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**New Geographies of Global Managerial Practice:
The Case of Business Services**

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Abstract

Economic globalization is radically transforming the ways in which firms in all sectors organize themselves and operate in the global economy, not only in terms of the physical locations of offices and employees, but also with respect to organizational form, corporate strategy and the way in which work itself is undertaken. Managerial professionals are thus at the forefront of a major transformation of the way in which key wealth generating activity is now taking place in the global economy. However, this paper will argue that the management literature has been relatively slow to engage with these transformations, tending to remain focused on conventional concepts of the geographic space occupied by firms and their employees. In order to develop this proposition, the paper provides a critical overview of the key transformations of global managerial practice that are developing in the contemporary global economy. It draws on more than a decade of research into transnational business service firms in banking, management consultancy, legal services, accountancy and advertising. It examines how the working practices of international managerial professionals have responded and adapted to increasingly interconnected global markets for their services, which has been accompanied by a radical transformation and internationalisation of their working practices. In particular, it examines how the practices of corporate control and the need for a common global corporate culture are bound into new and dynamic corporate geographies that present significant challenges for existing place-focused concepts of global corporate operation.

Keywords: ‘global corporation’; ‘management practices’; ‘global managers’; ‘business services’; ‘management geography’; ‘corporate control’; ‘global corporate culture’

1) Introduction

In recent decades economic globalization has radically transformed the ways in which firms in all sectors organize themselves and operate in the global economy (Dunning 1993; Morgan *et al* 2001; Dicken 2007). Since the 1980s in particular there has been a recognition within a range of social science disciplines – notably management and business studies, economic geography and organizational sociology – that firms have been subject to a wide set of transformations linked to the intertwined transnationalization - amongst other things - of their organizational form, operations, working practices and markets (c.f. Ashkensas *et al* 1995; Bartlett & Ghosal 1998; Galbraith 2000). Whilst earlier understandings of firm internationalization thus focused on a rather narrower concepts of the multinationalization through the setting up of productive facilities in multiple countries or the acquisition of existing national champions (Cohen *et al* 1979; Held *et al* 1999; Morgan 2001), the nature of the transnationalization of corporate activity has shifted in new and complex ways in the last fifteen years that social scientists have struggled to keep up with (Jones 2009). This has resulted in widespread debate about the respective validity of (often) competing concepts of multinational, transnational or global corporations (Doremus *et al* 1998; Dicken 2003; Jones 2005) and a growing recognition of the empirical and theoretical difficulty in effectively understanding the complexity of corporate forms and activities in the contemporary global economy. Existing theories of the multinationalization of firms have thus been increasingly challenged by complex forms of ‘corporate globalization’ as, for example, firms restructure towards global organizational forms or implement sophisticated global production networks (GPNs) (Davidson & De La Torre 1989; Berggren 1996; Nohria & Ghosal 1997; Coe *et al* 2004; Dicken 2007).

However, across the social sciences – and in economic geography in particular - a small but growing ‘socioeconomic’ literature has begun to respond to the complexity of corporate globalization processes by examining the significance of social relations, intra and inter-firm social networks and sociocultural practices in global economic activity (Thrift 1997; 2000; Taylor 2000; Yeung 2002; Jones 2005; Grabher & Ibert 2006). One of the key arguments emerging from this literature is that corporate globalization is producing both new kinds of global managers (Faulconbridge & Muzio 2009a) and new geographies of global managerial practice (De la Torre *et al* 2000; Yeung 2005b; Palmer & O’Kane 2007; Faulconbridge & Muzio 2009b). This represents the entry point for this paper. Its key proposition is that the emergence of both ‘global managers’ and ‘global managerial practices’ corresponds to a crucial transformation in contemporary global economy which much of the management literature has been relatively slow to engage with. Drawing on a small but growing ‘management geography’ literature (Gertler 2003; Yeung 2005b; Jones 2005; Gluckler 2005; Hall 2008; Comunian 2009; Faulconbridge & Muzio 2009a), it argues for an empirical and theoretical approach towards corporate globalization that seeks to understand the transnationalization of firms as a process that goes beyond the establishment of global production or office networks, or the transnational mobility of employees. Rather, it argues that corporate globalization is leading to a sea-change in how firms are managed at the global-scale. This equates to a whole range of complex logistical, intercultural and technological transformations that blur boundaries between firms, national economic spaces and markets. Central to these transformations are the activities of global managerial professionals who represent the

key actors in the propagation of new forms of ‘corporate globality’ (c.f. Jones 2005). These global managers are thus increasingly at the forefront of principle wealth generating activities undertaken by firms in the contemporary global economy.

