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BUILDING INTERCONNECTEDNESS:  
MANAGING FLOWS AND RUPTURES IN A COMPLEX  
INTERNATIONAL PROJECT.

**DRAFT, NOT TO BE QUOTED**

## KALEIDOSCOPE OF TEMPORALITY AND SPACIALITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter investigates the interconnectedness of time and space in a deterritorialised action net project. The analysis is on a macro level, focusing on multiple spacialities and temporalities and includes references to religion and gender. The research moves beyond the micro-level analysis of monochronic and polychronic notions promoted in the business literature. In concrete terms, I investigate participants' interactions in relation to time and space and what causes flow, i.e. the dynamic spaces of overlap and interaction, and what causes rupture. I will also investigate how flow and rupture generate new cultural approaches.

Reflexivity as a researcher is key to raising awareness for these processes. Thus, the sequence of topics in this chapter follows the analytical outcome of the research; hence is beyond the chronological order outlined in the project's masterplan.

First, there is an analysis of the endeavours necessary to achieve embodied presence. Participants are dispersed over continents, and because of this, create flows and ruptures that vary from flows and ruptures generally observed in same-location participants. Secondly, the concept of embraced presence is under scrutiny. Particular attention is paid to the interplay of kairotic and chronological timing. Thirdly, response presence as experienced during the design phase is critical in exploring the question of what creative space was needed to create space. Finally, the financial power scopes inextricably linked to the project, dispersed over time and space is investigated.

Cultural anthropology contributes concepts developed by Bate and Czarniawska serving as a base of understanding the action net and its members. In addition, I mirror Hannerz' call for multi-site fieldwork and build on his understanding of flow and interconnectedness as well as on Appadurai's notion of rupture and deterritorialisation. All these inform the exploration of what creates newness in this action net over time and space.

The findings are based on data from participatory observation, interviews and storytelling. Incidents are illustrated in thick description to help the reader into the action net members' world. This approach also helps illustrate the current and future challenges, which need to be tackled by the discipline of anthropology and their representatives.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the main actants in the project<sup>1</sup> is an English business school located in surroundings where the phrase “Englishness at its best” is a gentle understatement. In this environment, time seems to have come to a halt; trees are lush and swaying gently in the wind, deer graze on the golf course situated across from the old castle, accommodating the organisation; and feeding rabbits welcome visitors when they enter the meticulously manicured garden displaying orderly blossoming flowers seeking scarce island sunshine.

The castle’s pit stone appearance provides the visitor with a breath-taking first impression, standing there rock-solid across from a perfectly “dompteured” green lawn. Upon entry the visitor is welcomed by a majestic staircase spanning three sides of the entrance hall, impressive paintings in subdued tones, and wooden doors whose handles poke into the eye of the company attempting to open it.

Offices spread over several primarily stone-brick buildings on campus-like grounds are partly crammed, partly generous. Carpets feature small busy patterns mired in numerous shades of red and brown; it is not a design that one could by any stretch of imagination label modernist, reductionist. It is in one of these offices where the following dialogue takes place as one of many in the course of the project.

*“Tomorrow 1000 am conference call.”*

*“What time zone”. “UK.”*

*“Ok, who will be participating?” “Fatima, Mustafa, and the two*

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<sup>1</sup> I am a cultural anthropologist turned business consultant and have worked on this global/international complex project between dispersed places in Europe and Egypt in the role of team leader over the period of more than 12 months in the telecoms sector. It is a management development and change project comprising roughly 2000 individuals, aiming to implement performance driver skills throughout the organisation by the means of workshops and large group events.

*of us.”*

*“Ok. I will come to your office and we use one speaker-phone. Would you have a line set up for us?”*

Replete with English country-side idyll this locality creates global economy on a daily basis by actively producing, implementing, servicing and reproducing projects for multinationals corporations.

This analysis of “Building Interconnectedness” is beyond regulatory existing frameworks, that is the insertion of a large and complex global project into the nation-state concept of two countries, namely Egypt, and Great Britain. The call for the project itself originated by both, namely externally by the UK headquarters of the client organisation and domestically by the Egyptian business itself. Finally, it has been delivered by an English business school sitting in the lush English country-side featuring a diverse network of consultants and specialists spread over geographic regions. By this, the spatial unbundling of national space<sup>2</sup> takes its natural course.

This chapter will bring to light the kaleidoscope of multiple specialities and temporalities of the national and the global inherent to the analysed project, and thus the creative ways from interlinking cultural flows primarily crafted by the action net in the course of producing, implementing, servicing and reproducing this venture. Specifically, it will investigate participants’ interactions in reference to time and space and what causes flow, i. e. the dynamic spaces of overlap and interaction and/or rupture and in what way both, namely flow and rupture generate new cultural approaches.

In this context, I understand flow as to referring to things not fixed in their places, to mobility and expansion of many kinds, to globalisation along many kinds<sup>3</sup>. Thinking transdisciplinary this includes flow of capital, labour, commodities, information and knowledge, illustrating that this

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<sup>2</sup> Sassen 2001:264

<sup>3</sup> Hannerz 1997:9

term is not created and owned by anthropologists, but utilised by many disciplines such as economists, demographers, researchers and other information brokers. Nevertheless, this work focuses on the social qualities of globalisation, for which overarching concepts such as flows, interconnectedness, and ruptures are indispensable contributions.

Flows can result in interconnectedness<sup>4</sup>, however are also responsible for producing ruptures, which I, following Appadurai understand as points of “disjunctures” and inner contradictions<sup>5</sup>, within the flows of globalisation: they thus are perceived not as one homogeneous network, but as zones of tension, of connections and disconnections.

My understanding of rupture from this exploration is that rupture can be linked to a single dramatic and unprecedented moment, which calls for a continual and repeated break from formerly experienced meaningful forms, and by that can potentially create a new form of flow.

Appadurai theory of rupture takes into account media and migration as its two major, and interconnected, diacritics. It is not teleological in his understanding but offering new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds<sup>6</sup>.

Reflecting on the dynamics of flow, ruptures, and interconnectedness is key to this macro ethnography, thus I will draw on Weick’s<sup>7</sup> term of “organising” as it refocuses the reader’s attention away from the “organisations” trap. “Organising” never ceases, whereas “organisations” captures processes that have come to an end.

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<sup>4</sup> Hannerz 1997:8

<sup>5</sup> Appadurai 2005:32

<sup>6</sup> Appadurai 2005:3

<sup>7</sup> In Bate 1994:18

The working term of action net employed in this research is used to indicate the dynamic aspects of organising and its apparently solid effects as for a moment, they seem unchangeably and "organised-for-good"<sup>8</sup>.

