economic globalisation could work better. Stiglitz points out that global financial crises and instabilities have forced change, yet the fact is that “the advanced industrial countries actually created a global trade that helped their special corporate and financial interests, and hurt the poorest countries of the world” (2006: xii).

Here is the non-territorial empire influencing local conditions while meeting global trade deals and negotiating the distributions of global finance and technology. By contrast the modernist empire was based in territorial expansion, marked by the imperialist traces of historical power and authority of nation states. These nationalist moves followed trade routes and cemented normalising discourses of historical continuity through superiorities of classification of human subjects according to value hierarchies of people and place. Even animals were evaluated, marked, measured and categorised – always with an underpinning ethos of moral rectitude. For example early scientific explorations of Australia deemed the kangaroo and platypus to be inferior creatures, even sub-animal. This is in line with the hierarchising and categorising of Indigenous peoples in the endeavours of colonialism.

There is a supreme process of authority in those imperialist empires of conquest and colonisation. Standard lexicon defines *empire* as “an extensive group of states or countries under a single supreme authority; ... an extensive operation or sphere of activity controlled by one person or group; ... supreme political power over several countries when exercised by a single authority” (Pearsall, 1998: 604). Single authority rings of power over another country, belief, practice or people. Is this something that is cast to the realms of history? We need only examine such authorities as the contemporary policies and practices of the post 9/11 Bush administration and Blair politics in the globalising policies of the War on Terror to see a reinscription of empires of the mind/knowledge, empires of belief, empires of political power and authority, albeit in new disguise.

A brief history of colonisation of the British Empire shows the way “power over” historically worked. Familiar to those born and bred in colonised nations like New Zealand and Australia is the cultural and political signification of being a dependent, a possession, a ready market, an exotic sphere of a single authority, the British Empire’s “other”. Once Great Britain was the centre, the sign of Empire’s civilisation with its possessions, dominions and dependencies, that had reached into North America and India as early as the seventeenth century, then to dominate and colonise a series of small colonies, mostly in the West Indies, during the late seventeenth to late eighteenth centuries, and adding Australia, New Zealand, various parts of the Far East and large areas of Africa in the nineteenth century. A form of decentralised empire characterised the granting of self-governance to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and since the end of the Second World War independence for most of the remaining colonies (228).

The narrative recounted here is that of the West, specifically the British Empire, as she represented the mythical “mother”, the “homeland” towards which the European-British communities of the colonies gazed and for whom many died in the patriotic imperative of

nationalistic wars of the twentieth century. Through nationalism the concept of “world” became part of global social consciousness, with West domination as its underpinning necessity for the ideals of progress, freedom and democracy. The events of history recognised that the global hemispheres were tied via colonial expansions of the past and hopes for the future to come. But inevitably “mother” turned from the imperialist gaze to abandon her children as her interest waned in preference for new fields of interest, new markets with political and economic links to Europe and pressing social responsibilities to other colonised states (of India, Pakistan, Africa). New Zealand, for example, was cast adrift to look elsewhere for favourable markets for lamb, beef and wool, with her Pakeha and Māori subjects looking to each other to locate workable forms of bi-culturalism that might be retrieved from two historical notions of sovereignty. The discursive processes of cultural identity formation became crucial to the nation’s agendas and policies of governance. Following the 1940 centenary of the British Empire’s annexation of New Zealand, marked by the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840), the nation began to re-examine its identity as a *bi-cultural* nation, *Aotearoa* New Zealand, as it considered a future beyond the empire of the past, in tune eventually with an empire to come.

An abstract empire

The globalised “empire” is governed by a non-territorial centre that financier and philanthropist George Soros (1998: 103–105) calls “an abstract Empire”. Researchers are now grappling with new relations of power in economic and political terms, and cultural deficits and advantages in social spheres. This new empire is characterised by the ubiquitous spread of the English language, global movements of people and finance capital, digital information transfer that compresses space and time, over-technologised social spaces – and creating significant human consequences.

