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# Engaging the global countryside: globalization, hybridity and the reconstitution of rural place

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**Abstract:** This article applies Massey's (2005) call for a relational understanding of space that can challenge aspatial readings of globalization to the study of globalization in a rural context. Critiquing existing rural research for tending towards studies of global commodity chains and overarching processes of globalization, it argues for more place-based studies of globalization as experienced in rural localities. The concept of the 'global countryside' is introduced as a hypothetical space that represents the ultimate outcome of globalizing processes, yet it is noted that the characteristics of the 'global countryside' find only partial articulation in particular rural spaces. Understanding this differentiated geography of rural globalization, it is argued, requires a closer understanding of how globalization remakes rural places, for which Massey's thesis provides a guide. The article thus examines the reconstitution of rural places under globalization, highlighting the interaction of local and global actors, and of human and non-human actants, to produce new hybrid forms and relations. As such, it is argued, the politics of globalization cannot be reduced to domination or subordination, but are instead a politics of negotiation and configuration.

**Key words:** global countryside, globalization, hybridity, politics, rural.

## I Introduction

In her recent book, *For space*, Doreen Massey (2005) refers among other examples to the case of José Bové, the French farm leader who shot to international prominence in August 1999 when he led activists from the *Confédération paysanne* in dismantling a McDonald's restaurant under construction in the town of Millau. The protest instantly made Bové the darling of the anti-globalization move-

ment, a status affirmed 10 months later when he called small farm campaigners, workers' leaders, consumer advocates and academic experts on globalization as witnesses at his trial. Together with the assembly of an estimated 100,000 supporters at a free festival outside the court, Bové's tactics in effect inverted the legal process into what the newspaper *Libération* labelled 'the trial of globalization' (see Bové and Dufour, 2001; Woods, 2004; Birchfield, 2005).

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However, as Massey's (2005) discussion reveals, the strategic and ideological dynamics of the Bové case are far more complex than its popular representation as an anti-globalization protest suggests. Bové and his colleagues selected McDonald's as a target because it symbolized a form of corporate imperialism that promoted economic and cultural standardization in operations around the world (Ariès and Terras, 2000; Bové and Dufour, 2001). Yet, they were also careful to distance themselves from chauvinistic anti-Americanism and nationalism. Neither were they opposed to globalization *per se*. Indeed, the catalyst for the protests had been tariffs imposed by the USA on selected imports from the European Union as part of a trade war initiated by the EU's refusal to accept hormone-treated beef from the USA, which threatened a 30 million franc export market for Roquefort cheese from the Larzac Plateau. Thus, while opposing McDonald's-style corporate globalization, the protesters were supportive of global trade. Moreover, their actions depended on the appropriation of global networks of communications to broadcast their message, as well as on the construction of an alternative global network of farmer activists. Accordingly, Massey notes that this is not a politics of closure. Rather, she argues, 'what is at issue is the *nature of the relations of interconnection – the map of power of openness*' (Massey, 2005: 171, original emphasis).

Similarly, while they promoted local specificity and distinctiveness, especially in terms of culture and the connections between food, farming and the environment, Bové and his colleagues recognized that rural localities are constructed relationally and open to many varied influences. As Massey observes:

They recognize that localities are 'made', but are sensitive to the longevity of social structures in many rural areas . . . The local specificity which they evoke is one derived in part from variations within 'nature'. And part of their argument is that, for them, a politically acceptable negotiation with nature would involve responding to local variations in its

rhythms . . . It recognizes the place-specific conjunctions of human and nonhuman trajectories and its politics addresses the terms of their intersection. (Massey, 2005: 171)

Massey uses her discussion of the Bové case to support her call for a relational understanding of space that challenges aspatial readings of globalization. For Massey this approach opens up new political possibilities, not only of reimagining globalization in ways that present alternatives to the force of global capital, but also more broadly of confronting 'the challenge of our constitutive interrelatedness – and thus our collective implication in the outcomes of that interrelatedness; the radical contemporaneity of an ongoing multiplicity of others, human and nonhuman; and the ongoing and ever-specific project of the practices through which that sociability is to be configured' (Massey, 2005: 195). Massey's argument presents a provocation to human geography as a whole, but the brief reference to José Bové highlights the particular potential for a relational approach to rejuvenate rural geography's engagement with globalization.

This paper explores the potential for a revitalized rural geography of globalization by tracing the consequences of a relational perspective on place for our understanding of the remaking of rural places under globalization. It first reviews the existing literature on globalization in a rural context and argues that compared with urban studies of globalization there is a lack of place-based research that would allow the disparate strands of the literature to be drawn together into a more comprehensive analysis of how rural places are remade under globalization. The paper then critically engages with work on global cities to posit the notion of the 'global countryside' as a hypothetical space corresponding to a condition of global interrelatedness that, significantly, has yet to be fully attained but which is partially articulated through certain rural localities to a greater or lesser degree, depending on locally specific engagements with and responses to globalization. In order

to illuminate these place-specific contingencies further, the paper proceeds to examine the processes involved in the reconstitution of rural space through globalization. In keeping with Massey's approach, this section emphasizes the hybrid dimensions of this transformation, including the hybrid interaction of different strands of globalization and of local, national and global actors, the hybrid engagement of human and non-human entities at all scales, and the production through globalization of new hybrids. As such, the impact of globalization on rural localities is revealed not as domination or subordination but as negotiation, manipulation and hybridization, conducted through but not contained by local micro-politics. Thus, finally, the paper considers the implications of this approach for understanding the politics of rural localities under globalization, suggesting that elements of reconstitution are contested by local actors informed by different discourses of both rural place and globalization, but that once global actors and networks are engaged the contesting of place itself transcends scale, stretching the power-geometries through which rural places are constituted.

For the purposes of this discussion, globalization is defined as a dynamic and multifaceted process of integration and interaction that enrolls localities into networks of interconnectivity organized at the global scale and facilitating the global circulation of people, commodities, ideas and representations (cf. Steger, 2003). This perspective is further informed by recent contributions to the globalization literature that have emphasized the multidimensional nature of globalization (Beck, 2000; Nederveen Pieterse, 2004) and the complexity of the global systems that result (Urry, 2003). As such, the argument advanced here can be positioned with the transformationalist approach, holding that 'cultural, economic and political dimensions [of globalization] do not move at the same pace, and within these broad dimensions, unevenness and complexity reign' (El-Ojeili and Hayden, 2006: 15).

Moreover, in positioning globalization as a dynamic, ongoing, process of transformation, it becomes necessary to delimit the historical specificity of the argument. The discussion here focuses on contemporary globalization (also referred to as 'neoliberal globalization' or 'second wave globalization') broadly identified with the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It is recognized that the contemporary reconstitution of rural places under globalization includes and is influenced by the legacies of past exposure to global networks and global actors, as is evident in places in the discussion. Yet, it is argued that contemporary globalization is distinguished by the intensity of global processes, by the density and immediacy of global networks, and by the contingency of global connections in a competitive global economy. It is these features that facilitate progression towards the hypothetical condition of the global countryside.

