

**Reading New Zealand Within The New Global Order:  
Sport and the Visualisation of National Identity  
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Abstract

Globalization has emerged as one of the most controversial and debated issues of our times. In particular the potential impact of global products and processes on political, economic and cultural life in all of the world's 'global villages' has met with a range of responses from celebration to condemnation. This essay examines the relationship between globalization and national identity with respect to the phenomenon of corporate nationalism. Focusing on New Zealand, the analysis provides a preliminary examination of how global and local corporations appropriate dominant cultural themes, moments and stereotypes as part of their advertising and marketing campaigns. Such strategies enable corporations to *localize* and establish a sense of loyalty amongst citizens and consumers. Overall, the paper highlights the implications of the corporatization of contemporary life with respect to local, national and indigenous cultures.

Introduction

Within the context of increasing globalization most nation-states have been engaging in a dialectic process of being both outward and inward looking. Nations are *outward* looking in order to participate in the global economy and to form strategic partnerships that provide access to foreign markets for exports while simultaneously sourcing important overseas imports. Nations are *inward* looking in order to engage in self reflection about the past, present and future of the state in part as a response to, and sometimes as a form of resistance against, global forces.

Arguably, this amounts to what we might refer to as a ***postmodern national paradox***. That is, on the one hand nation-states are increasingly influenced by transnational corporations who have a *decreasing* allegiance to the nation other than as a producer of natural resources and a source of cheap labour. On the other hand transnational corporations are *increasingly* dependent on new ideologies of the state, especially those that deregulate and remove barriers to global trade. Moreover, nations are important to global companies inasmuch as they are recognised political-economic units and in turn potential markets for their products. It is within this postmodern national paradox that "the nation" as a symbolic representation of its people and as a commodity that can be marketed and sold exists within the new global order. The result of this dialectic process, or postmodern paradox, is that the nation becomes a contested terrain of

meaning with a range of corporate, state, political, cultural and indigenous groups seeking to define and represent “national identity” to serve their own interests (Jackson, 1998).

One way in which to examine this dialectic process is to examine the ways in which nations can be visualized. That is, how they can be objectified, commodified and represented. Arguably, the visual representation of nations, including souvenirs, travel brochures, movies, television and sport provide key sites for understanding how national identities are being corporatized. This paper will focus on how we can ‘read’ one particular nation, New Zealand, through an examination of how its sporting and national identities are visualized. Drawing largely upon contemporary advertisements this essay will highlight ways in which particular national and global corporations appropriate the nation in order to provide a particular visualization of New Zealand. Given the power of contemporary media and the unique nature of the New Zealand marketplace the dominant and contested images and narratives of the nation are likely to play a central role in the reproduction of particular national mythologies that both empower and disempower particular groups and individuals.

As a brief overview this essay will: (a) briefly conceptualize the concepts of nation and national identity; (b) outline the significance of sport, the media and advertising in the study of national identity; and, (c) illustrate the visualization of New Zealand national identity through an analysis of specific themes emerging in contemporary advertising. Throughout the analysis links will be made to the notion of corporate nationalism (Silk, Andrews and Cole, 2005), that is, the process by which corporate interests draw upon national themes and mythologies as part of their overall branding and marketing strategy.

To begin I would like to ask you to think of three things that come to mind when you hear or see the words “New Zealand”. While there may be a few exceptions chances are that you thought of one or more of the following: a clean, green country with beautiful scenery or sheep, or more recently the movie *Lords of the Rings*. On the sporting front chances are you thought of the “All Blacks”, New Zealand’s national rugby team. A simple, yet important question to ask is: “Where did your ideas, images or visualisations come from” (White, 1981)?

It is a particularly important question if you have never actually visited New Zealand and as such have no direct experience with the nation itself. However, it may be that you met a New Zealander who was traveling through your country or perhaps you studied aspects of New Zealand history, geography or culture in school. In each case your particular visualization of New Zealand as a nation and its national identity is being “mediated” that is, interpreted through the filter of other people’s viewpoints. This is not specific to New Zealand, it is true of all countries. The key point is that we are aware of whose visualization and/or definition of a national identity is the most dominant and, in turn, who it empowers and disempowers. Before proceeding, and because it is such a taken for granted concept, it is important to provide a basic understanding of *national identity*?