In the finance sphere, George Soros (1998) looks to the ubiquitous, unregulated, neoliberal, capitalist system of market forces in his book on the crisis of global markets. Seeking the urgent creation of a global open society, Soros defines the global capitalist system as “characterised not only by free trade but more specifically by the free movement of capital” (Soros, 1998: xii), which is inherently unstable. According to Soros, the global capitalist system may be analogous to that of previous territorial empires because it “does govern those who belong to it – and it is not easy to opt out” (104). However it differs from a territorial empire “because it lacks sovereignty and the trappings of sovereignty; indeed the sovereignty of the states that belong to it is the main limitation on its power and influence” (103–104). Although the global empire of capital is “almost invisible because it does not have any formal structure”, Soros maintains that “it has a centre and a periphery just like an empire and the centre benefits at the expense of the periphery” (104). The periphery is expected to take its place in the lottery of unregulated markets. He also points out that the subjects of this “abstract empire” are in peril, as they “do not even know they are subjected to it or, more correct, they recognize that they are subjected to impersonal and sometimes disruptive forces but they do not understand what those forces are” (104).

Stiglitz (2006) brings these moves of power and politics up to date in his criticisms of developing countries’ crippling debts and financial and social instabilities. World Bank, WTO, APEC, IMF, OECD, GATT¹ *et al.* signify global forces, groups of globalists formulating economic strategies for global solutions to questions that affect the local human subject. But, as commentators like Soros and Stiglitz point out through their dissections of the current state of globalisation, global economies in which people and institutions have put their faith carry with them profound instabilities. The free movement of global capital is a system in which we are all implicated. When “the pain at the periphery” of the global financial system has become so intense, individual countries simply “fall by the wayside” (Soros, 1998: xiv). And so it is with individuals and small communities who are not part of the dominant play: they are given responsibility for global progress and security yet they too “fall by the wayside” in the wake of insecure financial systems. In 1998 Soros wrote of his deep concerns in the wake of financial instabilities in South East Asia. He warned against the

perils of a collapsing global economy, following the implosion of the Russian economy, the tenuous banking system in Japan, and the collapse of Asian economies in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand (1998: xiv).²

Educational institutions in Australia and New Zealand well know the effects of economic destabilisation in their near neighbours as, in the late 1990s higher education budgets had become too easily dependent on international student numbers from the high-growth Asian economies. The Asian crisis had occurred at a time when monetary and fiscal conditions were deemed to be unmistakably favourable. Countries were forced to float their currencies, for example Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Taiwan (Eichengreen, 1996: 188–189), leading to “greater exchange rate flexibility” (190–191) marking the increases in global capital and information mobility of the twenty-first century. Critical of the IMF and the open free market advocacy of the “Washington consensus”, Stiglitz (2006) claims it is now time for developed nations to take stock of these global instabilities and to exert greater responsibility in alleviating the damages to disadvantaged countries.

A genealogy of political transformations

A genealogy of political transformation in New Zealand shows how modes of political and social knowledge and fiscal governance have responded historically to changing moves of power in empires of modernity and beyond. Defining moments of reinvention are identifiable from 1840 (annexation by Britain), to 1907 (Dominion Status), 1931 (independence within the Commonwealth), and 1984, when the Fourth Labour Government led by the New Zealand Treasury with the support of the New Zealand State Services Commission instigated an economic, political and social system of neoliberalism via the market model of governance. Adopting the free market with unseemly haste and little national debate, from 1984 New Zealand was led for the first time in its history by a new form of economic rationalism known as the “New Right” policies of neoliberalism. To action these moves of governance, privatisation of public assets followed and soon the business of education, knowledge and research was reinvented in the neoliberal frame. What followed was the inevitable reconstruction of the topography of social processes and the human subject as the individual transformed to *homo economicus*, a self-interested subject, best able to exercise his or her power of choice for future prosperity in a deregulated market identified by the minimalist state as a “state hands-off” system (see Peters, 1996; Kelsey, 1996; Grierson, 2000: 474–491; Olssen, 2001;). However with the state entering into transnational agreements on free trade and global economic partnerships, state governance was still impacting upon the individual, in spite of proclamations of devolution to individual rights and responsibility. As the nation entered into deals with unseen hands, off-shore interests flooded the local terrain and state commitment to the new global economic order was transforming economic, political, social and institutional systems of governance including, of course, tertiary education and the management of knowledge generation (research) in universities and crown institutes.