These arguments have a series of further implications for social scientific thinking about firm transnationalization. The paper contends that in order to effectively conceptualise the nature of contemporary firm transnationalization, a management geography approach – by foregrounding new geographies of global managerial practice - provides scope to generate a better understanding of how firms become successful and competitive at the transnational scale than existing approaches currently provide for. It does so by engaging with the complex set of managerial practices that enable ever larger and geographically dispersed transnational firms to operate effectively. In this respect, it therefore proposes a framework that seeks to conceptualizes global managerial practices around a four dimensions – power and control, client business acquisition and retention, knowledge management and innovation, and organizational culture and coherence. In particular, it examines how the practices of around corporate control and organizational culture / coherence are bound into new and dynamic corporate geographies that present significant challenges for existing place-focused concepts of global corporate operation. The paper illustrates the utility of such approach in presenting research into transnational business service firms in a number of different industries.

The rest of the paper develops these arguments in a series of stages. In the next section, it provides a critical overview of the key transformations associated with corporate globalization that are provide the context for the emergence of new forms of managerial practice in the contemporary global economy. The key contention is that contemporary economic globalization has produced a new form of global management in the world’s largest transnational firms, and that this presents a series of new and unresolved challenges for corporate operation. The third section then moves on to use a ‘management geography’ approach to develop a framework for better theorizing the nature of global managerial practice in contemporary transnational firms. The utility of this approach is then elaborated upon in the fourth section which considers the significance of global managerial practices around corporate control and culture in the transnationalization of business service firms over the last twenty years. To do so, it draws on more than a decade of research into the globalization of a range of business service industries including investment banking, management consultancy, legal services, accountancy and advertising. Finally, the paper ends by drawing together a series of concluding arguments in relation to how future research into corporate globalization can benefit from a management geography perspective that foregrounds global managerial practices as a key factor in the development of global economic activity.

2) Corporate Globalization: The Context of Developing Global Managerial Practices

Debates about the internationalization or transnationalization of firm go back to the 1960s and earlier (Cohen *et al* 1979; Bartlett & Ghosal 1998; Held *et al* 1999; Dicken 2007). However, over the last two decades the ongoing development of an increasingly interconnected global economy has produced a series of more specific arguments in the social sciences about how large firms are becoming more globalized (Morgan *et al* 2001; Dicken 2007). Earlier theoretical propositions about growth in number and size of firms

with multinational operations (MNCs) have been superseded by a debate about the degree to which firms have become fully transnationalized or even ‘truly global’ corporations (Doremus *et al* 1998; Dicken 2003; Jones 2005). Disagreements about how ‘corporate globality’ might be defined notwithstanding (Morrison *et al* 1991; Mourdoukoutas 1999; Preston & Young 2002), management theorists, economic geographers and other social scientists have become increasingly interested in processes of *organizational globalization* that have been occurring in large firms in all sectors of the economy (Bartlett & Ghosal 1998; Galbraith 2000; Jones 2005; 2009). In this respect, a growing literature has thus consolidated the argument that economic globalization at the corporate level is producing radical changes in the nature of the world’s largest firms (Dicken 2007; Yeung 2009). What is also clear from studies of firms in many different industries is that organizational globalization in these firms – what can be termed *corporate globalization* – is neither a uniform nor unproblematic process and that strategies and approaches for achieving a degree of corporate globality vary enormously between firms within and across industries (Jones 2003; Palmer & O’Kane 2007; Faulconbridge & Muzio 2009a). Furthermore, and central to the arguments of this chapter, is that the emergence (or otherwise) of corporate globality (and the degree to which it is successful) is heavily dependent on the key role of senior managers and a range of globalized working practices (Kipping 1999; Gluckler & Armbruster 2003; Gluckler 2005; Jones 2007; 2008; Faulconbridge 2008; Hall 2006; 2008). Before I considering these practices in depth, it is first necessary to examine at least two interrelated dimensions to wider corporate globalization that form the context in which global managerial practices have developed in recent decades.