In his book “*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*” Benedict Anderson (1983) refers to the nation as an “*imagined*” community. The nation is “imagined” to the extent that: (a) it has “limited” or exclusive borders and sovereignty; and, (b) its members (of even small nations) won’t know most of their fellow members, but in the minds of each lives an image of similarity and/or uniqueness. An important question immediately arises: “how does a diverse population of people come to think, feel, act, and be defined as a nation”? In response Anderson (1983) suggests that there are at least three ways in which this occurs: First, through *history, memory and invention*: that is, all nations use myths, legends, invented traditions and even heroes as part of the process of nation building. Second, through *technologies of power*, that is, the various ways in which citizens are officially recognised and classified. This refers to such things as a national census, the national voting register and the criteria for obtaining a passport. Third, people come to think, feel, act, and be defined as national citizens because the nation is *objectified*, that is, it is represented through various symbols, sites and increasingly commodities. Clearly, all three of these processes are interrelated with respect to creating a sense of national identity. Moreover, each can be located within or linked to one or more of the three characteristics of discourses of national identity noted by Hogan (2005).

First, Hogan (2005: 194) notes that there is not a single nation or national identity but rather “multiple competing and complimentary discourses of national belonging”.

Citing Bhabha (1990a; 1990b) Hogan affirms the power of ‘counter-narratives’ of the nation, that is, those that challenge dominant visions of an identity. Second, Hogan notes that national identities are not “stable across times, places and social context” (2005: 194) but rather are constantly in flux. To confirm Hogan’s (2005) first two points consider the case of Japan and Japanese national identity. Historically, Japan has been viewed to embody a relatively unique, homogeneous and stable cultural identity. However, as McCormack (2001: 3) notes the notion of an essential ‘Japaneseness’ is mythical particularly in relation to the historically diverse regional and linguistic cultural identities that constitute the nation. To empirically investigate McCormack’s (2001) claims of Japanese cultural diversity Light and Yasaki (2002) trace the shifting role of sport in the construction and confirmation of both regional and national identities in Japan. Focusing on the emergence of *JLeague* soccer in the early 1990’s they outline how one particular sport successfully departed from the traditional ‘corporate’ and ‘educational’ models in order to embrace and support local and regional identities. Overall, their study demonstrates that while issues of globalization and national identity remain complex sport and other cultural practices can play a central role in regenerating local and regional identities. Third and finally, Hogan suggests that discourses of national identity are both inclusionary and exclusionary, stories of both who we are and who we are not (2005: 194). The latter is evident when cultural distinctions are made between, for example, Canadians and Americans or Czechs and Slovaks or the Japanese and Koreans. In short, national identities, like all identities, are constructed “out of difference”. Notably, such inclusionary/exclusionary processes are increasingly evident not only between but within nations as increasing migration transforms various national landscapes.

As noted in the introduction of this paper, globalisation and the attendant power of transnational corporations are increasingly shaping the way in which “the nation” is being commodified and represented and, in turn, this is shaping how nations are being visualised both internally and externally. The next section outlines the significance of sport, media and advertising in visualising national identity.

### **Sport, Media and Advertising in the Visualisation of National Identity**

Given the global nature of sport and the vast array of international events such as the Olympics, World Cup Soccer, the Rugby World Cup and other world championships

sport has come to figure prominently in the expression of nations and national identity. As Singer (1998: 36) notes: “Only sports has the nation, and sometimes the world, watching the same thing at the same time, and if you have a message, that’s a potent messenger.” Moreover, as Clarke and Clarke (1982) note the very structure of these competitions where individuals and teams “represent” the citizens of entire nations highlights the significance of sport in the study of national identity. In their words:

there is an articulation between sport and political nationalism which can only exist because of the popular identification of particular athletes and teams as representatives of ourselves...Sport is a forum that allows the construction of the nation as "us" - rising above and displacing whatever 'minor' internal divisions there may be (1982: 65-66).