The 'global countryside' is by definition potentially global in scope and highlights the interconnectivity of rural localities in both the 'developed' and 'developing' worlds, although, as shall be argued, the impact of globalization in rural localities is highly geographically uneven. As such, this paper draws on examples from both the developed and developing worlds (cutting across the tendency towards compartmentalization in rural geography and rural sociology), but the selection is inevitably constrained by the geographical focus of studies of globalization in a rural context, such that there is a bias towards those regions that have received greatest attention from researchers – North America, Latin America, parts of Europe, Japan, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand. Extending the geographical scope of this research is one of the challenges for a future research agenda on globalization and the reconstitution of rural places.

## II Globalization and the rural

### *1 Rural research and globalization*

Globalization may have become one of the pre-eminent concerns of contemporary social science, but research into the processes,

effects and experiences of globalization continues to exhibit a distinct spatial bias. As Hogan has observed, 'there is a discernable privileging of urban over rural in scholarly accounts of globalization' (Hogan, 2004: 22), evident not only in Hogan's own discipline of sociology, but also in geography, where key texts on globalization such as Dicken (2003) and Perrons (2004) contain only cursory references to rural localities (Murray, 2006, is a notable exception). Hogan suggests that the relative neglect of the rural follows from a recognition that it is in urban centres 'that certain hallmarks of globalization – cultural admixture, economic dynamism, political and ideological transformations – are often most visible' (Hogan, 2004: 22). This may be so, but it is equally possible to point to hallmarks of globalization that have a strong rural visibility: global commodity chains, the commodification of natural resources, labour migration and the production of new amenity landscapes.

Furthermore, the apparent neglect of rural dimensions of globalization is arguably the consequence of disciplinary politics rather than of an actual lack of research. Agricultural geography, which has increasingly engaged with the global agri-food system, is poorly connected with economic geography; while rural sociology is largely divorced from mainstream sociology. Other studies examining globalization and its effects in rural contexts have been undertaken by development geographers, anthropologists, political ecologists and cultural geographers, often in isolation and without significant reference to rural geography as a subdiscipline. An examination of the references lists for these studies reveals the absence of any coherent, widely accepted, core body of literature on rural globalization.

Research on globalization in a rural context has largely fallen into five broad approaches, all of which have focused primarily on economic globalization.

First, the most significant volume of research has explored the globalization of

commodity chains and the development of the global agri-food system (Bonanno *et al.*, 1994; McMichael, 1994; Goodman and Watts, 1997; Busch and Bain, 2004). Studies have not only traced the shifting flows and networks of production, supply and consumption across a range of commodities from fresh fruit (Le Heron and Roche, 1996; Gwynne, 1999) to cut flowers (Barrett *et al.*, 1999), and from sugar (Drummond and Marsden, 1999) to salmon (Phyne and Mansilla, 2003), but have also examined the impact of commodity chain development on local rural economies, working conditions and gender relations (Bee, 2000). The commodity chain perspective has emphasized the rescaling of power in these relations, highlighting corporate concentration in the global agri-food system (Jussaume, 1998; Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002; Busch and Bain, 2004), and the limitation of nation-state autonomy by supranational regulatory frameworks (Busch and Bain, 2004). The consequences of free trade agreements and of associated economic liberalization and deregulation on agricultural industries and local rural economies have been examined through case studies from New Zealand (Le Heron and Roche, 1999; McKenna, 2000) to Mexico (McDonald, 2001; Echánove, 2005). Commodity studies, however, remain susceptible to Dicken *et al.*'s (2001) critique of the partial framework provided by the concept of commodity chains, particularly the over-emphasis on linearity and on the power of transnational corporations. More recent work has begun to follow Dicken *et al.* in adopting the concept of networks, rooted in poststructuralist and actor-network perspectives, but this approach remains underdeveloped in rural studies.

Second, a broader approach grounded in regulation theory has connected shifts in the mode of regulation of the global economy to the restructuring of local rural economies. Cloke and Goodwin (1992), although not explicitly engaging with globalization, provided a framework for this by linking global

modes of regulation to the construction of new local structured coherences which in rural Britain were identified with restructuring towards service-sector and consumption-based economies. However, this framework has not been significantly developed in rural studies, and most regulationist-informed work has focused more narrowly on the global agri-food system. Different periods of capitalist accumulation have been associated with distinctive 'food regimes', or international systems of food production, trade and consumption (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; Marsden *et al.*, 1993). Post-Fordism, for example, is associated with state deregulation, international free trade and the rise of 'niche' commodities, creating new conditions and demands to which local rural economies have had to adjust (Busch and Bain, 2004). However, Busch and Bain argue that the food regime approach 'helps explain the broad conditions under which certain processes occur but tells us little about the specifics' (Busch and Bain, 2004: 324). Instead, they point to the development of a neo-regulationist framework that engages with convention theory to explore the ways in which markets, states and economic relations are conceptualized. This approach, they suggest, is particularly salient for analysing the shift from public to private regulation in the global agri-food system, including the construction of new forms of certification, quality standards and place of origin branding that seek competitive advantage in a fragmented food market. Yet, it remains firmly focused on agri-food production and fails to connect to other dimensions of globalization operating in the same rural spaces.

Third, globalization has been engaged in relation to rural development, in both the 'developed' and 'developing' worlds. In some instances, studies have shown globalization to have opened up new opportunities for local-based rural development projects that exploit new niche markets or the search for cheap labour (Bebbington and Batterbury, 2001; Darkoh and Mbaiwa, 2002; Pérez Sáinz and

Andrade-Eekhoff, 2003). Conversely, in other contexts, globalization has been identified with disinvestment and the marginalization of rural economies (Epp and Whitson, 2001; Gray and Lawrence, 2001). As Killick (2001) concludes, globalization has both positive and negative impacts on rural development, accelerating growth in many rural regions of the developing world, but also creating real dangers that the rural poor will be left behind by lack of skills, capital and access to resources. Responding to this apparently fragmented experience, McMichael (1996) has argued that globalization is a postdevelopmentalist construct in that it does not demand universal progress towards the higher order of industrialized society, but rather crystallizes local diversity. In some places this may be articulated through entrepreneurship, in others through resistance to global pressures. Yet, the contribution of globalization processes to rampant urbanization and industrialization in China, for instance, demonstrates the persistence of the development paradigm at least in some high-growth regions (Zhao *et al.*, 2003; Friedmann, 2006).

Fourth, globalization has been associated with depeasantization, involving both the commercialization and 'modernization' of production systems and the subjugation of localized rural cultures and social structures (Araghi, 1995). Van der Ploeg (2005; 2006), in particular, has counterpoised the 'peasant principle' to globalization, drawing on Hardt and Negri (2000) to portray globalization as a decentred but ubiquitous force that subordinates and standardizes local agricultural systems. In this representation, contrary to some of the other approaches discussed above, globalization is positioned as an external intrusion that acts in opposition to authentic rural ways of being. There is no question of adapting to globalization, rather peasant resistance movements (Edelman, 1999; 2005; Moyo and Yeros, 2005) and the return to the 'peasant principle' in the organization of rural production are valorized as appropriate responses to globalization (van der Ploeg, 2005).