"A standard analysis begins with "actors" or "organisations"; an action net approach permits us to notice that these are the products rather than the sources of the organising – taking place within, enabled by and constitutive of an action net."<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to a network, in which actors make contacts, an action net assumes connections between actions creating actors. Therefore, action nets differ from networks in terms of time and space coordinates<sup>10</sup> and need to be observed as being established and re-established.<sup>11</sup>

One key idiosyncrasy of an action net is the lack of, or the different presentation of its physical presence. The multi-layer connection of actions of which many in this project occur in as diverse organisational fields as airline industry, airport infrastructure, telecoms, hotel accommodation in order to name a few. This diversity requires a differentiation between embodied, i. e. physical presence versus response presence, such as in computer work where the latter might not be captured by direct observation<sup>12</sup> when actually happening in time and space, but to a certain extent to a participant observer, namely me.

To further illustrate the idiosyncrasies of an action net it is essential to initially understand that networks first require actors, which form a more or less formal network, and which consequently produce actions. Reversely, in an action net the actions will come first, followed by

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<sup>8</sup> Czarniawska in Jimenez 2007:532

<sup>9</sup> Czarniawska in Jimenez 2007:532

<sup>10</sup> Lindberg, Czarniawska 2006:294

<sup>11</sup> Czarniawska in Jimenez 2007:534

<sup>12</sup> Schwartzman 1993:21

exchangeable actants. Only then the potential formation of a network may transpire or not.<sup>13</sup>

An action net is part of processes in their transformation, not at their ends. It is constantly in motion; it is continuously anew created and forever being re-created; meanings and meaningful forms can become durable however in a dislocated and relocated spatial understanding.

Boundaries of “organising” are constructed beyond legal requirements and confinements; they are redefined by the actants of the action net, thus are permeable, negotiable and different anew.

Reflexivity is key to raising awareness for these processes. As a logical extension; the sequence of topics in this chapter follows the analytical outcome of the research, and thus are beyond the chronological order of the project’s master plan. Thus, action nets capturing the never-ending flow of redistributive practices<sup>14</sup> lay ground for connectivity.

On this basis, the concrete focus is firstly on the analysis of the endeavours necessary to achieve embodied presence as actants are dispersed over geographic regions, and by that, members of the net create flows and ruptures. Secondly, the concept of embraced presence is placed under scrutiny. Particular attention is paid to the interplay of kairotic and chronological timing. Thirdly, response presence as experienced during the design phase of the project is critical in the exploration featuring the question what space<sup>15</sup> was needed to create space. And finally, the inextricably linked financial power scopes dispersed over time and space is investigated.

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<sup>13</sup> Czarniawska in Jimenez 2007:532

<sup>14</sup> Jimenez 2007:29

<sup>15</sup> For example, “Thinking space” in an office, supermarket, car, in order to create space in another locale for materialisation of action in the nearer future.

Data from participatory observation, interviews and storytelling are capture in the form of incidents and are portrayed in thick description to help the reader gain access into the action net actants' world.

## 2. WILL WE EVER MAKE IT THERE

0810am Cairo time: Minibuses arrive in front of the glittering building, stopping one behind the other, forming a neat “bus snake”, sleekly reflecting their exterior design in the glass front of the office block. The bus snake spits out employees, some of them chatting, some of them quiet and looking rather tired. They clutter around meticulously manicured lawns accommodating palm tree rows guarding the building and offering scarce shade in the form of distorted palm tree shapes; a quite unnecessary effort given the early morning hour. The spotlessly smooth and shiny glass front offers spectacular scenery mirroring the suns rays of the morning played back by the surrounding desert. These air-conditioned mini-buses had been on the road for more than one hour starting at the collection point near Midan al-Tahrir in downtown Cairo. By the time passengers reached the mini-bus, some of them had already travelled for more than one hour, often on non-air-conditioned and crowded public buses and vans serving as collective taxis.

All passengers arrive at the same time; enter the building at the same time, show their ID passes at the same time, log on to the IT system at the same time.

I have never had the pleasure to be in the role of passenger; hence I have to rely completely on key informants’ reports about riding the bus. Some of them seem to enjoy the same seat on a daily basis given its availability. Others are looking for variety engaging in small talk with different colleagues, while some try to catch a few more minutes of sleep.

The sense of familiarity of the day-to-day experience is mirrored in the rhetoric built around the doing of and being in it. I became witness of regularly held casual conversations featuring stories about the morning

ride in elevators and at the coffee machine. Often, I was addressed and integrated into the conversation mainly in order to let off steam about the experience. Sharing time and space on the mini-buses allows individual travellers to learn what colleagues think of the experience itself, investigate how the external environment is being perceived, e. g. newly set up supermarkets and apartment blocks along the roads travelled, and as a natural course, traffic issues. Additionally, it allows employees to listen and explore work-related issues on performing tasks and solving problems. The shared meaning built on the bus creates a sense of belonging to this group and clearly defines a boundary to others, namely those arriving in a private car.

The familiarity of the day-to-day experience is no longer derived from the idiosyncrasies of a localised place. The organic development of flowing back and forth has been accepted by the passengers. Often, it is sought after for strategic career planning by taking on a job position in a highly esteemed organisation situated in a highly respected locality. Respect and appreciation expressed by sayings such as "Oh, you are working in Smart<sup>16</sup>" was spelled out repeatedly, being a synonym for "You have made it!"

Repeatedly and without being solicited, the Nile as "the lifeline of all being" in Egypt has been brought to my attention. Programme participants found it important for me to understand why the commuting was necessary. The common reason stated was "we want to live close to the Nile, nobody wants to live in the desert".

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<sup>16</sup> "Smart" is the common abbreviation for Smart Village. Founded in 2001, Smart Village represents the first fully operational Technology and Business Park in Egypt. It accommodates Multinational and Local Telecommunications and Information Technology Companies, Financial Institutions and Banks, together with Governmental Authorities on three Million square meters in the west of Cairo. The efficient mix of business services boosts the competitiveness and profitability of enterprises taking advantage of Fiber Optic Network, multi-source power supply, District cooling and Heating redundant network plant. Evenly, organizations in Smart Village Cairo, profits from world class standards amenities including Property Management & Maintenance, Event's Management, Transportation Services on 24/ 7 basis. Also see [www.smartvillages.com](http://www.smartvillages.com)

Social meaning travelling from multiple places, such as Maadi, Zamalek, Mohandiseen<sup>17</sup> in Cairo and more remote Cairo neighbourhoods into the town centre of Old Cairo to then proceed to an artificially created centre at the periphery, where it is recharged in order to be transmitted into private homes again later in the evening, all of it with and against the flow of the traffic.

One and a half hours from the periphery into the town centre, has a strong impact on the majority of group as most of them travel to periphery by minibus.

“We are inclined to pay close attention not only to the active handling of cultural flows at the receiving end, but also to the multicentricity of flows, to crisscrossing flows, and to counterflows where the conception of the world is increasingly one of decenteredness (cf. Lash and Urry 1994: 4). Along related lines, Appadurai (1990: 6) goes as far as to argue that the new global organization of culture cannot be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models, even those which allow for multiple centres and peripheries<sup>18</sup>.”

The minibus as a metaphor for cultural traffic, enabling to connect multiple locations into an amalgamation of organisational meaning can be referred to as a rainbow culture<sup>19</sup>, bridging a variety of subcultures.