The wider implications of Clarke and Clarke’s (1982) point is evident when we think about the role of the media in influencing the visualisation of national identity by both citizens and foreigners. According to Bale (1986: 22):

“It is important to begin to explore the kinds of images which people have about sport and place since regional and national identity are about images which **insiders**, and more importantly **outsiders**, hold of regions and nations”...

The effect of media-generated imagery may be particularly important if sportsmen or women are the only members of particular nations we ever encounter. In such cases we may base our opinions of nations as wholes -- our national identities -- on our images of their representatives in sport. (Bale, 1986: 22, 24)

Specifically in relation to New Zealand sport is considered to be a key part of its cultural identity. Indeed, New Zealand is often self-described by New Zealanders as a “great little sporting nation” in large part due to its perceived comparatively strong performances against much larger countries. That is why one often hears the phrase in New Zealand “not bad for a country of four million people”. Moreover, it has been suggested that:

“Sport is fundamental to the New Zealand image and is a distinctive characteristic of New Zealanders. Elite sporting achievements are a source of national pride and marketers use these achievements to improve export performance and promote New Zealand as a tourist destination.” (The Business of Sport & Leisure

Summary Report, 1993, Hillary Commission).

The latter point is certainly contentious given the centrality of sport in many nations around the world. Indeed, what is perhaps most striking about the previous statement is not that sport is seen as a distinctive and defining feature of New Zealand national identity but most national identities.

With respect to the latter point there is little doubt that major corporations, both local and global, use sport as a vehicle to reach target markets and to promote their products. Within New Zealand specifically, the link between sport and nationalism combined with the structure and scale of the national economy make advertising a particularly powerful force in the construction and visualisation of the national identity. However, there are several factors that may help distinguish advertising in New Zealand compared to other countries. For example, New Zealand has a population of only four million people with about one third living within the Auckland metropolitan area. As a consequence most major advertising campaigns are created as “national” campaigns in order to reach the widest possible audience. In turn, this often challenges advertising industry creatives to ensure a broad representation of diversity within what is acknowledged as “one of the most over-researched countries...on the planet” (Roydhouse, 2004: L20). Not surprisingly this presents some enormous challenges and results in some elaborate productions of a fictional, mythologised version of the nation. It is for this very reason that advertising is such a key site for understanding national identity. According to Lealand (1988: 33):

"Cultural artefacts such as television advertisements, the messages that impel a large segment of popular culture, are often in the vanguard of the search for a national identity" ...."*It does not matter* that they fail to reflect the 'reality' of New Zealand life as they succeed by offering us attractive and humorous images of what we think we are; representations of the mythic richness of New Zealand life".

Based on the previous points this essay examines a series of television advertisements that highlight the link between sport, corporations and national identity in New Zealand. In particular, this paper will selectively utilize several popular commercials to illustrate how specific national symbols, themes and stereotypes are appropriated by major corporations in order to win affinity with the marketplace. Four themes and

corresponding advertisements will be examined including: (a) New Zealand as Clean and Green; (b) Achievement and The Great Little Sporting Nation; (c) Rugby as the national game; and (d) National Unity.