Fifth, and most loosely, globalization has been evoked as the context for the exploration of a wide range of processes and trends in rural societies, including domestic policy reforms (Epp and Whitson, 2001; Rigg and Nattapoolwat, 2001), farm restructuring (Gray and Lawrence, 2001), service sector investment (Che, 2005), outward migration (Perz, 2000; Alston, 2004), changing gender roles (Bee, 2000), poverty and social exclusion (Gray and Lawrence, 2001), land reforms (Sargeson, 2004), new forms of governance and political leadership (Shelley, 2000; Barrett *et al.*, 2005), the commodification of rural heritage (Ehrentraut, 1996) and the reassertion of first nations and indigenous rights (Pritchard and McManus, 2000; Mandryk, 2001). In many of these cases, the connections between globalization and the topics under discussion are sketchily drawn at best and globalization is in effect taken as a 'given' in structuring the contemporary rural experience.

## 2 *Towards the global countryside*

The array of research described above has contributed to our mosaic of understanding of globalization in a rural context. Yet the mosaic remains very much a work in progress. Some parts of the picture are considerably clearer and more complete than others; some studies sit as isolated tiles, apart from the emerging tessellation; and the connections between some parts of the image and other parts are as yet unknown. In particular, the mosaic is missing the input of a substantial body of place-based studies – research that might not only adopt an integrated perspective in examining the impact of different forms and aspects of globalization in a rural locality, but that might also explore precisely *how* rural places are remade under globalization, and start to account for the differential geographies of globalization across rural space.

A few studies have already begun to take a step in this direction. Echánove's (2005) study of the Valle de Banderas in western Mexico, for example, although primarily focused on the impact of trade liberalization

on the traditional peasant economy of mango cultivation for export, reveals the consequential restructuring of the local agricultural industry to be intimately tied to the migration of displaced farmworkers to the United States, the sale of properties to US and Canadian investors as holiday homes, and the development of the Bahia de Banderas as an international tourist destination. As such, multiple processes of globalization are shown to be contributing not only to restructuring the economy and population of the area, but also to reconstituting the locality as a networked space connected by trading relations, temporary out-migrants, seasonal visitors and external investors to a plurality of distant points, predominantly in North America.

Similarly, Murray (2001) has pointed to the significance of regional economic ties in globalization-led rural restructuring in the Pacific nations of Tonga and Niue. In Tonga, 'second wave globalization' (as distinct to 'first wave' colonial globalization in the nineteenth century) is identified with the weakening of traditional export industries of copra, bananas and vanilla under neoliberal trade reforms and the rapid expansion of a new squash pumpkin export trade to Japan, initiated by New Zealand entrepreneurs. As Murray notes, although squash exports have contributed to the growth of the Tongan economy, the new industry has transformed both economic and environmental relations in rural communities: changing the appearance of landscape and replacing polycultural agriculture with a dominant monoculture; increasing pollution, soil degradation and ground water depletion; further concentrating economic power, property ownership and social inequalities; and contributing to urbanization as displaced small growers migrate to towns and cities. Moreover, the Tongan economy has been left more vulnerable to global economic fluctuations. In neighbouring Niue, the reconfiguration of agri-food exports has been led by the demand for taro from the ex-patriot Niuean population in New Zealand, thus connecting economic globalization with global mobility.

As in Tonga, economic restructuring to meet new export demands has had substantial social and environmental consequences for rural communities.

On the other side of the Pacific, Epp and Whitson's (2001) collection of essays on western Canada documents the struggle of rural communities in the prairie and mountain provinces to adapt to multifaceted processes of globalization. Neoliberal economic globalization is associated not only with changing trading conditions and relations, but also with corporate concentration and investment in the region by transnational agri-food corporations seeking to exploit low wages and flexible development controls. The erosion of economic independence that these processes involve has, it is argued, been accompanied by the 'political deskilling' of rural communities (Epp, 2001) through neoliberal political reforms, as government units are amalgamated, services centralized and regulatory frameworks dismantled. The result is a differentiated geography of the rural West, with some communities scoring (contested) economic gains from inward investment, administrative centralization or the development of tourist resorts while others are effectively 'written off'. The differential geography is reproduced at a higher scale, Epp and Whitson argue, as the countryside under globalization is repositioned 'to serve two new and very different purposes – playground and dumping ground – as the traditional rural economy declines' (Epp and Whitson, 2001: xv).

It is through studies such as these (see also Bebbington, 2001; Buch-Hansen, 2003; Edmondson, 2003; Hogan, 2004), that we can begin to glimpse the new geography of the global countryside: a rural realm constituted by multiple, shifting, tangled and dynamic networks, connecting rural to rural and rural to urban, but with greater intensities of globalization processes and of global interconnections in some rural localities than in others, and thus with a differential distribution of power, opportunity and wealth across rural space. Moreover, the use of the term

'global countryside' here is a deliberate allusion to the concept of the 'global city', with two intentions: first, to react to the spatial bias in studies of globalization noted earlier by proposing a rural counterpoint to the global city; and, second, to emphasize the need in rural studies of globalization for the kind of nuanced reading of spatial difference and spatial process that work on the global city has produced in an urban context.

It is not suggested, however, that there are rural equivalents of global cities, or that the features of the global city can be mapped onto rural localities. Indeed, in early accounts the global city was defined by its very urbanity. Only the urban form, with its agglomeration of labour, production, consumption, communications and capital, it was implied, provided the necessary conditions for the reproduction of globalization (Friedmann, 1986; Sassen, 1991; 1996). The exclusion of the 'rural' as part of an undifferentiated 'other' beyond the global city, meanwhile, reinforced the subconscious urbanization of the globalization experience. More recent work has, however, critiqued the 'command centre' model of the global city and produced more wide-ranging readings of urban processes in globalization (see, for example, Brenner and Keil, 2006). It is this later literature that presents opportunities for translation to a rural context, particularly in four key aspects. First, it acknowledges that the geographical expression of globalization is not binary (global city/other), but multiple and multinodal (Yeoh, 1999; Marcuse and van Kempen, 2000; Robinson, 2002). While this has been primarily explored through work on 'globalizing cities' outside the traditional world city elite, the approach might equally be applied to thinking about 'globalizing rural regions'. Second, later global city literature has challenged the economism of early accounts, encompassing cultural and other forms of globalization (Hannerz, 1996; Krätke, 2006), opening up space for the processes of globalization as primarily experienced by rural localities. Third, recent

writings have emphasized the micro-processes involved in global city formation (Marcuse, 2006) and redescribed the global city as a heterogeneous assemblage (Smith, 2003), casting attention on to processes of place-making that apply equally in urban and rural contexts. Finally, as the agency of cities to attempt to shape their own global futures has increasingly been recognized (Olds and Yeung, 2004; Paul, 2005), so it is possible to examine the capacity of rural localities to engage with and shape globalization processes.