This challenges the common assumption centres overpowering the periphery as conventionally perceived in organisations, in particular flows being directed from headquarters to subsidiaries.

I am moving beyond the illusion of potentially romanticising the creation of flows in multiple directions; and by creating a centralised means for doing so to the harsh realities of the tedious journey within the flow; that is the rupture imposed to the single traveller’s life anew every day.

Even without the distance overcome by each individual on a daily basis of the working week, Egyptian traffic has a few more unexpected surprises

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<sup>17</sup> Famous Cairo neighbourhoods

<sup>18</sup> Hannerz Flows 1997:10

<sup>19</sup> Skoeldberg 1990 in Alvesson 1993:116

to offer inflicted by the common bending of traffic rules all year round resulting in numerous accidents causing a great many casualties due to overcrowded mini-buses used for public transport<sup>20</sup>. Frequent heavy fog most often experienced early mornings in wintertime and the occasional sand storm to be mentioned as additional challenges camouflaging any visibility.



Figure 1: hada ash-shara

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<sup>20</sup> Burst tyres, speeding and defective road planning were amongst the causes of the other accidents, which are only the latest in a flood of crashes that claim the lives of an estimated 5-6000 people every year. Road accidents are the second most frequent cause of death in all Third World countries. In Egypt, for every 100 million kms driven, 43.2 people die, compared with 0.9 in Australia, for instance. Accident specialists maintain that more than 50 per cent of the victims are in their mid-20s, and that one-fifth of children between one and five-years-old who die in hospitals are accident victims. Financial losses caused by traffic accidents -- estimated at LE1 billion a year -- include damaged vehicles, health care, hospital fees and lost working hours. In Al-Ahram Weekly Online Issue 778/19-25 January 2006

Hada ash-shara means "Here is the street", a traffic sign frequently spotted on the right-hand side of roads indicating the edge of the road necessary to provide greater safety in difficult conditions.

Looking beyond the physical dangers of flowing back and forth, which can lead to visible and tangible ruptures such as accidents, the much greater impact is caused by ruptures at a more intangible level, i. e. the time consumption of up to four hours impacting the private lives of the individuals travelling on the mini-buses.

"... modern places are increasingly phantasmagoric<sup>21</sup>. The comforting, familiar character of the cultural settings we routinely move amongst conceals the impact on our day-to-day lives of the influences of distant social forces and processes."<sup>22</sup>

On the one hand, the rupture caused by irregular schedules and massive time-consumption impacting the private life on the other hand, creates flow for the organisational life. The frequently stressed "Work-life-balance" usually put forward by business consultants and writers and spelled out in numerous publications in this context simply becomes absurd from the viewpoint of traveller and passenger..

One could argue that the mini-buses are non-places<sup>23</sup>, i. e. whose places are instrumental and contractual; a means of commuting originating in the practicality of reaching the uptown business quarter, usually promoted and authorised by senior management. In contrast, they can be viewed as anthropological places<sup>24</sup>, i. e. a place that serves as an integral part for socialising and connecting; and one that provides identity and memory linked to the organisation, binding its members to the company's places, the company history, its language and religion by the daily repetition of organic social interaction. In the context of networking and socialising, mini-buses are a vehicle for centralising

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<sup>21</sup> Giddens in Tomlinson 1999:107

<sup>22</sup> Giddens in Tomlinson 1999:107

<sup>23</sup> Auge in Tomlinson 1999:109

<sup>24</sup> Tomlinson 1999:109

meaning, constructed and negotiated in social interaction. One key actant, who grew up in Delhi underpins this view by stating:

“I can recall so vividly my last 4 years at school travelling in the school bus between the age of 14 to 18 everyday on the same seat. It is as important part of my schooling experience – flow – as was the classroom.”

Linking this to today’s situation:

“In Delhi, “chartered buses” ply between offices and large residential colonies carrying the same people everyday – there are innumerable stories of friendships, love and people dynamics in these places.”

Viewing the mini-bus as a non-place, then it just is one property of the organisation’s “Has” culture<sup>25</sup>, a functional instrumentality. The consumption of up to four hours per day of moving from one place to another is a fundamental experience in employees’ lives, it becomes naturalised and taken for granted, a natural flow of experience. By the doing of the passengers it becomes an anthropological place, whereas the intended functional instrumentality of getting employees to their workplace is reverting the anthropological place back to a non-place. The perceived functionality of this facility again becomes an “Is”-Culture every time people bring it to life; hence it is a true hybrid accommodating different group’s interests.

So, the buses symbolise time and space not only as a contributor to flows and ruptures in reaching embodied presence, but are an integral part influencing organisational culture and people’s lives in an unexpected way.

When mini-buses are the vehicle for centralising meaning for some of the actants, then for other actants it must be aircrafts.

For footloose cosmopolitans<sup>26</sup> whose social reality of a considerable part of their life-time is packaged by the complex process of making it onto an

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<sup>25</sup> “Has”-Culture is the culture of an organisation, that dominant members value; and usually refers to senior managers' values interpretation and preferred way of doing things;

<sup>26</sup> Hannerz 1996:104

airplane and – in shah allah<sup>27</sup> – arriving there, the very process becomes a vehicle of centralising meaning, experienced and negotiated in the social interaction inherent to the effort. A significant part of the social interaction is located in places of necessity and convenience such as limousines when talking to the driver, queues when having to take off shoes and retrieving the laptop out of the bag, at the coffee machine in the lounge when hoping to encounter a drinkable coffee, at the announcement board when searching for the gate that had changed three times over last few minutes. A significant contribution to meaning happens in the reproduction of the order of members aspiring belonging, and members belonging to the globalised elite. In the being of the doing lies the “Is”-Culture.

The course of achieving embodied presence present a range of flows and ruptures, which are under scrutiny in more detail over the next few pages.

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<sup>27</sup> So God wishes.

The current:

*"I booked you a flight from LHR<sup>28</sup> to Cairo, Priya. I hope that works for you."*

*"I am afraid that I will have to travel from Sweden directly. Would you look up flights from Stockholm via Zurich or Vienna to Cairo and inform me about availability."*

And the past:

*"It was about fifty years ago that I first boarded an airplane. I still recall how passengers comported themselves in those days. We were "airline passengers", a rare breed of earth denizen, aristocrats in every sense of the word, and we were treated as such by airline staff, stewardesses, and ticket agents alike."<sup>29</sup>*

Today, the globalised elite stripped of their various electronic hand-helds and other paraphernalia symptomatic of "The Business Man"<sup>30</sup> waddles in socks, holding up the flannel trousers through the metal frame of let's say LHR security hoping not to beep to then finally "get dressed" again by storing the preferred mobile phone in the preferred pocket, the other mobile phone in the other pocket, the iPod in an even other pocket, reattaching the belt, relacing the shoes, pulling on the jacket, repacking the laptop bag, checking on the keys to finally proceed towards the duty-free area.