### **Clean and Green: Toyota's "Welcome to Our World"**

This is one of the longest running television commercials within New Zealand first airing in approximately 1990. Variations of the basic advertisement have emerged from time to time in relation to special events (e.g., the America's Cup). The ad is notable not only for its cinematography but also its length. The two minute long commercial appears is like a mini-tourist video depicting the beauty and richness of New Zealand's "clean-green" paradise. Featuring the song "Welcome to Our World", a smoothly edited, slowly paced range of images showing mountains, beaches, lakes, rivers, pastoral landscapes and local wildlife dominate the screen. In addition, we see depictions of people engaging in a range of sport and leisure activities to reinforce the supposed healthy, active lifestyle that is both available to, and a central part of, all New Zealanders lives. We should not be surprised that a corporation such as Toyota would want to link itself with the nature and beauty of New Zealand and clearly they have been successful. As Hawkes (1993: 18) notes:

now close to one in four new vehicles spilling out onto our roads is a Toyota. So when people see the cosy, nationalistic, warm fuzzie corporate advertising encapsulated in the "Welcome" campaign, they are not just glimpsing Utopia. They can associate the overall message with the machine they drive, or which the neighbours, family or workmates own.

However, we should not overlook the fact that this picture is the equivalent of a video postcard that captures an idealised image of the nation overlooking the negative realities of New Zealand life. Erased from the script are the problems of pollution, a struggling healthcare system, escalating levels of violence and ongoing political struggles with indigenous Maori. Moreover, it is important to highlight what is actually behind Toyota's motivation for producing such an advertisement. As a foreign company, Toyota, needed to find a way to "localize", that is, fit into the local marketplace. The use of these

images and theme song facilitate the process of making Toyota a natural part of the New Zealand landscape.

As a further example of how the nation is commodified we only need to look at the New Zealand Tourism promotions including their web site: [www.newzealand.com](http://www.newzealand.com). Not surprisingly the site provides an overview of all that New Zealand has to offer as a tourist destination. Moreover, it includes a television commercial that serves as the basis for the wider “100% Pure” campaign, a marketing strategy that clearly identifies New Zealand’s natural beauty as a key attraction. To be clear, New Zealand is a beautiful country and under the right conditions visitors are likely to see and experience postcard moments. However, these images mask another side of New Zealand which includes a less than impressive international performance in terms of waste production, lack of proactive recycling and other environmental policies. Indeed, at the time of this writing the New Zealand government had just discovered that, contrary to initial positive projections, their partnership in the controversial Kyoto Agreement could possibly end up costing the nation millions or even billions dollars. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that nature and scenery will remain at the forefront of New Zealand’s promotional culture. As Bell (1996: 29) suggests that this is in part due to the fact that “In discourses on the development of a nation’s identity, nature can substitute for or stand for the past”. Or stated another way, it enables the nation, and those who wish to visualize and commodify it, the opportunity to use the raw material of nature as a way of making a declaration about a nation’s place in the world.

### **Achievement and The Great Little Sporting Nation: Weetbix’s “Hillary”**

As a relatively isolated nation with a small population, New Zealanders perceive themselves to be very successful within the realms of international sport. Former chairman of the Hillary Commission for Sport and Recreation, Sir Ronald Scott, commented that: "We are an assertive, confident people. We believe we can take on bigger nations and succeed. A lot of that feeling emanates from our sporting successes. Sport isn't everything in the life of a nation, but in New Zealand it has played a bigger than average part over the years". It is for this reason that, as previously noted, one often hears the phrase “Not bad for a country of 4 million people” highlighting a type of David versus Goliath scenario where New Zealand takes on the sporting giants of the world.



The theme of New Zealand sporting *overachievement* is demonstrated in a series of Weetbix cereal advertisements launched in the mid 1990's and continues today. Each ad draws upon real New Zealander heroes and historical moments in order to nostalgically link the audience with the product. In each case children (part of the market for whom the product is intended) are used to play the roles of each of the historical figures. Amongst the key heroes and moments are: Sir Edmund Hillary's conquest of Everest, Peter Snell's athletics victory at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, and Jean Batten's celebrated transTasman flight between Australia and New Zealand.