A Foucauldian analysis of the type of domination in operation here suggests that there is a form of “truth obligation” inscribed through certain technologies or sign systems in the social or cultural order (see Foucault, 1982). Something is made concrete to the end-user of social policy, the consumer, reader and interpreter of social knowledge (the social or historical subject) via words and ideas that embody certain “common sense” meanings that have become normalised.³ These technologies of normalisation operate to determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or dominations, and so the claims affect the way the human subject thinks about knowledge and about self. Foucault explains this point in relation to “the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves: economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine, and penology” (1982: 17–18). Foucault’s concern is to expose the way different eras and conditions organise knowledge, and how technologies of domination work through the management of individuals. By these means of analysis some light can be shed on modes of

governmentality in neoliberal economies of advanced post-industrial nations. “The main point is not to accept this knowledge at face value but to analyse these so-called sciences as very specific “truth games” related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves” (Foucault, 1982: 18).

Thus in looking at the concept of a global empire we must consider the way the empire has constructed the human subject or individual according to certain technologies or signs in our culture and the sorts of effects this is having upon some peoples at the radical expense of others. Referring again to Joseph Stiglitz (2006), for all the advantages of increased productivity and democratic participation in Asian economies, there is an economic and social downside of globalisation. We only need to look at the increasing levels of poverty, political corruption and opportunistic action in Africa, depressed economies of Russia following the precipitous devolution of the Soviet States, and environmental desecration in a range of countries to know that globalisation must be fairer, it must work for all people, not just for the rich and powerful.

Disjunctures and performativity

These observations and predictions are salutary, and we know that within every state there are human subjects whose lives are disrupted, deprived, depressed and damaged. Yet the need for enhancement of global social justice continues to be overtaken in the push for increased efficiencies of knowledge production, accumulation and transfer in the global reconfigurations of education through the OECD and other global organisations. A riveting statement by H  l  ne Cixous at the start of the catalogue of the *2006 Biennale of Sydney: Zones of Contact* (Merewether 2006: 045) draws attention to these disjunctures:

When an event arrives which evicts us from ourselves, we do not know how to “live”. But we must. Thus we are launched into a space-time whose coordinates are all different from those we have always been accustomed to. In addition, these violent situations are always new. Always. At no moment can a previous bereavement serve as a model. It is, frightfully, all new. (H  l  ne Cixous)

This present of which Cixous speaks is excruciatingly new, un-lived, and unrecognisable for those in dislocation as a result of economic and ideological globalisation. Yet we are all implicated. As curator Charles Merewether writes, “These are our histories imbricated as we are in the tragic events of violence and destruction as much as in dreams and realisation of peaceful co-habitation and conviviality” (2006: 045). Our social lives are performed via knowledge transfers along “the fault-lines of the present in which the past persists and the future is uncertain” (045). These performative encounters shape the human subject in the instabilities as well as the economic prosperities of globalisation.