2.1 The Construction of Globalized Firms

Corporate globalization is most obviously manifest in the emergence of organizations that resemble ‘global firms’ in the contemporary world economy. In broad terms, there remains no consensus in the social sciences on what corresponds to a ‘multinational’ as opposed to either a ‘transnational’ or ‘global corporation’ (Bagchi Sen & Sen 1997; Doremus *et al* 1998; Dicken 2003). Such a linear ‘scaling up’ corresponded to a territorial based notion of national firms ‘internationalizing’, and then operating increasingly across and between national economies rather than operating multiple discreet productive facilities in more and more countries (Jones 2005). As Dicken (2007) emphasizes the development of many actual large firms does not well fit any sequential series of ideal-type models. Not all firms fit all (or in fact any) of the criteria around territorially conceived ideas of a transition from ‘national’ to ‘transnational’ operations, and the possible criteria by which corporate globality can be assessed extends beyond those issues (Jones 2005; 2007).

However, several elements of firm-level globalization are important in forming the context for the transformation of managerial practices. Firstly, and perhaps most significant, is ongoing organizational restructuring towards ‘corporate globality’. This involves the formation of business organizations that operate as a coherent single unit across the globe, rather than being divided up into smaller geographically-divided sub-units – generally on a national or regional basis. This kind of divisional restructuring is also often accompanied by a concomitant reorganisation of financial structures within these firms (Ashkensas *et al* 1995; Roberts 1998; Jones 2003). These forms of

restructuring are increasingly being used as a definitional basis for the concept of the 'global corporation' within a growing body of management literature (e.g. Wortzel & Wortzel 1997; Carrel *et al* 2000) and writings amongst organizational sociologists (e.g. Davidson & De la Torre 1989; Mourdoukoutas 1999). Organizational restructuring achieves greater globality by uncoupling (as much as possible) functional aspects of firms' form to geographical units (Ashkensas *et al* 1995; Galbraith 2000). For example, this represents a dismantling of multiple back-office divisions in every country or region where a TNC operates, and the centralization of such functions at specific 'global' locations serving a firm on the planetary scale. In that sense, 'organizational globalization' is about the reconstruction of internal divisions and departments that focus on the global operational scale rather than being delimited (and often replicated) in multiple countries (Pauly & Reich 1997; De La Torre *et al* 2000; Morgan *et al* 2001).

A second aspect to firm-level globalization is the way in which firms in all sectors are increasingly reorganising themselves so they can be better integrated into globalized markets. Whilst firms have long been involved in international markets through trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) in overseas productive operations (Held *et al* 1999; Dicken 2007), in recent decades the growth in size and extent to the operations of transnational firms has deepened and become significantly more complex. For example, in manufacturing TNCs the evolution of increasingly complex global production networks (GPNs), the development of the 'global factory', global sub-contracting and out-sourcing (Malmberg 2003; Coe *et al* 2004; Dicken 2007) are all bound into strategies for entering new national markets, improving competitiveness against global competitors and creating more efficient global-scale production systems. Similarly, firms in service industries are equally competing increasingly in a global marketplace and reconfiguring their operations to enable them to do so (Lewis 1999; Bryson *et al* 2005; Gluckler 2005; Pain 2008).

Clearly, in reality there is both enormous diversity between firms and industries in the nature of corporate structures and market integration, as well as substantial constraints as to how far internal restructuring can be carried (Bartlett & Ghosal 1998; Preston & Young 2002) – for example, different countries will still require specific 'national-level' differences on regulatory or legal grounds. Nevertheless, what is also clear is that to implement and subsequently maintain both organizational transformation and orientation to globalized markets requires a radical transformation in the working practices of managers in these firms. Where managers previously held responsibility for geographically-defined organizational divisions, managerial roles now cover functional components of firms that often cover multiple national economic spaces. The running and operation of new globalized firms thus has led to the reconfiguration of manager responsibilities and consequently the kinds of practices their roles require them to undertake (Gertler 2004; Depner & Bathelt 2005; Jones 2007; Faulconbridge 2008; Faulconbridge & Muzio 2009b).