Weetbix's Sir Edmund Hillary "Everest" advertisement opens in England's Explorer's Club in 1953. Two kids representing upper class British men joke about Hillary's intended attempt to climb Everest. The next scene takes us to Mount Everest where again two children play the roles of Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tensing Norgay. As they climb the dangerous mountain Sherpa Tensing warns "Its impossible. We must turn back". The young Hillary responds with "Where I come from there is no such word as 'Impossible'". We then see the two young climbers reach the summit with Hillary carrying the New Zealand flag. In the background we can hear a chorus of singers declaring: "Kiwi Kids, are Weetbix kids". In each of Weetbix's historic episodes famous children are seen devouring Weetbix reinforcing that they have an established relationship with the product. In the most recent example which links Weetbix with its renewed sponsorship of the All Blacks, we see a range of young boys watching their national heroes on television. In the first scene we see a young boy identified as "John" watching Colin Meads score a try on a black and white television. Next, we see a boy named "Doug" watching "John" Kirwan score his infamous end to end try versus Italy in the 1987 Rugby World Cup. Finally, we see another young boy celebrating a "Doug" Howlett's All Black try. In her book, *Inventing New Zealand*, Claudi Bell (1996: 153-154) observes that: "The essential theme in each Weetbix advertisement is achievement....the heroes as public property live on in popular mythology, personifications for some of the best things about New Zealand."

Thus the brand (Weetbix) is articulated with New Zealand national identity through, for example, Sir Edmund Hillary's historic conquering of Everest. Upstaging the British, planting a New Zealand flag, and using the lyrics of the commercial's song all

serve to create a sense of pride within the context of nostalgia, a fond memory of one of New Zealand's greatest moments. All of this serves to help Weetbix reproduce its brand image as distinctly New Zealand. In and of itself the commercial seems harmless and in fact from a marketing standpoint it is quite clever, cute and humorous. However, this is a clear example of corporate nationalism which can be defined as: "the process by which corporations (both local and global) use 'the nation', national symbols, images and memories as part of their corporate strategy (Jackson, 2004). In effect, a corporation is using parts of New Zealand's history and collective memory to tug at the heartstrings of the audience and to create a positive relationship with their product. The question, which cannot be answered here, is who has the right or should have the right to use such national memories and icons for any purpose and in particular commercial gain? This point also emerges in relation to the third example in this essay: Rugby as the National Game.

### **Rugby as the national game: Adidas in New Zealand.**

In 1999, global sportswear company Adidas assumed control of the sponsorship of the New Zealand All Blacks replacing local company Canterbury who had been the sponsor for the previous 75 years (Jackson, Batty and Scherer, 2001). Within New Zealand there was an atmosphere of caution and anxiety over the prospects of a foreign company assuming control of the national icons. However, despite some early challenges Adidas proceeded with a strategic campaign aimed at localizing the brand and demonstrating their commitment to New Zealand rugby. This is perhaps best demonstrated in their first two television commercials. The first, titled "Captains", employed numerous nostalgic techniques including being shot in black and white. In keeping with the theme of history and tradition the commercial was staged in an old locker room and featured eight former New Zealand Captains pulling on jerseys that had been "lovingly recreated to the specifications of the All Black uniforms of each era" ("Pull up to the jumper", *Admedia*, 1999: 30). As each of the captains (Charlie Saxton: 1945-46, Fred Allen: 1946-49, Sir Wilson Whineray: 1958-65, Sir Brian Lochore: 1966-1970, Graham Mourie: 1976-1982, Wayne Shelford: 1987-1990, Sean Fitzpatrick, 1992-1997, and Taine Randell: 1999) pulled the adidas jersey over their head he was "reincarnated" as the next chronological captain concluding with 1999 captain Taine Randell. The ad features a modified version

of an old war song “Bless Them All” in order to link rugby, masculinity, mateship and war. Unlike the Weetbix commercial the Adidas ad uses actual New Zealand rugby heroes, past and present, in order to invent a sense of tradition and association with the All Blacks.