As a consequence of 9/11<sup>31</sup>, flow and rupture are closely interconnected as demonstrated when entering the microcosm of embarking an aircraft aiming to transform spatial distance in less than 3.5 hours to spatial closeness. Space is presented in time not in kilometres or miles<sup>32</sup>; it is supposed to add value to clients when spending 3.5 hours nicely compartmentalised into a starting and landing period, an eating period, and one period designated for the consumption of one movie most likely

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<sup>28</sup> London Heathrow

<sup>29</sup> Amin 2004:3

<sup>30</sup> This is linked to the observation that I am often the only woman in business class.

<sup>31</sup> Appadurai 2001:16

<sup>32</sup> Tomlinson 1999:4

disconnected from the idiosyncrasies of the place of arrival. The creation of flow attempted by business travel is not only perceived as interruption by some passengers trying to gain some quiet time allocated to completing a load of work or simply relax; it is the airline industry's effort to sell exclusiveness of what has long become the ordinary.

Arriving at 0100 am at Cairo airport on a Sunday morning requires the bundling of my attention to find the proper conveyor band for luggage collection asking myself "Where did I actually come from?"

The slowing down speed inflicted by a traffic jam allows me to refamiliarise myself with overwhelming smells, omnipresent sounds, irresistible sights, the closeness of other cars to the one I m travelling in.

"Dawn is a struggle between day and night: it is during the hours before daybreak, as the reign of night comes to an end ... and the break is made with darkness ... open to the light ..."<sup>33</sup>

Sabah, the morning is synonymous with blossoming<sup>34</sup>; the sky appears in twilight, the sun is struggling through the damp morning air whilst the muezzin calls for the first prayer of the day, the Fajr, happening at the threshold of dawn and sunrise. The hotel complex lies still, the soccer court to the left is empty, in the background spreads the desert in the semi-dark, the only sound is the one of the muezzin.

The sound of his voice makes me finally realise that I have arrived. Creating flow to achieve embodied presence is held together by rupture, which happens to be beyond the physical reality of three hours of sleep. Rupture becomes dramatic for the individual actant's personal life; weekends are interrupted as early as Saturday lunch time or early afternoon, only to be in the position to create flow for the timing of the client's project. Rupture at micro-level creates flow at macro-level. The specificity and complexity of the boundary zones such as airport

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<sup>33</sup> Bourdieu 1977:148

<sup>34</sup> Bourdieu 1977:151

security controls, multiple passport checks, the air travel itself, born to become the interactive overlapping of global and national orders<sup>35</sup> are customary to one universalistic process irrespective of sense-making or relevance, to which actants surrender and herein become the overlapping.

Rupture and flow again are inextricably linked to the reproduction of members of the globalised elite in which the actants' ecology overpowers the right to his or her culture<sup>36</sup>.

Flows are multicentric, however often claimed to be more powerful from centre toward periphery<sup>37</sup>, in this specific example power is being accumulated in the periphery in multilateral ways as leaving Europe to arrive in a country of transition, as leaving the urban centre to rest in the outskirts, as leaving the preferred Nile area to rest in the desert. Travel produces beyond a new financial centre a centre of social meaning.

"Sabah al-chir, ya Priya."  
"Sabah an-nur, ya Hassan."<sup>38</sup>

0815am at the hotel near the work site: We were back in the game and only a few kilometres away from the glittering buildings. Ready to go.

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<sup>35</sup> Sassen 2001:265

<sup>36</sup> Hannerz 1996:58ff

<sup>37</sup> Hannerz 1996:60

<sup>38</sup> "Good morning, Priya."  
"Good morning, Hassan." (reply version)

### 3. WE HAVE ARRIVED

Having faced lengthy time investments in order to accomplish embodied presence, up to one hundred actants illustrate the latter in one large room accommodating diverse understanding of space and time; diverse levels of income, experience, hierarchy; all covert in more or less non-disclosed tacit knowledge, including intuition, apprehension, and tacit ways of knowing<sup>39</sup>, usually acquired only through shared experience. The objective defined as providing physical space for the process of sharing.

Generous space elegantly decorated, featuring mahogany covered walls embracing roughly 400 square meters, which are covered with lush carpets in light and pleasant colours inviting a meander pattern in a colour-coordinated dark-red to spread on it, prompt the entering actants rather to sit on the luxurious surface much rather than on chairs and bean bags neatly arranged over the room.

These large group events initially designed to last roughly two hours and facilitated by a small number of key actants intend to create interconnectedness among individuals representing diverse hierarchies, departments, locations, organisational belonging.

Bearing this objective of intended flow, actants are welcomed, provided with a programme overview, and invited to create space and connections by the means of speed networking and other interventions suitable for this number of individuals. After the duration of two hours individuals then reconvene in smaller groups according to topic covering the performance driver and hierarchy level.

After the project launch decision-makers argued to reduce the duration for Large Group Events from an initial 2 hours to 90 minutes to once more, reduce the duration 45 minutes at an even later stage. The

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<sup>39</sup> Nonaka, Toyama, Konno in Little, Quintas, and Ray 2002:44

reduction of roughly 63% of the total time leads to ruptures at many ends.

One of the observations turned out to be the artificial termination of fruitful conversations at interpersonal level, impacting new contacts and long-lasting ones interconnecting the mosaic-like aspects of the kaleidoscope of diversity, i.e. hierarchies, floors, departments, locations, age, ethnicity, income, gender, appearance, heritage having emerged the space. This can be clearly defined as a rupture for networking<sup>40</sup> and boundary-crossing, and hence the cultural traffic<sup>41</sup> beyond the conventional boundaries for communication and interaction. Our endeavour of purposely creating a microcosm of "Is"-Culture as developed in terms of time and space on the mini-buses and illustrated earlier was interrupted by promoters of a "Has"-Culture.

The intended mindful and purposeful creation of interconnectedness can lead to multilateral objection. The latter expressed by actants of different hierarchies fearing the disjuncture of categories of belonging as well as by actants actively contributing to the creation of the design in place.

Expressed as a clear rupture for some of the actants was the necessity of the redesign of the design in place. The meticulously planned plot for the two hours session went missing, thus Chronos, the Greek god of time, measuring it in mechanical intervals<sup>42</sup> was entirely substituted by Kairos, the Greek god of the right time recognising it by jumping, slowing down, omitting longer periods, and dwelling on others<sup>43</sup>. The once dominant master plan, or in the actants lingo "running order", an expression of chronological time was made extinct. Instead, redesigning wherever possible at "the right time", temporal autonomy for an action or a

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<sup>40</sup> For reference some of my other projects are in favour of promoting up to 60% networking time on management development programmes, ideally packaged in different interventions, which normally receives positive feedback.

<sup>41</sup> Alvesson 1993:118

<sup>42</sup> Czarniawska in Jimenez 2007:528

<sup>43</sup> Czarniawska in Jimenez 2007:528

system<sup>44</sup>, hence kairotic time ruled our lives as one actant expressed in utter exhaustion:

“In the hotel in Cairo we talk about what we are learning at breakfast and when we get back in the evening and at lunch in the company. We have had conference calls and meetings<sup>45</sup>. Evenings are lost to wash-up sessions and planning next LGEs. This is entirely exhausting – one week sessions are pretty demanding on your time and energy levels specially as dealing with three groups of up to 30 individually and up to 270 individuals collectively.”<sup>46</sup>

Another expression of organising in kairotic was brought to our attention by having invited all actants to more than the two originally planned performance driver workshops leading them to attend many more Large group events than initially outlined and hence have them experience potential and unintended repetition.