### 3 *Defining the global countryside*

If the distinctiveness of the global city is becoming blurred by recognition that globalization processes are active in virtually all cities (Marcuse, 2006), the delimitation of a territorially defined global countryside would present an even greater challenge – in part due to the pervasiveness of globalization in the staple rural economic sectors, and in part due to the topographic character of rural areas. Accordingly the ‘global countryside’ is conceived of here as a hypothetical space, corresponding to a condition of the global interconnectivity and interdependency of rural localities.

Such a space does not currently exist (and many never exist), and there are no rural localities that can be labelled at present as ‘global countryside’ in quite the same way as London and New York are described as ‘global cities’. Yet, it is possible to anticipate the characteristics of this imagined space by projecting forward actually existing globalization processes and, in doing so, to create a framework for identifying the partial articulation of the ‘global countryside’ in real, present-day rural localities. Following this approach, 10 characteristics of the ‘global countryside’ are proposed:

1) Primary sector and secondary sector economic activity in the global countryside feeds, and is dependent on, elongated yet contingent commodity networks, with

consumption distanced from production. The volume of global food exports increased more than four-fold between 1961 and 1999, creating a \$550 billion global export market in agricultural goods by the end of the twentieth century (Millstone and Lang, 2003). The scope for global trade has been substantially increased by tariff reform and deregulation, as well as by technological innovation, yet, unlike the colonial trading regimes that were intended to stabilize supply, economic relations in the contemporary global countryside are highly competitive and vulnerable to currency fluctuations, consumer fashions, shifting trade controls and political and corporate decisions that may be taken far away from the localities affected (see, for example, Drummond and Marsden, 1999; McManus, 2002; Anderson *et al.*, 2005).

- 2) The global countryside is the site of increasing corporate concentration and integration, with corporate networks organized on a transnational scale. Key sectors of the rural economy are now dominated by a handful of corporations (Bruinsma, 2003), many of which are aligned in transnational ‘food chain clusters’ integrating the agri-food production process, in the slogan of ConAgra, ‘from seed to shelf’ (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002). Transnational corporations operate on a ‘footloose’ strategy, seeking out the most favourable economic conditions, yet displacing local commercial interests and transforming the economies of host rural communities (see, for example, Epp and Whitson, 2001).
- 3) The global countryside is both the supplier and the employer of migrant labour. Rural economies in the developed world are increasingly underpinned by migrant labour, particularly in agriculture, but also in meat-processing, manufacturing, tourism and the service sector (Epp and Whitson, 2001; Bruinsma, 2003; Lawrence, 2004; Rogaly, 2006). Migrant

workers are not only sourced from neighbouring less-developed states, but now on a global scale, from Chinese farmworkers in Britain to Iranian meatpackers in Canada (Broadway, 2001; Lawrence, 2004). Migrants frequently come from rural communities in their home nations and many have been displaced by the consequences of neoliberal economic restructuring linked to the globalization of agricultural markets (Perz, 2000; Binford, 2003; Echánove, 2005).

- 4) The globalization of mobility is also marked by the flow of tourists through the global countryside, attracted to sites of global rural amenity. Rural resorts in regions such as the Australian east coast, New Zealand and the Rocky Mountains, as well as ecotourism sites in the developing world, enjoy an increasingly global reputation and attract intercontinental tourists as the staple of amenity-based economies (Campbell, 1999; Whitson, 2001; Cater and Smith, 2003; Walmsley, 2003).
- 5) The global countryside attracts high levels of non-national property investment, for both commercial and residential purposes. Commercial investment is associated with economic globalization, corporate concentration and resort speculation. Residential investment frequently builds on the amenity value of rural localities, either for holiday homes or for permanent migration. Cheaper air travel and deregulation of property markets has helped the reach of transnational counterurbanization to expand from the regional (Britons in France, Americans in Mexico, etc), to the global (North Americans in New Zealand, Japanese in Canada, etc) (Whitson, 2001; Schmied, 2005; Woods, 2006).
- 6) It is not only social and economic relations that are transformed in the global countryside, but also the discursive construction of nature and its management. Neoliberal globalization involves the commodification of nature, finding new opportunities for the commercial exploitation of natural resources in some regions – which in turn may be associated with environmental degradation (Klepeis and Vance, 2003) – and valorizing the amenity value of natural assets in others (McCarthy, 2004; McCarthy and Prudham, 2004). At the same time, locally embedded discourses of nature are also challenged by the dissemination of ‘global’ values of environmental protection and animal welfare, promoted by transnational campaign groups such as Greenpeace and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and codified in international treaties and in the designation of nature parks and World Heritage sites (see, for example, Buergin, 2003; Reser and Bentrupperbaumer, 2005).
- 7) The landscape of the global countryside is inscribed with the marks of globalization. Most dramatically this is expressed through the large-scale destruction of primary forest, the planting of secondary commercial forest and the expansion of pastoral farming landscapes and scrubland (Rudel, 2002); as well as in the opening of new oilfields and mines (Urquhart, 2001; Standlea, 2006), and the development of global tourism resorts and their associated infrastructure. More subtly, the landscape is changed by the transplantation of plant and animal species; by the introduction of more commercially attractive crop varieties (Ramsey and Everitt, 2001) and the abandonment of less-favoured traditional varieties (Millstone and Lang, 2003); and by the proliferation of the symbols of global consumer culture in the built environment of small towns (Edmondson, 2003).
- 8) The global countryside is characterized by increasing social polarization. Globalization has created opportunities for entrepreneurs in rural societies to amass considerable wealth, but has also polarized the socio-economic structures of communities in the global countryside. Small producers and traders unable or unwilling to adjust and compete have been squeezed and

frequently forced out of business, sometimes compelled to sell property and migrate (Perz, 2000; Murray, 2001; Cocklin and Dibden, 2002; Echánove, 2005). Similarly, while international investment in resort areas has boosted rural economies and, in the case of permanent in-migrants, helped to expand the local middle class, escalating property prices have excluded low-income local residents, contributing to problems of deprivation, homelessness and out-migration (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000).

- 9) The global countryside is associated with new sites of political authority. The subordination of national agricultural policies to global trade agreements, the effects of corporate concentration, the imposition of nature parks and environmental regulations and challenges to traditional discourses of nature have all contributed to a perception among residents of the global countryside that political authority has been scaled up beyond their reach (Epp and Whitson, 2001; Hogan, 2004). Globalization has created new sites of political authority for the global countryside, most notably enclaves of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the headquarters of major transnational agri-food, forestry and mining corporations (Buch-Hansen, 2003; Busch and Bain, 2004), which in turn have fostered new forms of political engagement (Routledge, 2003; Woods, 2003). However, as is discussed further later in this paper, the argument that the creation of these new political sites equates to the disempowerment or the 'political de-skilling' (Epp, 2001) of rural communities is contentious, and misunderstands the nature of power in the global countryside.
- 10) The global countryside is always a contested space. The transformations wrought by globalization on rural space frequently meet resistance from local actors and allied campaigners. Moreover, the multifaceted nature of globalization

means that tensions can arise between the logics of different aspects of globalization – for example, between the neoliberal exploitation of natural resources and globalized discourses of environmental protection (see, for example, Magnusson and Shaw, 2003; Standlea, 2006) – while conflicts also develop over the most appropriate strategies for engaging with globalization within particular localities. Such conflicts may focus on particular social or economic processes, but they draw on a much deeper concern for cultural and geographical identity (Hogan, 2004). Because globalization is seen to transform place, the contestation of globalization processes is inseparable from contests over place-meaning and identity, which connect in turn in the global countryside with debates over the rural identity of a locality and the meaning of rurality (see, for example, Edmonson, 2003). As such, the politics of the global countryside is intrinsically conjoined to the 'politics of the rural' (Woods, 2003).