While the “Captains” ad was produced for the local market a second commercial titled “Black” was later released for a global audience in anticipation of the 1999 Rugby World Cup. “Black” was also shot in black and white and featured a dramatic performance of the All Blacks’ famous haka interspersed with images of traditional Maori warriors. The images are intimidating and the sound piercing. This is also a clear example of corporate nationalism although in this case Adidas draws upon indigenous culture and a “national” ritual to articulate the brand and the nation. Notably, in this case Adidas was actually challenged via a \$NZ1.5 million lawsuit that was filed by the tribe whose ancestral chief reportedly invented the haka (Reid, 2000). In addition, a number of other scholars have highlighted the racial stereotypes and intellectual property rights issues at stake when corporations appropriate indigenous culture for private profit (Jackson and Hokowhitu, 2002). The implications regarding how such television commercials influence the visualisation of New Zealand and Maori are worthy of consideration. Consider the scenario of someone from a foreign country, who knows little or nothing about New Zealand or Maori people, watching a carefully crafted, intimidating advertisement featuring angry ‘primitive and savage warriors’. While further analysis would be required to ascertain the way in which such images shape the way in which Maori and New Zealand are interpreted by foreign audiences there is little doubt that there are important implications.

Most recently, the social construction of national identity through rugby became evident with respect to the 2005 Lions Tour. The Lions, or more accurately the British and Irish Lions, are in effect, an all star team of players representing England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. In mid-2005 they toured New Zealand playing a range of games against provincial teams, the New Zealand Maori team and culminating in a three test series against the All Blacks. What makes the Lions tours distinct is the fact that they are quite rare (the last tour to New Zealand was in 1993) and the nature of the tour group that accompanies the Lions: the infamous ‘Barmy Army’. Consisting of a range of fans in

terms of age, gender and nationality the 'Barmy Army' is arguably a corporatised, self-promoting travel tour group that symbolically 'invades' host nations. Clearly a lot of planning went into hosting the estimate 25,000 fans who travelled to New Zealand for the tour in order to meet the demands for accommodation, transportation and even restaurants and pubs.

Notably, the Lions 'invasion', including their 'Barmy Army' supporters had an impact on the promotional culture of the various games. Furthermore, the Lions Tour provides a unique example of how a particular visualisation of national identity emerges in terms of creating an identity out of difference. For example, as the Lions and 'Barmy Army' arrived a series of television commercials emerged that highlighted the theme of war and invasion. For example, Telecom featured an advertisement that begins in black and white in the style of an old war news reel. We witness a man with binoculars observing war planes soaring overhead with a voice-over proclaiming: "Invasion Imminent, 25,000 Barmy Army light infantry of reached our shores". In turn, we hear an emergency siren sounding and see a cavalcade of Union Jack-marked camper vans entering an urban area with locals seemingly fleeing for their lives. In the next scene a camper van carrying some middle aged Brits pulls over next to a young boy in order to obtain directions to "the Cake Tin" by which he is referring to New Zealand's distinctive "Beehive" parliament building in the capital, Wellington. The young boy, annoyed at their ignorance points the visitors in the wrong direction and then proceeds to use his Telecom "push to talk" Telecom mobile, in effect, a modern walkie-talkie system, to alert New Zealanders around the country about the location of the invaders. In turn, we see a group of Kiwi blokes acting like war generals using their barbeque tongs to map out enemy location and plan combative strategy. A voice over states: "But don't worry we'll be ready for them. Use your push to talk mobile to outsmart the enemy. Join the resistance. Get behind the All Blacks with Telecom and unite for victory". This advertisement was followed up by a second one which featured the 'Barmy Army' landing on shore and planting a Union Jack flag on the beach as if to claim victory and ownership. Arguably these commercials tell us as much about the struggle to redefine and reassert a British identity in the new millennium as they do about New Zealand identity. Why for example, would 25,000 British Lion supporters fly to the far side of the world to

watch rugby matches that are readily available via satellite television? Why would some British fans want to be a part of a corporate tour group that essentially manufactures a “British” experience down under flying the flag of the ‘Barmy Army’? What does such a phenomena tell us about Britain as a postcolonial colony in and of itself?