The unexpected turn encouraging spontaneous flows and greater interconnected among participating actants, at the same time prompted even greater rupture with the initial design requiring continuous redesign of the already redesigned redesign leading to endless double-loop processes.

In kairotic organising where change is the only constant, may this be changing starting times, breaks, or shortening of sessions, or change of design altogether a chronologically organised running order serves as a guideline in order to ensure consistency between different sessions across the programme as actants are kairotically changing. In the larger context of creating interconnectedness, chronological timetables and running orders can show effect only when designed to provide orientation allowing kairotic timing to incur.

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<sup>44</sup> Czarniawska in Jimenez 2007:528

<sup>45</sup> With people dispersed in other locales.

<sup>46</sup> One actant expressing exhaustion

In seeking a workable solution accommodating flight itineraries, family interests, and personal needs we started day one of the working week, that is Sunday after lunchtime working through rest of the week until day five COB<sup>47</sup>. As idiosyncrasies of this net project are unusually diverse, so must the approaches within the setting, necessary to make it work. Nevertheless leaving one actant expressing his frustration about the kairotic understanding as follows:

“Culturally, there is a tendency for low level disruption, although this is not deliberate. Constant chatter, walking out to make or receive calls and poor time keeping, all make it difficult to keep sessions on track. A major triumph is getting them to turn off their ring tones.”

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<sup>47</sup> Close of business day

## 1.1.DHUHR WA ASR<sup>48</sup>

Actants are not only overcoming great distances in order to achieve embodied presence represented on organisation site, beyond having reached the microcosm they further need to accommodate several physical and virtual locations in one day usually regimented by a more or less predefined work load being synonym for time constraint.

Large size flat screens mounted at random intervals in the elegantly furnished hall featuring marble floors and state of the art interior design invite by-passers to stop and follow the latest development in the ongoing Lebanon crisis. Mobile phones keep ringing ceaselessly prompting owners to answer at fast pace, yet taking time to express concerns about the observed on the screen and herein their worries about friends and family members located in the war-ridden Middle East state.

Returning from the virtual visit a 360 miles east they intend to stop at their open plan office in the next-door building, which distance allows more phone calls to be answered. The quick visit serves to liaise with colleagues who happen to be there at the same time. Later, on the way to the canteen, situated again in the other building they stop for a comfort break, in whose facility you can, from selected toilet cabins hear ring tones in different styles, which of course, people feel obliged to terminate by answering.

By the time people manage to reconvene in the seminar room, 25 minutes past the agreed starting time individuals had physically moved over a number of locations with their attention being dispersed over numerous spaces often a few thousand miles away.

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<sup>48</sup> Noon and Late Afternoon

One of many observed incidents and ongoings that greatly impact the flows of the interaction among actants next to space is time. Research data repeatedly pointed to importance to topic to all actants involved, thus the special attention. This found expression in the handling of breaks, comprising several forms such as comfort breaks, lunch break and in particular prayer breaks.

The Non-Muslims among the actants not being familiar with this practice, perceived these breaks as alienating and unusual, interrupting the flow of the working day unnecessarily. The result of this perception has created repetitive and often-circular discussions consuming considerable time whilst in the process of "organising" and hereafter. Conversations did not only include rhetoric of astonishment and alienation, but equally contained the search for solutions for handling the issue.

Prayer breaks were usually initiated by the muezzin's call of "allahu akbar" echoing from a few dispersed mobile phones vibrating on various tables in the seminar room.

One actant spelled out the following:

"I expected some cultural differences in the perception of time and punctuality and was not disappointed."

Here is an excerpt from one of her e-mails to other actants on this subject:

"There has been some difficulty getting started punctually or even moderately punctually. I made some random notes on things that help based on comments from participants and colleagues. Timings of sessions may change; prayer breaks will dictate timing. Participants will come and go as they please."

The structure of the working day is organised by two out of altogether five Muslim prayers, that is Dhuhr (noon) and Asr (late afternoon). These two prayers represent only a glimpse of the entire complexity illustrating

exemplarily the real function of the classificatory system<sup>49</sup> evoking abrupt and complete transformation of business life prompting activities of men and women into a certain direction.

Dhuhr is the time for the prayer between the declining of the sun & Asr, i. e. when the shadow of something is twice its own length. Asr is the time for the prayer immediately after the last time limit of Dhuhr until (just before) the sunset. As indicate the timing is closely related to the movement of the sun resulting in a continuous change of prayer breaks and herein impacting on the working day.

Prayer, the second pillar in Islam, is a fundamental piece in a Muslims life. It is the physical demonstration of devoutness that expresses unitedness regardless where you are on this planet. Sites become connected by belief. Yet, praying is a moment of transition and rupture, bringing participants together and yet separating them by gender-specific privacy openly expressed by women in particular. The course is abruptly altered by the adoption of a new rhythm<sup>50</sup>: Some participants leave the seminar room, some stay. Participant feedback and participant observation assisted us with some insights pertaining to dealing with space in this matter. Often, women would leave the room to commandeer a smaller syndicate room for prayers. The larger group of male prayers would stay in the main seminar room to perform their prayers; others would use the time to make phone calls, chat with each other, simply roam around, go for a smoke in the outside smoking area, or pick up a coffee.

According to the rules of clausturation female Muslim prayers would, in the odd scenario of staying in the main seminar room ask all males to leave, equipping me with the privilege to stay in the room. Reversely,

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<sup>49</sup> Bourdieu 1977:159

<sup>50</sup> Bourdieu 1977:159

male prayers did not seem to mind female presence in the room as long as they did not move between them and the qiblah<sup>51</sup> whilst praying.

The rhythm of the prayer breaks ensures the flow of the maintenance of the symbolic order, and herein its properties defined by the time consumed to recite raka'as<sup>52</sup>, to organise oneself by space required according to the rules of claustration, and by the mental mode to reconvene cognitively and physically in order to resume with business matters.

This flow is not only accepted but welcome allowing individuals to connect with spirituality during a busy working day providing them with the opportunity to remind themselves of the essence of existence.

Flow from within out means rupture from outside in: From the point of view of some of the Non-Muslim actants breaks altogether, and in particular prayer breaks were perceived as nuisance primarily to the fact that people hardly return on time, or worse, sometimes never showed up again.

In the course of solution seeking breaks and prayer breaks were coordinated more accurately by reducing breaks in number and organising them in accordance with the prayer times effective in Cairo at that time<sup>53</sup>. Depending on the perspective breaking and reconvening, and herein punctuality can be viewed as rupture or as flow.

Nevertheless, it is essential to understand the management of breaks and in particular prayer breaks on a cognitive level in order to manage business life in the Arab world, and to develop an emotional alignment towards it in order to actively contribute to the creation of flow.