2.2 *New Firms of Globalized Work*

Bound into the transformation of the internal organizational architecture of firms as they globalization, corporate globalization is also producing new kinds of work in the global economy. The proposition here is that work itself is becoming globalized as a form of practice – what I term 'global work' (c.f. Jones 2008) – and that this represents a new an

important transformation linked to the wider globalization of economy and society. In relation to the development of global managerial practices, five major transformations in the nature of work are significant. Firstly, there are the transformations to the associations that constitute work as a set of social practices in the contemporary world. Work at the scale of the individual is becoming bound into distanced sets of relationships (Giddens 1990; Tomlinson 1999; Beck 2002) that are breaking down the conventional and existing conceptions of jobs, firms and labour markets. Work is becoming spatially and temporally reconstituted as a consequence of various globalization processes which means there is a need to reconsider how it is theorized as an activity. In essence, this means developing a theoretical understanding of how work is a multiply-distanced form of social practice that is shaped by and also shapes distant entities. Work is generally understood as being undertaken by an individual (the worker) in a specific place (the workplace). Instead, in the contemporary global economy the agency to affect change by workers (the activity of work) is increasingly constituted through a network of relationships that ‘perforate’ scales (Amin 2002), and also how the place/ space in which work occurs as an activity (increasingly) exceeds a given physical location. Physical places of work are thus only one space in which work is being ‘done’ in the contemporary world, and for many forms of work, an increasingly less significant one. Work is occurring in, for example, social, technological, informational spaces that have a very different form to physical workplaces. Nowhere is this more evident than in the organizational spaces of globalizing firms (Yeung 1998; Jones 2008; 2009)

Second, and following on, is the scalar transformation in the embodied practices which people undertake when they ‘do’ work. Workplaces need to be reconceptualised as existing across multiple spatialities, and many forms of work are also involving growing physical mobility of the workers themselves. In many industrial sectors, a growing proportion of the labour force is undertaking new forms of work mobility including substantial increases in work-related travel and long-term working away from their home locality. International business managers travelling for transnational firms are the most obvious example, but in fact they represent only a small proportion of workers who are undertaking new forms of mobility associated with globalization across a diverse range of sectors¹. Global work is also producing shifts in work-related personal movements on a daily basis in terms of commuting, home-working and travel to/from new spaces for work activities (Dale & Burrell 2008; Millar & Salt 2008; Faulconbridge & Beaverstock 2008; Beaverstock *et al* 2010).

Third, the experience of doing work is changing. In other words, not only does work exceed physical workplaces and workers are more mobile, but what workers are *doing* is also changing and represents a different form of spatialised experience as a consequence of globalization. Globalization is not only an ‘external’ factor that produces economic pressures on firms to change their activities in response to global markets, competition and global supply chains etc (Sadler 1997; Coe *et al* 2004; Dicken 2007) but is bound up in the way in which working practices have also been transformed by the globalization of economic activity. What a worker *does* on a day-to-day basis, for example, is being shaped by a variety of influences that increasingly span the global scale. Shift times, managerial relationships and organizational crises in distant places all

¹ For example, see Ehrenreich’s (2002) work on nannies and sex workers or Sampson & Schroeder (2006) on marine crew.

impact on the minutiae and everyday details of working experience in ways that have not been the subject of theoretical attention (Elger & Smith 2005).

Fourth, the nature of the power relations within which both workers as social actors and also jobs as abstract organizational tasks are entangled is being transformed by globalization. Increasing proportions of workers in both the developed and developing worlds are employed by transnational corporations whose management and ownership is organized at the global scale (Dicken 2007). This is producing new and complex sets of power relations in the corporate workplace. Workers in many industrial sectors are no longer accountable to managers in the same geographical locations as they are (Harvey, M. *et al* 2000; Morgan 2001; Jones 2002). Furthermore, even where lines of control are still apparently similar to the existing conception of them occurring relatively discreetly within workplaces, power and control over workers is now increasingly bound into multi-scalar and complex inter- and intra-organizational sets of relations. The increasingly complex geography of corporate ownership has also contributed to a transformation of power relationships between the worker and the employer. More and more workers are thus bound into sets of power relations that cannot simply be theorized within a specific location.