As characteristics of a hypothetical space, these 10 statements reflect an idealized condition of global rural integration that might be positioned as the end-point of globalization from a rural perspective. However, there are rural localities that exhibit one or more of these characteristics, at least in part. The extent to which any particular characteristic is evident in any particular rural locality is determined not only by the degree of penetration of globalization processes, but also by the way in which those globalization processes are mediated through and incorporated within local processes of place-making. As this *emergent* global countryside is not a uniform, homogeneous space, but rather is differentially articulated, and contested, through particular rural *places*, so the question posed earlier – *how* are rural places remade under globalization? – becomes central to our understanding of the global countryside. To address this question we

need to return to Massey's thesis of the constitutive interrelatedness of space, and to begin to understand the various processes of hybridity, co-constitution and entanglement that comprise the reconstruction of place in the globalizing countryside.

### III The hybrid reconstitution of the global countryside

#### 1 *The hybrid countryside*

'The countryside is hybrid', declared Murdoch (2003: 274), pointing to the multiple dimensions through which rural space is constituted and defined. 'To say this', he continued, 'is to emphasize that it is defined by networks in which heterogeneous entities are aligned in a variety of ways. It is also to propose that these networks give rise to slightly different countrysides: there is no single vantage point from which the panoply of rural or countryside relations can be seen' (2003: 274). Murdoch's elusive countryside defies reduction to a simple reproducible form because of its multiple hybridity – it is made (and constantly remade) through the entanglement and interaction of the social and the natural, the human and the non-human, the rural and the non-rural, and (though Murdoch does not expressly say so) the local and the global.

As Murdoch reveals the countryside to be already hybrid, so the reconstitution of rural places under globalization cannot be understood as a linear narrative. There is no pre-existent stable and uniform rural place upon which 'globalization' can act, but then neither is there a single, unidirectional force of globalization. Rather the reconstitution of rural places under globalization must be understood as involving hybrid interactions at three levels. First, globalization is itself hybrid, involving many different strands that become knotted together, yet which may also elicit different responses from local actors. Second, globalization proceeds by hybridization, fusing and mingling the local and the extra-local to produce new formations. Third, as emphasized in Murdoch's work (2003, 2006; see also

Jones, 2006), the countryside is a hybrid of the human and the non-human, and as such, the reconstitution of rural places under globalization must involve both human and non-human actants, at both local and global scales. In this section, these three dimensions of the hybrid reconstitution of the global countryside are discussed in turn, before briefly examining how they work in concert in the remaking of rural places.

#### 2 *Hybrid and multistranded globalization*

In proposing a 'plural sociology of globalization' Beck (2000: 31) not only critiqued the narrowness of accounts that located the globalization dynamic within one sector of institutional action (the economy, culture, politics, etc), but also emphasized that recognition of the multiple forms of globalization necessarily needs to engage with the interplay between these different dynamics. It is not sufficient to acknowledge that economic globalization is paralleled by cultural globalization, and by a globalization of mobility, and by a globalization of political institutions, and so on, rather in adopting a place-based perspective we must understand the ways in which these dynamics become knotted together, such that globalization is experienced by rural localities as a hybrid of economic, social, cultural and political processes. As noted earlier, the interplay of these dimensions is evident in Epp and Whitson's (2001) work on rural Canada, where economic globalization, global migration and political reform are all interlinked, and in the lay discourses of rural residents in Australia and Japan explored by Hogan (2004), for whom economic restructuring, immigration and cultural change all form part of the experience of globalization.

In a study of four rural localities in the Andes of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, Bebbington (2001) similarly observes that:

The global entanglements in which Andean localities are enmeshed are, and have long been, multi-stranded: beyond market relationships, the webs linking Andean places and the wider world pass through globalized

religious institutions, civil society networks, intergovernmental relationships, migrant streams and more. (Bebbington, 2001: 415)

Yet, he continues, there is no necessary reason to presume that these different dimensions of globalization will favour the same livelihood and landscape outcomes. Rather, he suggests, identifying globalization as multi-stranded enables the tensions between different globalization forces to be explored, and creates the possibility for both reactionary and progressive forms of local engagement with globalization:

It would at least raise the question as to whether these different dimensions of global entanglement might be made to pull in different directions by some of the actors involved. Thus, while it may be the case that certain dimensions of globalization, and certain forms of global-local dynamics threaten to dominate and destroy landscapes, livelihoods and cultural practices, might it be that (both in previous times and the present) other dimensions of globalization, and other types of global-local dialectic, have built up the capacities of peoples and places to deal with this round of economic globalization? (Bebbington, 2001: 416)

Bebbington's case studies document the effects of economic globalization in squeezing the livelihoods of rural residents dependent on dairy farming and coffee growing, but they also reveal examples of communities profiting from global connections. In the Salinas region of Ecuador, for example, Bebbington records the development of community-based enterprises, supported by transnational NGOs and global civil society groups. Pérez Sáinz and Andrade-Eekhoff (2003) similarly describe strategies of community adjustment to globalization in Central America based on the exploitation of attendant opportunities, including the establishment of global trading connections by small-scale handicraft producers in rural El Salvador, and the promotion of tourism to replace a waning agricultural sector in Costa Rica.

This is not the neoliberal argument that free trade and economic liberalization will generate prosperity in the developing world – a thesis

that has been roundly critiqued and discredited (Killick, 2001; Panagariya, 2005). Rather it is an argument that the reconstitution of rural places under globalization is not straightforward: different dynamics of globalization elicit different responses; similar pressures from globalization will have different consequences in different localities; and the reconstitution of place involves the interaction of global and local actors. The hypothetical space of the global countryside can hence be seen simultaneously as a site of uncertainty and challenge for rural communities, and as a realm of opportunity.