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<sup>51</sup> Qiblah is the direction to which the Muslims turns in order to perform their prayer. It is towards the Kaabah in Mekkah, whose direction is usually indicated in hotel rooms. Alternatively, when travelling Muslims sometimes use a compass for orientation.

<sup>52</sup> Prayer units

<sup>53</sup> Consulting [www.islamicfinder.com](http://www.islamicfinder.com) proved to be of assistance to investigate concrete timings and thus align the day's structure accordingly.

## 4. DREAMING IT

This sections aims to explore the interconnectedness across multiple time and space during the design phase of the project, which means that planning and thinking at large is based on assumptions, imagination, and finally on dreaming.

Characteristic for this project is that only 20% of the overall project time is utilised in form of presence time, requiring physical presence for interaction whereas 80% of time consisted of response presence<sup>54</sup>. The latter might not be visible to an observer, and greatly but not exclusively consumes time during the design phase.

In the early days of the design, being unaware of this uneven distribution of time allocated, the consideration of relocating key actants becomes an important one based on the assumption that embodied presence is important.

In hindsight, the privileged position of reflexivity and introspection, allows recognising the extent to which sites are connected with one another. They are connected in such ways that the relationships established and formulated prior the embodied presence become more important than the embodied presence itself; otherwise the embodied presence would never materialise. Establishing the translocal connection is a porous endeavour with unclear ends, which even with good intentions and careful planning is difficult to define unless doing it and being in it. Local bundles<sup>55</sup> of sitedness are power locales with their own pull factors; in the specific cases the pull factors are stronger on client locale with the number of actants being bigger there and herein commitment to working hours are stronger.

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<sup>54</sup> The body of calculation is base on the overall time spent on this project translated into consultant days and expressed in percentile.

<sup>55</sup> Hannerz 2003:206

At a later stage of the design phase, considerations of relocating key actants turns out to be appropriate to fulfil requirements in form of presence time. It, however, requires mobility of a significant number of key actants.

One of the many challenges during the design phase is the visualisation of time and space across boundaries and geographic locales as presented with a few selected examples.

## 1.2. CREATING TIME AND SPACE IN ONE LOCALE OVER TIME AND SPACE ELSEWHERE

Programme manager: "We would need another meeting regarding rescheduling. Would tomorrow between 1400 and 1600 suit you?"

Director: "That would be after COB. We need to ring this forward."

Programme manager: "Sorry can't do. Am in a meeting. How about the day after tomorrow?"

Director: "Friday?"

Programme manager: "Ah, right. I forgot. Then we have to postpone until next week."

Director: "I guess so, however Ramadan is starting then, meaning we need to accommodate the concall early morning as working time during Ramadan is until lunch time."

Programme manager: "I can come in half an hour early on Monday, so we can start as early as 0830."

Director: "That will be alright. That will be 1130 local time, and for me 0930."

Programme manager: "Oh, where are you?"

Director: "Zagreb."

As illustrated in this short dialogue, vagueness in time expression is typical at the very start of the design phase and transforms into prescriptiveness featuring high accuracy further into the project.

Thinking the “Imagined” is similarly necessary for the organising of workshops and large group events requiring authentic visualisation of spatial prerequisites. The design, for which moving a greater number of actants is inherent, necessitates multi-purpose rooms; that are three rooms, one next to another connected with separating walls. The design, at first, included a smooth transition from smaller group intervention directly to one large group events, which only at later design stage became clear was impossible due to the infrastructure available. A one-hour time investment was necessary for transforming rooms, a necessary time prerequisite needed to be included into the design at a later stage, again requiring some considerable time investment for reworking.

Electronically mediated images and symbols of representation both at micro-level illustrating rooms and setup as well as office buildings and office space helped gain a better understanding of organisational culture and its symbols. E.g. company values painted on office walls in both Arabic and English.

Thinking the other location requires “time-space compression”<sup>56</sup>, a sense of dramatically reducing distance in your imagination in order to be able to plan the unplanable. Bridging knowledge gaps and creating understanding by establishing processes in means of e.g. forms is what helps greatly in understanding and in clarification. The importance of using both, emails and concalls is stating the obvious. Less obvious is the utilisation of time and space within “the available time and space” for informal conversation, be it at the office coffee machine or at the airport security check, helped flow of information and thus, become important hubs for knowledge excavation and further its dissemination. Nonaka refers to this space as “ba”<sup>57</sup>, where information is interpreted to become knowledge. Ba is based on interaction unifying physical space, virtual

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<sup>56</sup> Harvey 1989 in Tomlinson 1999:3

<sup>57</sup> Nonaka, Toyama, Konno in Little, Quintas, and Ray 2002:49

space such as email, and mental space such as shared ideals, again being highly contextual<sup>58</sup>.

### 1.3. “TO CAIRO IN LESS THAN TWO HOURS”

The catch phrase does not refer to travel time but to the time invested, namely two hours to extricate one key actant from existing commitments in order to make him available to travel to Cairo. This intervention, at very short notice, was necessary is one example to be to handle continuous changes throughout the project.

Changing workshop content on short notice, reschedule sessions, different time formats altogether, cancellations three weeks before actual date, all of this has a major impact on several actants’ availability, competing with actants’ working time allocated on another project, all clear rupture at many ends established in response presence with a final impact on presence time. Clearly, those changes had little or no impact on extent of presence time but difference was shown in dates. Conversely, the impact was greatly shown on the extent of response time, in which many actants involved: Re-establishing flow found expression in resource allocation seeking those with necessary capabilities to deliver the work required. One consequence of the changes was the necessity of long term stays for some of the key actants, which in the perception of many was at large a rupture for the quality of life, caused by extricating themselves from existing commitments.

On interpersonal level, rupture is expressed by aggravation over continuous changes resulting in a lack of trust how can you say this – reference!!, although reliance on others is a critical success factor by actants. Aggravation expressed by one actant is shown as follows:

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<sup>58</sup> Nonaka, Toyama, Konno in Little, Quintas, and Ray 2002:49

“... they don’t seem to understand the nature of our business world, where people schedule their work well in advance (up to a year in advance in some cases) and expect schedules to be kept to.”

In conclusion, one can state that the section about response time is fairly brief in comparison to thick description of presence time, e. g. bus rides, prayer breaks, although most of the time was spent in response presence. This clearly mirrors the challenge of response that is idiosyncratic for all global projects; that is the difficulty to put the intangible and the “Non-experiencable” into thick descriptions.

Frequent feedback as reported by key actants shows that the comfort zone within response time is often found in the critical period of time difference normally at two to three hours depending on the location of other actants and an temporally shifted working week due to the Egyptian working week lasting from Sunday to Thursday. Those two to three hours usually starting early afternoon and Friday were usually used for reflection, planning and reworking.