Fifth, the nature of *workplaces* themselves is being transformed. Whilst people always obviously undertake work in given physical place at a certain time, the nature of their work needs to be understood as existing across a variety of spaces and through an actor-network which includes non-human elements. Workplaces can no longer be adequately defined as discreet physical spaces (factories, offices), and in many globalizing industries the actual physical space in which work is undertaken has become increasingly insignificant in terms of affecting the outcome of working practices (c.f. Debrah & Smith 2002; Taylor & Bain 2005). A globalization of work therefore has entailed enrolment of multiple contexts in the constitution of working practices themselves itself. These include virtual, organizational and social spaces that shape the outcomes produced by work practices (c.f. Dale & Burrell 2008).

3) Conceptualising the Geographies of Managerial Practice

The processes of corporate globalization discussed so far have an enormous range of implications for different industries, firms and workers in the global economy but the focus of this paper is on an issue that has received only very limited attention to date: how corporate globalization is transforming managerial practices within firms. This specific concern draws on an identifiable shift in the interests of many economic geographers towards a concern with the concept of an economic practice itself. Economic geographical thinking about practices has concerned itself with is diverse, the concept of economic practices have emerged as a central thread in the subdiscipline and in particular in work that falls within the management geography category (Yeung 2002; Ettlinger 2003; Jones 2005; Hall 2008; Communian 2008; Faulconbridge & Muzzio 2009b). Economic geographers have utilized a broad definition of economic practices corresponding to ‘stabilized, routinized, or improvised social actions that constitute and reproduce economic space’ (Jones & Murphy 2010a; 2010b). The focus is on the practices through and within which economic actors and industrial communities embed knowledge, organize production activities and interpret and derive meaning from the world (*ibid*). Furthermore, of particular concern for economic geographers has been the

way in which corporate globalization develops a complex set of needs and constraints around physical co-presence for corporate employees, and how the need for face-to-face interaction is balanced by other technological mediated economic practices in the globalizing world economy (Gertler 2003; 2004; Storper & Venables 2004; Jones 2007). A small management geography literature has thus begun to apply this perspective to managerial practices (Ettlinger 2003; Gluckler 2005; Grabher & Ibert 2006; Hall 2008; Faulconbridge & Muzio 2009b) in a way quite different to the dominant approach deployed within management studies that tends to theorise firm management with meso-level concepts (for example, management processes and structures) that operate within the existing (but relatively simplistic) territorial-based models of firm form and internationalization (c.f. Jones 2003; Dicken & Malmberg 2001; Dicken 2007). The key argument therefore is that developing a management geography approach develops a distinctly geographical theoretical cut at understanding how the key economic practices of managers within large transnational firms are central to ongoing processes of corporate globalization and also the success or otherwise of transnationalizing firms in all sectors of the global economy. By shifting the empirical and theoretical emphasis onto individual and collective practices by managers within and between firms, the aim is to develop more effective conceptualization of what leads to corporate growth, competitiveness and innovation in the contemporary globalised era.

The paper will shortly turn to examine in some depth the utility of such an approach in understanding the recent and radical changes occurring in transnational business service firms but before I do this, I want using a management geography perspective to outline a theoretical framework for thinking about the nature of global managerial practices. In this respect, I suggest that at least four different dimensions to these practices need to be conceptualized in order to capture the nature and role of managers in large transnational firms in the contemporary global economy. The significance of each of these generic dimensions to managerial practice will of course vary between firms and sectors, but the wider contention is that these attributes of practice are amongst the most significant in shaping corporate globalization as a wider phenomenon.

The first and perhaps most obvious dimension of global managerial practice concerns power and control within transnational firms. The increasing transnationalization of corporate form requires considerable work on the part of key senior managers within firms in order for firm operations scattered across many physical locations at the planetary scale to be coordinated effectively. Furthermore, as transnational firm have become much larger than firms in any previous period (and indeed organizations more generally), the challenges and complexities faced by senior management in these firms are novel. Corporate globality creates a series of limitations on the capacity of senior managers to wield control over corporate activities for a range of reasons: the friction of distance, lack of co-presence with employees under management or cultural differences in subsidiary firms in multiple countries. Conceptualising the specific nature how control is orchestrated, how managerial power is wielded and the spatiality of the social interactions that surround these activities thus requires an understanding of the multiple practices undertaken by managers and how these are organized and coordinated at the global scale.