### 3 *Globalization as hybridization*

If globalization is not homogeneous, neither is it homogenizing. Some commentators have identified globalization with cultural assimilation linked to economic standardization (Ritzer, 1993), with causal links between consumer behaviour, corporate strategy and the demands on systems of production. Thus, van der Ploeg has argued that, in a rural context, 'globalization occurs *not* through the internationalized flows of commodities, ideas and people, *but* through the subordination and consequent reorganization of local and regional farming systems to just one grammar, that is, the one entailed in, and imposed by, the increasingly interlocking socio-technical regimes' (van der Ploeg, 2006: 261). Yet, there is considerable evidence that local differences may not only be resilient to globalization, but may even be reinvigorated by globalization. Traditional practices and systems may be transformed by the interaction with global networks, but the result is frequently not standardization but the production of 'localized hybridity' (Murray, 2006). As Nederveen Pieterse argues, such new hybrid forms have a global familiarity because they incorporate global commodities or relate to global cultural reference points, but they have particular local configurations, in both urban and rural contexts. Thus, he observes:

If we look into the countryside virtually anywhere in the world, we find traces of

cultural mixing: the crops planted, planting methods and agricultural techniques, implements and inputs used (seeds, fertilizer, irrigation methods, credit) are usually of translocal origin. Farmers and peasants throughout the world are wired, direct or indirect, to the fluctuations of global commodity prices that affect their economies and decision-making. The ecologies of agriculture may be local, but the cultural resources are translocal. (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004: 53–54)

To this agriculturally focused list could be added, among many other examples: the incorporation of non-local artifacts into 'traditional' rural practices such as hunting or craft-work; the use of translocal technologies and media to promote local rural events and festivals; the injection of external capital to support 'endogenous' rural development schemes; the tailoring of rural heritage sites and landscapes to meet tourists' expectations; the development of new 'adventure tourism' activities that interact differently with the *in situ* natural environment; the enforcement of translocal environmental regulations in the management of natural resources; plus, of course, the fact that many of the individuals involved in performing these activities will be of a non-local origin.

Moreover, these processes of hybridization occur within particular locations, and as they take place so they have a transformative impact on their locale. It is in this way that localities are reconstituted under globalization, not as an imposition from above, but through a process of co-constitution that involves both global and local actors. To make this assertion is to go beyond a recognition that global and local are co-defined, or that they exist in symbiotic relationship which each transformed through interactions with the other, as the concept of 'glocalization' describes (see Robertson, 1992; Urry, 2003). Rather, it acknowledges the variegated politics of globalization, in which localities can be, as Massey (2005) argues, agents in globalization but with their capacities to

act shaped by their position within wider power-geometries:

For in a relational understanding of neoliberal globalization 'places' are criss-crossings in the wider power-geometries that constitute both themselves and 'the global'. On this view local places are not simply always the victims of the global; nor are they always politically defensible redoubts against the global. Understanding space as the constant open production of the topologies of power points to the fact that different 'places' will stand in contrasting relations to the global. (Massey, 2005: 101)

Thus we are returned to the differentiated geography of the global countryside. However, it is now clear that variations in the relative degree of integration of particular rural localities into global networks are not the product of the uneven operation of globalization as a top-down process, but of localized processes of place reconstitution. Global and regional structural factors are important in framing the challenges and opportunities presented to local actors through globalization, but they are only part of the picture. The ways in which local actors engage with global networks and global forces to produce hybrid outcomes are fundamental to the reconstitution of place in the globalizing countryside, and to the maintenance of place distinctiveness within the emergent global countryside.

#### *4 More than human globalizations and the reconstitution of rural space*

The hybrid reconstitution of rural spaces under globalization involves not only the mixing of local and non-local agents, processes and influences, but also the mixing of diverse natural and social elements, and human and non-human entities. As noted above, all rural formations 'are woven from the disparate beings, processes and materialities of the world, and the forces that shape them include differing forms of agency that can be variously described as non-human agency, relational agency or collective agency' (Jones, 2006: 185). The constitution and reconstitution of rural places is therefore not in the control of human actors, local or global, but is a

multi-authored and negotiated process that seeks to engage, define and position a vast array of natural, material and social entities. Human actors may rely on the conscription and manipulation of non-human entities in promoting their particular narrative of place within this process, but they are powerless to achieve their desired outcomes unless the non-human entities perform the roles ascribed to them (see, for example, Woods, 1998). Equally, human constructions of rural place are precariously vulnerable to non-human interventions, from flood and forest fires to animal attacks and crop diseases.

The negotiation of place between the human and the non-human is not limited to rural spaces, as Davis's (1998) analysis of Los Angeles shows (detailing what Massey (2005: 160) describes as the 'conflicting and often perilous throwntogetherness of nonhuman and human'). However, the significance of the non-human in place constitution is particularly pertinent in rural contexts because of the extent to which the distinctiveness of rural localities is represented through or attributed to non-human elements. Thus, rural places are portrayed as distinctive from each other through reference to the natural landscape, or the local geology, or the presence of certain plants or animals, or the crops that are grown or the livestock raised, or the style of the local vernacular architecture, or the particular foods that are traditionally produced, and so on. It is these elements that are celebrated as the symbols of locality against the supposedly homogenizing forces of globalization.

José Bové and his colleagues in the *Confédération Paysanne*, for example, articulate their struggle within a discourse of the French countryside as the woven-together assemblage of natural, social and economic relations. In this model, traditional farming acts as the thread that connects human and non-human components, working with the local natural environment and with indigenous or historically present crops and animal breeds, serving the social, economic and cultural needs of the community, and producing

distinctive foods that are consumed locally using traditional regional recipes (Bové and Dufour, 2001). The targeting of McDonald's as a symbol of globalization consequently reflected the disruption caused to this system by the introduction of alternative, alien and standardized elements:

We thought McDonalds appropriate for several reasons: the type of food at McDo, which is industrial food requiring industrial agriculture (meat as cheap as possible, one type of potato for all McDonalds worldwide, and three or four varieties of salad). Everything is standardized. It is a multinational firm with a wish of hegemony. These elements show well that it is a target which corresponds to opposition to globalization. (José Bové in Ariès and Terras, 2000: 74, author's translation)

As this example demonstrates, the association between distinctive non-human elements and the local distinctiveness of rural place does not necessarily imply that non-human actants are inherently part of the 'local' counterpoised to the human-led processes of globalization. Non-human entities – both natural and manufactured – have frequently acted as the agents of globalization. Historically, the exposure of rural regions to global influences often came in the form of a seed, plant, foodstuff or livestock introduced as a means of capturing rural spaces for global commodity networks. Merino sheep, for example, were introduced to Spain from Africa in the thirteenth century, launching the European 'wool revolution'; from Spain they were exported to the Spanish colonies in America in the eighteenth century, and later to Australia and New Zealand where they laid the foundations of a wool economy of global significance (Knobloch, 1996; Holland *et al.*, 2002). Similarly, growth hormones, patented hybrid seeds and genetically modified organisms have become the agents of contemporary global agri-industrial corporations. Kneen (2002), for instance, compares the hybrid seed sold by Cargill in India to the soldiers of a colonizing army:

Looking at Cargill's activities in India, it is not hard to imagine seed in the role of colonizing troops, the occupiers of the land dictating that

the peasants will now produce agricultural commodities for the colonial power, which will take these commodities (perhaps to another land), process them, and send them back to be purchased by those among the colonized peoples who can afford them. This is exactly what the British did to the textile industry in India; it is what Gandhi protested against, and it is what Cargill would have reproduced with its hybrid sunflower and corn seed – at the same time as it would be creating customers for its fertilizers. (Kneen, 2002: 197–98)