The performative transfers of knowledge represent a mode of production that now characterises global economies. Jean-Fran  ois Lyotard had predicted this transformation of our postmodern times when he wrote of the optimisation of the knowledge economy in terms of performativity of the globalised system of knowledge:

The true goal of the system, the reason it programs itself like a computer, is the optimisation of the global relationships between input and output – in other words, performativity. Even when its rules are in the process of changing and innovations are occurring, even when its dysfunctions (such as strikes, crises, unemployment, or political revolutions) inspire hope and lead to belief in an alternative, even when what is actually taking place is only an internal readjustment and its result is no more than an increase in the system’s viability. The only alternative to this kind of performance improvement is entropy, or decline. (Lyotard, 1984: 11–12)

Efficient input-output of information is the principle mode of production within which academics now work. Education itself has become a performative venture of such efficiencies, which become accountable to the system itself. With increasing audit and compliance in the stakes of knowledge generation and technology exchange there are escalating demands on the human subject as

“knowledge worker”, who finds that more and more time is taken up with maintaining the system. What characterises the performativity of knowledge in new cultures of research regimentation and audit is that national governance determines the priority areas for growth of knowledge to serve the national economies, which are already implicated by networks of global business and cross-border trade agreements. Each cog in the system is now working for a system that is now globalised and faceless. As knowledge performance is transformed to align with these moves, the business of higher education and those academics working to uphold this business are reconfigured.

Specific example

This situation is patently apparent in Australia where four areas of research focusing principally on science, technology, health and security are prioritised for national significance. Announced in 2002 by the Australian Government, the “National Research Priorities” were positioned as an important element of the “Commonwealth Government’s Commitment to Innovation, *Backing Australia’s Ability*” (DEST, 2002).⁴ Periodically under review by a Standing Committee chaired by the Chief Scientist, the National Research Priorities were developed as a “whole of government” initiative “of long-term importance to Australia” (DEST, 2002). Underpinned by “priority goals”, the National Research Priorities (NRPs) are fourfold: “An Environmentally Sustainable Australia; Promoting and Maintaining Good Health; Frontier Technologies for Building and Transforming Australian Industries; and Safeguarding Australia”.

With their overt focus on science and technology it has not been easy to find a space for funded arts and humanities research in the Australia Research Council priorities, and for several years academics have been working around these priorities to secure funding for legitimate research of the less-rationalised, scientific or instrumentalised forms of knowledge. The narrow emphasis in 2002 on science and technology was opened up in 2003 for the inclusion of social sciences and humanities research, but the creative arts as a legitimate field of knowledge were still on the margins of Australia Research Council funding.⁵ That the arts and humanities traditionally address the sorts of human issues of dislocation resulting from the market dynamics and asymmetrical modes of information wrought by globalisation is deemed of less importance than the outcomes of scientific research in the stakes of global competition and productivity.

Attempting to address these disjunctures via robust national policy for education, in August 2003, the then Australian Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Honourable Brendan Nelson announced his package of reforms in the education sector as “the new foundation for our higher education sector” to “prepare young Australians for the future”. Promising new financing arrangements to underpin public funding, Minister Nelson proposed his package of progressively introduced reforms in *teaching, workplace productivity, governance, student financing, research, cross-cultural collaboration, and quality* (Nelson, 2003; see discussion in Grierson, 2006). Such focus on productivity and quality responds to globally prescribed and overarching OECD recommendations. The OECD and World Bank have laid down indicators for the benchmarking of education in accord with the need for education to drive skills’ improvement of a global workforce for the global knowledge economies.

“Globalisation, massification of higher education, a revolution in communications and the need for lifelong learning, leave Australian universities nowhere to hide from the winds of change”, declared Minister Nelson (2003) as he argued for “Resilience, both economic and human” – to be largely driven by research, teaching and scholarship that can be measured by international benchmarks. Warning against “a long-term collision course with mediocrity that can only be avoided by embracing change now”, Nelson described his package of reforms as “a balance of sound policy with the pragmatism required to deliver what Australia needs and the future demands”.

But clearly the entire rhetoric is couched in progressive instrumentalism for the future with little debate of the present conditions of economic globalisation and the effects of technologisation of

our social spaces, our economies, our working habits, our skills, our knowledge and ultimately our minds. A predictive emphasis on “embracing change” to avoid disaster is typical of the sort of statements we hear time and again in national policies through which knowledge will be corralled and constituted, measured and transferred. Thus in the interests of futuristic predictions the present is brought into a clearly defined means–end relationship aligned to a necessary, yet imagined, demand-prosperity.