Second, global managerial practices are in many cases central for many transnational firms in the processes by which they both acquire and retain business as well as entering new markets. Obviously the degree to which different forms of managerial practice are important in the way firms sell their products varies enormously between different industries, but what is important as firms transnationalise their businesses is the nature of practices bound up in interpersonal and social networks at the global scale that lead to firms 'doing' business. For a Chinese manufacturing firm, for example, this may be about the practice senior managers are involved with amongst actors in supply chains, distributions networks and intermediary operations in Europe or North America. In contrast, for a North American business service firm the nature of interpersonal relations and practices senior managers engage in with key individuals in client firms is crucial (Jones 2003; 2008; Faulconbridge 2006). Yet in both cases, corporate globalization means that senior managers are embroiled in a range practices that constitute the key activities for the firm to undertake business.

The third dimension to global managerial practices that need to be conceptualized are those surrounding knowledge and innovation within and between firms. As the global economy has become more informational and wealth generation bound into innovation and creativity (Brown & Duguid 1991; Wenger 1998; Nonaka & Teece 2001), senior managers are increasingly involved in a range of activities that affect the capacity of transnational firms to manage knowledge and foster innovation at the global scale (Coe & Bunnell 2003; Gertler 2003; Faulconbridge 2006). Whilst clearly, and as will be discussed shortly, knowledge and innovation related managerial practices are at the heart of many business service firms, such practices are also important in firms in all sectors. Understanding how managerial practices leads to more or less effective forms of knowledge management and innovative outcomes in increasingly transnational firm is thus a potentially powerful explanatory tool in better theorizing corporate operation and development.

Finally, a fourth dimension to global managerial practices that need to be conceptualised concern those linked to the development of global corporate culture and firm organizational coherence. The transnationalization of firms requires an increasing level of both infrastructure and working practice by employees to maintain organizational coherence at the global scale (c.f. Morgan, G 2001), with the development of a common corporate culture shaping employee behavior seen as an important aspect of maintaining coherence. Senior managers are involved in a range of practices that seek to foster certain elements of global corporate culture and produce greater organizational coherence as a consequence. The degree to which these practices are successful potentially represents an important contributor ultimately to the degree to which achieved corporate globality is achieved, and thus whether firms manage to successfully transnationalise their operations. Again, the specific nature of managerial practices enrolled in the development and maintenance of corporate coherence varies between firms and the nature of industries, but in generic terms it represents an increasingly key function of managers in transnational firms.

4) Global Managerial Practices in Business Services

Having outlined a fourfold framework for thinking about the significance of global managerial practices in the contemporary transnationalising firms, I now want to

elaborate on its utility by presenting an overview of research into the nature and significance of emerging global managerial practices in key sector of the contemporary economy: business services. Over the last couple of decades, research has indicated that in common with other industries, business service industries have become increasingly globalized. In general terms, since the late 1980s firms in investment banking, management consultancy, insurance, legal services, advertising and, accountancy have begun to move out of national-based markets and operations to transnational ones (Enderwick 1989; Aharoni 1993; Daniels 1993; Lewis 1999). This process has been a progressive and uneven one, varying between both different business service industries and national economies (Bryson *et al* 2004; Jones 2007; Pain 2008). However, the major drivers behind this shift are at least threefold.