The entry of such agents into a rural locality has an impact in reconstituting rural space because of the displacement effected in both natural and social systems. Indigenous crop and livestock breeds are abandoned and disappear from local landscapes and ecosystems. The number of varieties of wheat grown in China, for example, decreased 10-fold between the 1940s and 1970s, while over 250 domestic breeds of cattle and 180 breeds of sheep are reported to have become extinct (Rissler and Mellon, 1996; Millstone and Lang, 2003). The social effects come as the power relations between breeders, suppliers and growers are reconfigured and as dependency on external corporations increases. For campaigners such as Bové, the ramifications are cultural as well as economic:

The multinationals are working on only five or six strains of rice, genetically modifying them for a type of intensive cultivation in areas where subsistence farming previously held sway. In some Asian countries, these five varieties now cover 60 to 70 per cent of the land planted with rice. We're witnessing the complete annihilation of a farming culture which had the ability to feed itself, together with the distinctive social and cultural system this produced. (Bové and Dufour, 2001: 91)

Campaigners in Australia against free trade agreements with the United States, the Philippines and New Zealand have similarly employed arguments of biosecurity to suggest that weakened quarantine regimes would expose the country to viruses and parasites such as fireblight and mealy bugs with devastating consequences for apple and banana crops and the local economies and

communities that they support (Weiss *et al.*, 2004). In this case, however, the invading non-human entities are not the agents of capitalist globalization but its free-riders, entities whose global mobility is facilitated by human actors, but whose actions contribute to the reconstitution of rural localities in ways not envisaged by the people (inadvertently) responsible for their introduction. Instances of this type include not only the devastation of crops and their dependent communities caused by parasites and diseases, but also the ecological disruption wrought by infestation by deviant introduced species such as cane toads in Australia and rabbits in New Zealand (Holland *et al.*, 2002). Additionally, the impact of avian flu on the rural localities into which it has been carried – not only in terms of human casualties, but also in the loss of poultry stocks and wild bird populations, and the consequences of restrictions on farming practices – illustrates the capacity for rural spaces to be reconfigured through the intervention of non-human entities circulating on a global scale independently of human action.

### *5 Remaking place in the global countryside*

Taken together, the three dimensions of hybrid interaction discussed in the sections above provide an insight into the processes through which globalization effects the remaking of rural places. The reconstitution of rural spaces under globalization results from the permeability of rural localities as hybrid assemblages of human and non-human entities, knitted-together intersections of networks and flows that are never wholly fixed or contained at the local scale, and whose constant shape-shifting eludes a singular representation of place. Globalization processes introduce into rural localities new networks of global interconnectivity, which become threaded through and entangled with existing local assemblages, sometimes acting in concert and sometimes pulling local actants in conflicting directions. Through these entanglements, intersections and entrapments, the

experience of globalization changes rural places, but it never eradicates the local. Rather, the networks, flows and actors introduced by globalization processes fuse and combine with extant local entities to produce new hybrid formations. In this way, places in the emergent global countryside retain their local distinctiveness, but they are also different to *how they were before*.

As such, the impact of globalization must be put in the historical context of the long-term and ongoing exposure of rural localities to external flows, influences and authorities. Rudy (2005), for example, in developing a 'cyborg perspective' to capture the ambiguity of human/non-human and nature/society boundary practices in California's Imperial Valley, observes that:

At all times, not only was the region organized internally at least in part as a response to exogenous political and economic conditions but it was permeable to the intentional and unintended movement of ecological, personal and communal conditions – as embodied by (e.g.) birds, scientists, workers, public health advocates, water conservation infrastructures and different cultural group practices – across the Valley's boundaries. (Rudy, 2005: 32)

Globalization may therefore at one level be positioned as no more than another period of change in the ongoing dynamic of rural place-making. Places such as Imperial Valley have long experienced dramatic transformations as the result of the arrival of new actors and the 'global' (or at least, 'transnational') connections that they brought. Yet, what makes the experience of contemporary globalization different to earlier conditions of rural change is the intensity and immediacy of the global networks of connections and flows into which rural localities may be enrolled.

Equally, while all rural localities are touched by global networks and global flows in some way, the intensity of the connections forged, the extent of change effected to the locality, and the degree of manifestation of characteristics of the global countryside, all vary considerably. Globalization, it appears, is more significant in remaking some rural places

than others. This differential geography in part reflects structural factors that moderate the exposure of rural communities to global networks and processes, some of which reveal the continuing (if beleaguered) role of the nation state in mediating globalization. It is no coincidence, for instance, that some of the most explicit articulations of global countryside characteristics are found in rural localities in countries such as Australia and New Zealand, where national governments have pursued radical policies of economic liberalization and deregulation to prepare for competition in the global economy (Burch *et al.*, 1996; Le Heron and Pawson, 1996; Kelsey, 1997; Pritchard and McManus, 2000). In contrast, many rural communities in the United States are arguably partially shielded from the full pressure of globalization by agricultural protectionism, while globalization is least pronounced in the rural regions of closed economies and polities. Other significant structural factors in moderating the exposure of rural localities to globalization include physical terrain and accessibility, proximity to major economic and population centres, and political and economic stability. Perhaps significantly, though, the tentacles probing a way through these obstacles come from below as well as above: not just from global capital seeking new markets, cheaper resources and production sites and new investment opportunities; global tourists searching for new destinations and experiences; and migrant workers hunting labour shortages; but also from local initiatives and entrepreneurship endeavouring to connect with global networks and the opportunities that they are perceived to bring.

The reconstitution of rural space under globalization involves not only the transformation of material relations, but also the discursive repositioning of place. Locally embedded discourses of place and identity are both challenged by the changes wrought by globalization, and find new articulation in opposition to globalization (see Hogan, 2004). At the same time, rural places are

invested with new meanings by both local and external actors as they are repositioned in global networks. These representations are in turn conveyed through global networks, such that certain rural locations acquire a global significance in that they are known and have meaning in contexts geographically distant from the locality. This may be low-key and limited, such as identification as a the major supplier of a particular commodity to transnational supermarket groups, or it may be a higher profile and more widely recognized reputation as a tourist destination, a world heritage site or as the site of major environmental conflicts, to cite just a few examples. While these new meanings may be produced and disseminated outside the locality concerned, local actors may also draw on global connections to redefine places in terms of their global standing – for example in the marketing of Queenstown, New Zealand, as ‘the adventure capital of the world’, or the claim by Lompoc, California, to be ‘the seed-growing capital of the world’ (Cater and Smith, 2003; Woods, 2005).

The discursive and material reconfiguration of rural localities are intrinsically linked, as discursive shifts both reflect material transformations and are intended to have material effects. The production, circulation and reception of discursive representations of place is confined to the human realm, but discourses of place ascribe meaning to non-human entities and their materialization is dependent on the complicity of non-human entities. For example, the translation of the discursive representation of a locality as a commercial source of coffee beans into material exports is dependent on the successful cultivation of the coffee plant crop. This adds a further layer of contingency to the reconstitution of rural places under globalization.