One other important insight is that embodied presence can only be reached by prior response presence as illustrated consuming a significantly larger proportion of overall time. Further expanding on Appadurai’s notion of “scapes<sup>59</sup>”, I call this space “brainscapes”, aiming to describe the wealth of knowledge created in non-defined deterritorialised physical places and non-physical spaces, and greatly contributing to the successful materialisation of global projects. Only at a much later stage in such projects, if necessary at all, physical vehicles of deterritorialisation and interconnectedness such air carriers and mini-buses gain significance, namely for transforming response presence into embodied presence, and resulting in the materialisation of the latter in one place.

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<sup>59</sup> These are “building blocks,” as Appadurai suggests, of contemporary imagined worlds. An alternative spatial rendering of the present, one that is not “fixed” as a typical landscape might be, but which are of various, disjunctive sizes, amorphous, and flowing. In Appadurai 1996:33

The earlier mentioned “ba” is not bound space either, nor is it reduced to communities of practice, but features on-line networks, documentation, and databases as well as in the specific case of Seven Eleven Japan is the extensive on-the-job training i.e. the “Burabura Shain”, the Walking Around Employee<sup>60</sup>. Nevertheless, the ba disregards the richness of diversity from places and spaces.

Regardless of shrinking physical distances, be it within the city limits of Cairo or over a few thousand kilometres, the concepts of embodied and response time has been explored.

Now it is time to turn to financial implications.

## 5. TIME IS MONEY – WHAT IS SPACE?

This article looks at ways how to understand the social qualities of globalisation with its modalities of interconnectedness unique to this project setting. The proposition that globalisation creates a certain homogenisation preferably promoted by writers covering economic mechanisms may be correct when stating that the global is determined by financial power, and in fact emerges from the juxtaposition of the national and the global. Nevertheless, this point of view deserves a closer look.

The disjuncture of virtual and material temporalities is often expressed in organisations’ divergence between a) manufacturing capital and b) materialising capital, which seems to be a major key characteristic for the specific study displaying the overlap of the national and the global.

Manufacturing capital advances global-economic features like hypermobility and time-space compression, of which both are not self-generative<sup>61</sup>. They are the process of the actions created by the actants of the net, the latter acquiring an “actorial” identity from these

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<sup>60</sup> Nonaka, Toyama, Konno in Little, Quintas, and Ray 2002:52

<sup>61</sup> Sassen 2001:262

actions<sup>62</sup>. They are produced and reproduced by individuals by physically flowing back and forth, by means of mini-buses, and cars, or airplanes greatly contributing to cash flow movements on a global scale. At micro-level the individual actant, facing tedious journeys on jammed desert roads may be more concerned with jams and traffic signs. Those being subject to air travel may be irritated about security controls and worry about delays. Frequently observed in this study, often individual actants are unaware of their contribution to global finance flows, which to many are entirely beyond the individual's control as a result of the interconnectedness of financescapes<sup>63</sup>, that is the disposition of global capital sometimes mysteriously and yet rapidly moving: currency markets, stock exchanges, and commodity speculations.

The second, that is the materialisation of capital is portrayed in the production of the management development programme. This includes the nitty-gritty of finance doing on daily basis, yet embedded in the larger pull and push factors of the finance world. This is illustrated at its best in global endeavours presented at hand. Going through figures, updating Excel sheets with data, watching payments fall due and their realisation only months after delivery all based on project level, feeding into the flows of financial streams at large. Often, the global is counting on a jetlag between the locales. The duration of manufacturing capital by the production of a management development programme requires irregular intensity over the period of one year and allowed the financial service production of the client organisation to use the capital for shorter-term operations.

The projects itself is a production of the global economy. Sassen argues,

“... that globalisation has contributed to a series of economic activities that take place in national contexts but that are sufficiently novel in some of their features (organisational and

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<sup>62</sup> Lindberg, Carniaska 2006:294

<sup>63</sup> Appadurai 1996:34

locational) so that while they do not appear to violate existing regulatory frameworks, they cannot be said to comply with them either."<sup>64</sup>

The mindset about time and space in the form of the national is reminiscing about the past, occasionally shown by expressed statements and displayed behaviours by some of the net's actants. However, the current excavation shows that the national is a time that looks to the past and inherits a future.<sup>65</sup> Two national pasts and futures, that by a first casual project definition happens to be British and Egyptian. In the being, the actants produce a new one taking place in the presence, when waiting at the airports in Istanbul, Vienna, Zurich, and Stockholm, when being driven along Alex desert Road, when interacting with each other.

## 6. WHAT TO LEARN FROM THIS?

Interconnectedness does not just mean people moving from one locale to another. It means changing the meaning of social interaction in the course of doing, and by that changing the nature of the locales. Herein, ideally this adds to the awareness and the learning of the individual actant participating and contributing, thus establishing and re-establishing this redistributive practice of changing the meaning.

Vehicles of physical transportation regardless if limousine, airplane, mini-buses are a place of transformation, inhabiting the change of cultural practice, experience, and identities.<sup>66</sup> Vehicle contributing to deterritorialisation, i. e. "the loss of the natural relation of culture to geographical and social territories"<sup>67</sup>; they are not a loss but a shift incorporating new geographical and social territories, hence true vehicles of interconnectedness. This perspective is one that decision-makers in

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<sup>64</sup> Sassen 2001:266

<sup>65</sup> Sassen 2001:269

<sup>66</sup> Tomlinson 1999:106

<sup>67</sup> Garcia Clancini in Tomlinson 1999:107

organisations in charge of introducing means of transport such mini-buses may not consider at its full extent.

Senior management's intention by establishing the mini-bus system may lie in the necessary practicality of shipping the workforce over long distances to their jobs in order to get their daily portion of tasks and responsibilities accomplished. This encourages the view of seeing the organisation as a purposeful instrument and adaptive mechanism.

However, as an anthropologist I view the mini-buses not as a cultural artefact, a separate component alongside others, in the discipline of Organisational Behaviour often labelled as "Shared values"<sup>68</sup>. In contrast, I understand the transportation system as an integral part of "Is" culture, a generative process in the form of a mobile vehicle that shapes meaning and derives its interpretations as generating travel between centre and periphery. By regarding culture as a root metaphor, its dynamic aspect of "organising" becomes transparent away from the static notion of "organisation". The earlier is a particular form of human expression<sup>69</sup> contributing fundamentally to the existence of the "organisation". This is a continuous process; of which senior managers are an integral part, however cannot control it.

The process of the action net as a set of meanings constructed and negotiated in social interaction<sup>70</sup> implies that the social reality of time and space inherent to the action net is continuously created, recreated and changed, and thus is an "Is" culture.

In accordance with Smirchich's view of organisational culture as a root metaphor, I believe this perspective a significant contribution to supporting the earlier named "Brainscapes".