Firstly, as TNCs have developed in all industry sectors, business activity has escaped national economies and moved into new markets at the global scale (Dicken 2007). TNCs represent the major clients (i.e. the market) for business services have followed their market and transnationalized their activity (Bryson *et al* 2004). In this respect, business service firms have had to respond to the needs of their clients for global-scale services (Majkgard & Sharma 1998; Nachum 1999; Strom & Mattson 2005; 2006). Second, within many business service sectors such as investment banking, the globalization of markets has also been accompanied by the development of larger transnational service firms and a concomitant greater degree of corporate globality (Jones 2003; Faulconbridge & Muzio 2009a). Organic growth and acquisition of overseas firms has produced a growing number of business service firms that are themselves transnational. These service TNCs are at the forefront of the production, distribution and consumption of services in the global economy (Bryson *et al* 2004). Clearly this is entwined with the globalization of markets for these services in a complex ways (Roberts 1998; Warf 2001; Miozzo & Miles 2002). Third, many business service firms are embedded in economic globalization as key actors who have developed informational products whose purpose is to facilitate the globalization of markets and firms in other sectors (Roberts 2006). This driver varies between different industries but certainly investment banking and management consultancy are heavily involved in providing advisory services to clients firms on how to transnationalise their operations and do business in markets at the global-scale. An important component of much professional business service advice in a range of sub-sectors is thus concerned with helping other firms develop, for example, effective *corporate globality* (in spheres such as operations, ICT, human resources and information management) as they transnationalise which is essential for them to compete effectively at the global-scale (c.f. Jones 2005).

Given the context of wider corporate globalization in business service industries, I now draw on a body of research data collected over the last decade that considers how two specific dimensions to globalizing managerial practices have emerged in new geographical configurations. Using the framework outlined in the first part of this paper, I do this by presenting elements of three different research projects undertaken between 1999 and 2009 that provided insight into the evolving nature of global managerial practice in investment banking, management and strategy consultancy, legal services, advertising, architecture, accountancy and information technology consultancy. The first of these projects (1999-2002) examined transnational working practices in the investment banking and management / strategy consultancy industries for forms located in leading

global cities (London, New York and Tokyo). As well as secondary data sources from firms, it comprised depth interviews with over 80 senior managers in banks and consultancy firms. The second project examined the same issues in legal services firms based in the City of London (2003-6) involving interviews (around 35) with senior partners and human resources directors in UK and European firms. The third body of data draws on projects that has examined transnational business service industry amongst small and large firms in lower tier city regions in the UK economy (for example, Manchester, Birmingham and Belfast), using both secondary data and depth interviews with senior managers conducted primarily in two periods: 2001-3 and 2007-9.

Clearly significant differences in managerial practices exists between firms in these industries, and the nature of industry and corporate globalization has evolved over the decade when these project were undertaken, but my proposition is that a series of common dimensions to practice are evident.

4.1 Global Practices of Control in Transnational Services Firms

When I joined [name of Bank], it was only a couple of thousand people in a dozen countries - that was eight years ago. Now we have over eight thousand in something like seventy-five locations across forty different countries.

(Director, Human Resources, UK Investment Bank, London)

The research I have undertaken over the last decade suggests that the kind of corporate globalization described in the extract above is producing a dramatic reconfiguration of the way in which managerial power is exercised, implemented and distributed in business services. Global managers are increasingly bound into a series of practices centred around tackling the (increasingly) difficult challenge in running transnational business service firms. I want to make three arguments based on research into a number of industries.

The first is that the practices of strategic and managerial power in these transnational service firms are enacted by a global network of stakeholder managers, rather than being simple acts undertaken by small number of specific senior managers in a head office. Practices of strategic control are spread through many business service firms in a way which does not always necessitate the 'centre' being heavily involved in individual business decisions. Senior managers located in head offices do, of course, have enormous potential power but this power is normally diffused through the transnational management hierarchy. For example, in investment banks and management consultancy firms, 'global corporate strategy' was set by (beneath Board level) 'global management committees' (c.f. Jones 2002):

Every year, a budget is put together, which is reviewed by the Management Committee...but at a strategic level, that management committee will talk about various decisions, but in the business management perspective it is decentralised down to the front-line products and the geographies.