While these advertisements deserve much more thorough analysis than can be offered here they do offer some insights into how a global/local corporation (to the extent that it is largely foreign owned, but operates locally), Telecom, uses an international sporting event, the 2005 Lions tour, as a vehicle for constructing national identity and in turn its own brand and products. Beyond that, Telecom’s ‘Barmy Army Invasion’ advertisements seek to actively engage citizens/consumers through use of their newest communications technologies. Of course Telecom was not alone in the use of the Lions tour, the ‘Barmy Army’ or the national teams involved to appropriate national images, themes and stereotypes as part of their promotional culture. Indeed, the entire event serves as a strategic site for the analysis of corporate nationalism.

As a final example of the way in which corporate nationalism operates within the New Zealand context I draw upon the advertisements linked to various America’s Cup campaigns. The America’s Cup in of and itself is a fascinating case study with respect to the concept of corporate nationalism. Consider the fact that the America’s Cup is generally promoted in terms of an international sporting event where teams representing different countries compete against each other. However, unlike the Olympics or most other “international” competitions, the America’s Cup yachting teams are rarely aligned with a particular nation-state other than symbolically. Indeed, competing teams actually represent, almost exclusively, private yacht clubs and more accurately major corporations. Consider the current Cup champions Alinghi. The Alinghi syndicate is based in Switzerland (an interesting fact in and of itself since Switzerland could not really host the event due to lack of facilities and hence the competition is being held in Valencia, Spain in 2007) has a range of local and international sponsors including: the Société Nautique de Genève. UBS, Infonet, Audemars-Piguet, SGS, Nespresso and MSC Cruises. Furthermore, the actual crew consists of members from: Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, France, Italy, New Zealand, Spain, USA, and a minority from Switzerland. Other America’s Cup teams feature varying configurations of nationalities in their teams

but they all share the fact that they are “branded” corporate national teams including: BMW Oracle (USA), Luna Rosa (Italy) Emirates (New Zealand) and even Team China is sponsored by a range of global corporations including: Tag Heuer, Neocles Corporate, Silver Marine, and ILM Management. Arguably, the contemporary America’s Cup embodies many of the pessimistic characteristics of future sport forecast by producer Norman Jewison in the 1975 movie Rollerball given that corporations have effectively replaced nations.

Here, I wish to highlight how one particular America’s Cup syndicate, “Team New Zealand” illustrates the concept of corporate nationalism. The team name itself provides an initial glimpse into how corporate and national identities are linked. There are some unique features about Team New Zealand that should be clarified including: (1) though certainly not a national sport, sailing/yachting is more accessible in New Zealand given that it is surrounded by water; (2) with only 4 million people and the cultural centrality of sport almost any team or event assumes national significance; (3) in the case of New Zealand, perhaps due to strong grassroots development, most of the team members are actually Kiwis; and (4) the New Zealand public and government have invested heavily, both financially and emotionally in several America’s Cup campaigns. Team New Zealand won its first America’s Cup in 1995 in San Diego and successfully defended its title in Auckland in 2000 eventually losing to Alinghi in 2003. Arguably, it was in 1995 that “Team New Zealand” emerged as a “national” team largely due to its success but in particular because of the David versus Goliath victory over the USA. Through a carefully orchestrated and corporate and media manufactured spectacle a group of white middle class Kiwis competing in a relatively exclusive sporting event on the other side of the world emerged as both global and local heroes, “Team New Zealand”. The key corporate sponsors: TVNZ (the state owned television broadcaster and in effect a government funded agency), Lotto (yet another government agency) Toyota, Telecom, Steinlager and ENZA (New Zealand Apples) dominated the sail space but also the airwaves in terms of commercial time. However, they also engaged in collaborative efforts through the America’s Cup to become “Team New Zealand” as much as the yachtsman themselves. If there was any doubt about the national significance of the victory in 1995 one only needs to consider the amount of media coverage of the event,