Confluence and disjunction

Expansionist devices of imperialism in previous centuries propelled their territorial moves to find new markets for capital gain and knowledge superiority. Empires of the present and empires to come, discursively marked by economic globalisation, are still expanding albeit with technologised *modus operandi*. The empires of globalisation are characterised by excessive information and finance transfer, the valuing of enterprise and innovation in knowledge generation and exchange, the focus on investment in industries that are deemed to be at the frontier of new knowledge, and the inevitable folding of the business of education into the business of industry and commercialism in advanced post-industrial nations. In the meantime less developed nations suffer the degradation of poverty and displacement, and global social justice is not a priority agenda of the World Bank and IMF *et al.*

Increasing emphases on global mobility of higher education are seen as compatible with economic agendas that demand a global workforce. As global concerns escalate via geopolitical and fiscal instabilities democratic nation states reconfigure their processes of economic rationalism and fold knowledge increasingly into new managerialist agendas for increased prosperity marked by a competitive edge in technologies and skills. The ideas, knowledge and people skills of human capital are identified as raw materials for economic innovation and growth, with subsequent governance and distribution of funding to move knowledge *efficiently* from production to end-user. These expedient reformulations are also marked by increased state compliance, regulation and intervention in education and institutional practices. Social goals are set via these complex relations of power while overlooking the need for open and robust disclosure and critical debate on global causes of injustice and insecurity. The human subject is inevitably drawn into these constructions and constraints as audit and accountability in education mark and measure the performative sites of knowledge that were once deemed to be free.

Conclusion

This discussion has undertaken an excavation of a critical history of the present. By opening knowledge and institutional policies and practices for scrutiny, this paper invites new ways of thinking towards that discourse of our times – globalisation. The present abstract empire of globalisation is increasingly characterised by an expanding economy of knowledge, dependent on technological efficiencies of information transfer, regulated audit and fiscal management, as well as notions of excellent, efficient accumulation and fast production capacities. Inevitably the relations of power and knowledge evoke consideration in the reformulations of the human subject. Here we have conditions that appear politically stabilising, but are they? Disembedded contexts are calling for open evaluation.

This global condition poses profound challenges for those involved in the economies of funding, production and distribution of knowledge. In the light of global moves for the endless growth of innovative knowledge to strengthen the alignments of the “free” world, political goal-setting and futuristic predictions are discursively constituting and prefiguring a knowledge empire as yet unknown, an empire to come.

Abbreviations

APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NRP	National Research Priority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RQF	Research Quality Framework
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Notes

1. See list of Abbreviations.
2. Soros argues that in 1998 Malaysia deliberately opted out of the global capitalist system, gaining relief by lowering interest rates and pumping up the stock market by isolating the country from the outside world. The effect of this was a flight of capital. As Soros stated: "The relief is bound to be temporary because the borders are porous and money will leave the country illegally" (1998: xiv).
3. The philosophy of the subject is Foucault's major concern. "The term 'subject' in a poststructuralist sense draws attention to the double position of agency, of being the subject who acts and is acted upon at one and the same time ... As Foucault shows, 'the subject is the basis upon which discourse is founded and, at the same time, the mode of objectification which transforms human beings into subjects' (Marshall, 1990: 14)" (cited in Grierson, 2000: 475).
4. DEST: Department of Education, Science and Training, Australian Government. URL: <http://www.dest.gov.au/>
5. One of the key challenges for Australian research policy is the new emphasis on creativity in the global economies of knowledge production and exchange. Research in science, technology, and the arts and humanities can "strengthen our understanding of Australia's place in the region and the world", to cite the words in the fourth research priority of the Australia Research Council. Therefore the position of the arts in the creative knowledge economies of globalisation needs to be more fully diagnosed. The future support for research, knowledge production and transfer in the creative arts and humanities in Australia will depend upon political decisions to be embedded in the new Research Quality Framework (RQF) and the relationship of the RQF to the Australia Research Council.

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