"When culture is a root metaphor, the researcher's attention shifts from concerns about what do organizations accomplish

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<sup>68</sup> Based on McKinsey's 7-S framework

<sup>69</sup> Smirchich 1983:353 in Jimenez 2007:269

<sup>70</sup> Garsten 1991:5

and how may they accomplish it more efficiently, to how is organization accomplished and what does it mean to be organized”<sup>71</sup>

“Brainscapes” is also an expression of deterritorialised “Is”-culture, a combination easily claimed to be an oxymoron. Yet, is idiosyncratic for this project. When “Is”-culture is something an organization *is*; describing the negotiated and shared meaning that emerge from social interaction, hence imported by individual actants, then it is organised and re-organised by actants in the role of footloose cosmopolitans<sup>72</sup> creating and re-creating new space beyond prescribed territorial boundaries. This allowing temporal and spacial space “in between” to giving ground for newness altogether.

If senior management allowed organisational culture “to breathe” more of rather than treating it as prescribed artefact, then “brainscapes” would become more self-generative<sup>73</sup>.

Flows and ruptures occur at both micro-level, presented as data from participant observation, and macro-level, that are second order findings<sup>74</sup>, namely the re-interpretation from micro-level outcome. At micro-level actants experience the impact on a daily basis on their every-day doing. In the role of footloose cosmopolitan, it disconnects them to having access to a widely accepted work-life-balance, at macro-level it may include the flow of meaning between greater locations and new cultural approaches, often unintended such as the development of an IS culture on company buses shipping people back and for.

Ruptures are at many ends at the very macro level between the globalised elite contributing the reproduction of there very order anew on

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<sup>71</sup> Smirchich 1983:353 in Jimenez 2007:269

<sup>72</sup> Hannerz 2003:104

<sup>73</sup> Necessary prerequisites such as authentic leadership and a favourable environment are not discussed here as it is beyond the scope of the topic.

<sup>74</sup> Kriwet 1997:36

a daily basis, and individuals viewing aircrafts and glittering mini-buses from afar having limited or no access to it; and at micro-level, within families between those who are on the move and those who stay back home.

Interdependency of flows and ruptures explicitly illustrated by example of prayer breaks, where at project level praying was often perceived as rupture and only at macro-level prayers may be synonym for flow, when in the course of praying one connects with the universe and interconnects with all other prayers in the same time zone.

Interconnectedness goes beyond of time and space. It is located in the supra-national, which is beyond nation-state boundaries with usual tangible properties such as passports, visas, metal frames, CCTV cameras, and security passes. The supranational is less tangible, far fuzzier, defined and redefined continuously as illustrated by the means of financial contribution delivered by the globalised elite, of which actants are largely representative.

Clearly, all of the presented is the outcome of some anthropological research in the specialist area of business anthropology. Micro- and macro-level findings are based on participant observation with the usual challenges and ethical issues inherent to this approach.

This example plus recent publications from both, anthropology and non-anthropological disciplines debating the current and the future qualities of globalisation trigger the question what are the unique knowledge contributions from anthropology, possibly leading to a necessary strategy formulation on "Quo vadis anthropology".

## 2. ANTHROPOLOGY AS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Based on this study I will illustrate some implications as well as current and future challenges for our discipline.

### 2.1. FROM FOOTLOOSE COSMOPOLITAN TO “DISCIPLINE COSMOPOLITAN”

In the course of illustrating global interconnectedness based on one large and complex project, it becomes transparent that the social qualities of globalisation require the researcher to dwell on a broad spectrum of disciplines utilising versatile skills and competencies.

The knowledge of theoretical frameworks built around the notion of culture, the in-depth understanding of culture embedded in its context, the competent handling of the methodological tool box– all these are key when researching the social qualities of globalisation and thus become a strong competitive advantage for the anthropological discipline.

“Anthropology does have unique gifts to bring to business. We have better ways to talk about the super organic than do other disciplines. Whether culture exists or not, people do think it does. Managing the intended and unintended consequences of this perception can be a critical force in the lives of corporations and in the well-being of their members.”<sup>75</sup>

Aguilera, an organisational anthropologist in his statement clearly fixes the benefits of the discipline to organisational boundaries. I would widen this tight concept and claim it to be beneficial for the implications of globalisation at large. By stating this, it is necessary to mirror this

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<sup>75</sup> Aguilera 1996:741

broader perspective by not fixing and defending the boundaries of the discipline, but actively incorporating others, helpful and necessary for research. In the earlier case, this would be for example migration, finance, and management.

Regardless if researching a specific community or key aspects of globalisation the call goes for cross-fertilisation from different disciplines, beyond the social sciences. The interconnectedness displayed in the current piece of macroethnology needs to be mirrored in the discipline, apparently having an effect on necessary competencies and skills displayed by the discipline's representatives.

## 2.2. A BIT MORE CULTURE

Staying with business anthropology for a moment, it may be in line with the professional scope of anthropologists to work with clients into the direction of "culturing" the business, meaning to put a stronger emphasis on culture as such, in both within and beyond organisational boundaries.

Briefly summarising the earlier and more detailed elaboration of the research, there seem to be two rather contrasting ends of a dichotomy, that are a) culture as a functional instrument, also known as "Has"-culture, usually prescribed by senior management, ideally designed for achieving better performance or b) culture as a root metaphor, also known as "Is"-culture, which based on interaction individuals bring into an organisation.

Moving from the end of functional instrument towards "more culture" will allow individuals and teams to build on their own cultural make-up<sup>76</sup>. Only then, individuals can fully deploy their skills and competencies<sup>77</sup>. In return, this provides the ground for enjoying diversity and herewith

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<sup>76</sup> Hannerz 1996:58

<sup>77</sup> This presupposes that people are being treated equitably meaning recognising cultural variety. Whereas treating people equally means ignoring variety.

developing coping strategies for new situations. Encounters in these diverse settings, most likely accompanied by some friction, will provoke new understanding, cultural approaches to synthesise.

“Because of our methods, theoretical constructs, and world view, I believe that we can help people make better decisions and create better business organizations. An anthropologically informed workforce will make better companies, but being allowed to teach them anthropology depends on the initial contributions we make in their language.”<sup>78</sup>

These methods can be beneficial but tend to be time- and resource-consuming. For this reason, it can be difficult for decision-makers to commit to using these methods and buying in more stakeholders. A clearly defined and spelled out cost-benefit analysis will help senior executives support initiatives.

### 2.2.1. CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY

Certainly, anthropology has made some important contributions to society. A wider audience can benefit from our contribution only when anthropology’s expert knowledge is made available.

Qualitative research methods and specifically participant observation allow the researcher insights from within the context, which is an integral part of converting new tacit knowledge through shared experience<sup>79</sup>.

Externalisation of tacit knowledge acquired by the means of the often time-consuming participant observation method is usually made explicit by publishing articles and books. Knowledge is crystallised, however seems to be presented within the context where it happens. Hardly ever, one will find a combination with other disciplines let aside the attempt to transfer findings to other parts of society in order to elicit some learning.

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<sup>78</sup> Aguilera 1996:741

<sup>79</sup> Nonaka, Toyama, Konno in Little, Quintas, and Ray 2002:44

Positioning the discipline to address a wider audience and thus, impacting societal decision-makers will require discipline representatives to package findings in a more customer-friendly way by simultaneously keeping up the academic standard and adhering to the discipline's inherent ethical guidelines.

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