the victory celebrations, the ensuing parades and the range of related media opportunities that emerged. The 1995 win entitled New Zealand to host the next America's Cup regatta in 2000. Outside of the national sport of rugby it became one of the most visible sporting events in New Zealand history. A cornerstone of the 2000 America's Cup was the promotional culture that drove it. "Team New Zealand" as a national team and corporate brand emerged again with some familiar faces: Telecom, Toyota, Lotto, Steinlager and one key new sponsor SAP software. To demonstrate the process and manifestation of corporate nationalism I will draw upon one key television commercial: *Loyal*. Produced by advertising agency Saatchi and Saatchi, the commercial uses the song "Loyal" by iconic Kiwi musician Dave Dobbyn. As a brief description: with faint guitar music in the background, the black and white commercial opens with a close up of an elderly man watching a distant sunrise as he stands atop a coastline rock. As the camera pans back we see the man put his right hand over his heart. In turn, he is joined by another man who takes his arm and covers his heart. Within seconds a mass of people link arms forming a patriotic human chain the length of New Zealand's coastlines. Throughout this process we hear the lyrics to Dobbyn's song:

"Call me loyal, I say loyal too, 'cause we are loyal" Out in the battle from far and new where does allegiance lie, sometimes, and why are you waiting, waiting for what, the history of some love, Call me Loyal....I will hold you loyal too, cause we are loyal.

The song continues as the human chain gets longer including a range of local heroes and celebrities (eg. Sir Edmund Hillary) and a clear attempt to represent the nation's diversity: male and female, young and old, Maori and Pakeha along with a range of other racial/ethnic groups, and social classes. Eventually the line leads to the dock where the Team New Zealand crew is standing and we see a close up of skipper, Dean Barker. As the song ends we hear a voice over: "They've come from all four corners to have a go at what's ours. It's their billions against our team of 3.9 million. We're with you all the way." The last shot we see are the corporate sponsor logos, in full colour.

This is a very powerful advertisement in terms of its cinematography, music and imagery. The diversity of New Zealanders along with their physical connection to the actual regatta team provides a symbolic sense of belonging and unity. The closing

voiceover highlights the challenge ahead articulating that it is “us against them”, “money versus national pride” and a commitment to “loyalty”. Finally, we witness by virtue of their coloured logos members of corporate “Team New Zealand”: the sponsors. Thus, citizens are connected to a national sporting team and its sponsors through an international corporate sporting event that is articulated as being in the nation’s interests and represented and reproduced in a complex web of state and corporate media streams including: television and print advertisements, documentaries, news coverage as well as the America’s Cup event itself. Ultimately, Team New Zealand lost the Cup in 2000 but Team New Zealand has returned with \$20 million in government funding and a new key sponsor: Emirates Airlines. It is very early days but evidence of corporate nationalism for the 2007 America’s Cup in Spain is already emerging via Toyota commercials.

### **Conclusion**

Competition within the global economy is putting increasing pressure on corporations to seek out and win over world markets. The consequence is that corporations attempt to expand but in order to do so they face the challenge of localizing or fitting into local national contexts. One strategy being adopted is that of corporate nationalism which consists of the appropriation of popular national symbols, themes and stereotypes in order to win favour with the audience. As a consequence “The nation is...corporatized, and reduced to a branded expression of global capitalism’s commandeering of collective identity and memory” (Silk, Andrews and Cole, 2005: 7). It is difficult to predict the longer term implications of such phenomena. However, the increasing ownership, appropriation and at times exploitation of particular aspects of national and indigenous cultural artifacts is surely cause for concern. As Michael Schudson (1993) reminds us: advertising operates as a form of capitalist realism that does not represent society *as it is* but rather *as it should be* according to the logic of capitalism. According to Goldman & Papson (1996: v): “Under such circumstances no meaning system is sacred, because the realm of culture has been turned into a giant mine.”

This essay has argued that the corporate use of national images and collective history may have an important impact on how any given nation is visualized both locally and globally. Given the power of the media and advertising in particular, there is a



danger that the power of transnational corporations will gain increasing ownership and control of the national visual landscape. In turn, this may change the way in which citizens define themselves and are in turn defined by others.

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