An illustration of the contingent and hybrid processes involved in remaking rural places as sites of global interaction can be seen in the case of Kaikoura in New Zealand, as described by Cloke and Perkins (2006).

Previously a small town dependent on farming and fishing, and thus positioned primarily within national networks, since the 1980s Kaikoura has become a globally renowned centre for whale and dolphin watching. In 2003, whale and dolphin watching tours were taken by 160,000 tourists, 90% of whom were international visitors (McClure, 2004). The overseas tourists are now vital to the local economy and the transformative impact of their presence has been reflected in the town’s population growth and the scale of its physical development, as well as in problems of traffic congestion and parking and a high tax burden to support new infrastructure, and the conflicts these issues have generated (McClure, 2004). Yet, the transformation would not have been possible without the entrepreneurship of the local Maori community who started the whale watching tours (and which is itself a consequence of the settlement of claims relating to the Treaty of Waitangi which framed the conditions of colonial global engagement in New Zealand), or, crucially, without the performances of the whales and dolphins themselves. As Cloke and Perkins comment:

Whales and dolphins in Kaikoura have certainly been enrolled by tourist operators, but both their presence and their ability to perform are crucial to the assemblage – and seem to generate a strange topographical effect, disrupting the space concerned. The animals, then, are both enrolled and enrol. Were it not for their presence and performance, the tourist operation would be redundant; yet it is that operation which facilitates the hybridity of human-nonhuman relations concerned. (Cloke and Perkins, 2006: 905)

This then is the paradox of the global countryside. Rural localities are transformed by new connections that are forged with global networks, global processes and global actors; yet this transformation cannot occur without the enrolment and acquiescence of local actors, both human and non-human, whose very incorporation in turn modifies the networks of which they are part to produce new, hybrid, outcomes. Viewed from this

perspective, globalization cannot be reduced to the subordination of the local by global forces; nor the power of the global to domination. Rather, the impact of globalization in reshaping rural places is manifest through processes of negotiation, manipulation and hybridization, contingent on the mobilization of associational power, and conducted through but not contained by local micro-politics.

#### **IV Conclusion: negotiating the politics of the global countryside**

The search for a 'new angle of vision on politics' is an intrinsic part of Massey's (2005: 147) exposition on a relational understanding of space discussed at the start of this paper. As she expands, an appreciation of the spatial and its engagements calls less for a politics framed by linear progression, and more for 'a politics of the negotiation of relations, configurations' (Massey, 2005: 147), 'an outward-looking local politics which reaches out beyond place' (Massey, 2005: 148). This is the politics of the global countryside. As described above, globalization remakes rural places not through a politics of domination and subordination, but through a micro-politics of negotiation and hybridization. At the heart of this politics sits a tension. As globalization proceeds, political authority is displaced such that one characteristic of the global countryside that finds partial articulation in reconstituted rural places is the multiplication of new, distant, sites of authority; yet, because the reconstitution of rural places under globalization rests on associational power, local actors (human and non-human) retain agency in shaping the circumstances and character of their enrolment.

Thus, the institutions of rural local governance may be constrained in their ability to regulate the processes and consequences of globalization (Epp, 2001), but the local is nonetheless the sphere in which globalization and the attendant reconstitution of place is contested. Local conflicts are choreographed around contrasting perceptions of

globalization and its effects. Hogan (2004), for example, documents differing attitudes to globalization among rural residents in Australia and Japan, while Epp and Whitson observe that the politics of the global economy 'exposes and sharpens divisions within communities between those who see opportunities (or, failing that, no other choices) and those who see threats or displacements' (2001: xxi). Moreover, in assessing the perceived impact on place, these discourses of globalization are fused with discourses of rurality. Edmondson (2003), in her study of an American prairie town, presents these as conflicting 'rural literacies', producing different readings of events such as the arrival of a fast-food chain. Whereas some residents welcomed the restaurant as positive step of modernization and a vote of economic confidence in the town, others saw it as introducing an alien culture and values contrary to rural life, while a third group identified the further encroachment of neoliberalism, bringing standardization at the expense of local goods and services. It is in this way that the politics of globalization becomes entwined with the 'politics of the rural', contesting the meaning and regulation of rurality (Woods, 2003).

Yet, the very involvement of global actors and global networks in the reconstitution of rural places means that conflicts are not contained within the locality. In some cases, both sides seek leverage by constructing networks of activists that transcend scale and generate a global symbolism in their own right. Magnusson and Shaw's (2003) collection on Clayoquot Sound explores one example of this – a struggle over corporate logging on Vancouver Island – yet, as they argue, such conflicts are not a globalization of local politics nor a localization of global politics but rather, true to the hybrid nature of the global countryside, blur the distinctions between the two:

the politics of places such as Clayoquot puts traditional distinctions between local and global, small and large, domestic and international – and much else – into serious

question. If Clayoquot is paradigmatic, it is because the *puzzle* of politics is especially apparent there. (Magnusson, 2003: 1)

The collapsing of scale and place implied here is further evident in the mobilization of transnational political networks not only by the usual protagonists of globalization – global corporations, global NGOs – but also by groups purportedly opposed to the globalization of rural society. By building transnational alliances such as the international farmers' coalition, *Via Campesina* (Desmaris, 2002; 2007), transporting protest to new spatial contexts, as in the Inter-Continental Caravan of Indian farmers through Europe (Featherstone, 2003), and creating ephemeral spaces of convergence for rural activists around events such as WTO summits (Routledge, 2003), the rural counter-globalization movement itself connects rural places through global networks, and helps to make rural politics global.

Massey's (2005) call to understand our constitutive interrelatedness presents a challenge to geographers and social scientists to rethink and re-engage with the geographies of globalization in rural contexts. Taking up this challenge demands a new, multidimensional, research agenda that emphasizes the importance of place-based research in both the developed and developing worlds. Such research would need to focus on the micro-processes and micro-politics through which place is reconstituted, treating human and non-human actants agnostically, and be sensitive to the historical legacies of past engagements with global processes and forces. Additionally, the research agenda should engage with the concept of the global countryside as a hypothetical space that represents the end-point of globalizing forces, and interrogate the factors that shape the geographically differentiated partial articulation of its characteristics. In parallel with locality research, there is also a need for analysis framed at the global scale tracing the global networks that transect and connect rural space and investigating the new geographies

of interconnection and new spatial imaginaries that result. Finally, there is a need for critical political analysis as part of the new research agenda – for explorations of the operation of power in globalization and the reconstitution of rural places; for more qualitative and ethnographic research uncovering the discourses and narratives of globalization, rurality and place that frame the responses of local actors; for studies of the role of transnational institutions and organizations in constructing and regulating global networks and flows, and in reproducing discursive representations of the global countryside; and for work on the political mobilization of rural activists contesting globalization and their engagement with global networks and global opportunities. There are studies in recent years that have set the trail for a new research agenda by beginning to explore some of these issues, but they are few and fragmented and there is a need for a more coherent, systematic approach. Developing such a new research agenda has tremendous potential to contribute not only to a reinvigorated rural geography, but to our wider understanding as geographers of our dynamic, co-constituted, interrelated, globalizing world.

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