(Managing Director, Equities and New Issues, German investment bank, London)

We have a group of Partners in each of the major sectors of the business who meet regularly to talk about where that part of the business is going...and how successful this has been...erm...and they feed ideas back to other Partners who are courting new business. So our general strategy is informed by these meetings between the people close to the business...
(Senior Partner, US Consultancy firm, New York)

In this sense, financial power is negotiated and wielded by senior management from a centralized perspective. Yet, as this Director explains, the market context of investment banking is such that there is no written strategy for the company. Global corporate strategy is a negotiated and fluid phenomenon that emerges from across a transnational network of managers at different levels in the corporate hierarchy:

So global strategy is all very well, but it's really the guys with their ears to the ground who know what you should be doing. Certainly in a global firm, I can't know how the Japanese market is going medium term - or not more than partially, any case. I'd need so-and-so who sits in Tokyo... and he can certainly change strategy, yes. So it's a two way thing to some extent...
(Director, Capital Markets, Swiss Investment Bank, London)

Individual Partners and even MCs [management consultants] who are dealing with clients, who are providing the service... they have a lot of autonomy to follow a certain line of argument or take certain decisions...Making sure that process doesn't get out of sync with what the rest of the company is doing – that's the trick.
(Senior Partner, US Management & Strategy Consultancy, Boston)

The agency's strategy is something that comes from a discussion with New York and elsewhere...so yes, it is not dictated from here...you need a close sense of what is going on in other markets to make those kind of [strategic] decisions...
(Partner, UK Advertising Agency, London)

The managerial practices that constitute strategic power in these firms are, therefore, not simply located in head offices or specific places, but rather demonstrate a complex geographic form through a network of managerial actors. One Managing Director explained it in this way:

Essentially individual centres act very much on their own initiative. We encourage quite a high degree of autonomy in the different centres, encouraging local management to use their local skills optimally. And that's proved very successful... it requires a good degree of understanding and co-operation between the global management team. In fact, philosophically I think the company is quite keen not to create rigid lines of responsibility amongst that team...

(Managing Director, Global Head of Money Markets, American Investment Bank, London / Paris)

Senior managers who are often based in head offices are the people who make a decision, but there is thus a considerable involvement in the practices of corporate control by junior managers who are engaged in business activity. In that sense, contrary to the image of centralised power practiced in transnational head offices, strategic power is diffused through a series of management practices undertaken by a range of managers across a firm's global operation.

Second, where senior managers do exercise 'centralized' power in transnational business service firms, it tends to be at the 'global scale'. They may not directly intervene in the day-to-day running of businesses by line managers in a given country or region, but their interventive power becomes apparent at the level of transnational corporate strategy:

Our world-wide managing director... may get involved to arbitrate or because he sees something in any particular country which that particular country cannot see because he has the overview. There was a situation last month like that... So he was able to add value, to bring global perspective and as a result, we have put additional resources onto that.

(Managing Partner, American Management Consultancy Firm, Chicago)

"No, no-one makes a major decision over the phone. Obviously... Senior Partners meet regularly as you might expect, and when that refers to what we are doing overseas, then that means travelling to meet the local Partner... in reality though there has to be a degree of trust, these guys [Local Partners] necessarily have a fair amount of autonomy"

[Senior Partner, Law Firm, London]

The key element of 'central' power practices is the role of 'transnational overview'. This senior manager has power in terms of dictating what 'the wider picture' is beyond a given national context, and he is also the mediator who resolves conflicts that arise lower down in the managerial hierarchy.

Third, the consequence of these networked and diffuse managerial control in business service firms is that managerial practice in many business-service sectors is increasingly bound into different forms of mobility and ICT practices. Senior managers, rather than wielding power from a global city-based head office, spend an (often substantial) amount of time travelling (c.f. Jones 2010). The practice of managerial control, whilst supported by information technologies, relies heavily on direct social contact between managers at different levels:

That's really what being a senior guy is all about. I spend most of my time on business trips. On a plane somewhere to have a meeting of regional heads, or meeting the man in Sidney who's running a project we're doing at the moment in Australia. Or my counter-part in Los Angeles. You see...well, there's no IT system in the world that will change that. IT - email, video-

conferencing, teleconferencing whatever - only helps you keep up to date. A lot of decisions are never made over the phone...

(Divisional Manager, Japanese Investment Bank, New York)

Even in a relatively small firm like this there is no way with our global operations that David [Divisional Head] can take direct responsibility for what the New York or Hong Kong office are doing. We are small in North America and so you have to rely on them, but globalization [of the firm] ...it does also mean a lot of travel. Chatting on Skype is fine, but you have to go out there to really know what's going on, to get a feel for how they are doing...

(Senior Partner, UK Advertising Agency, London)

Whilst the use of ICT is bounded into the practices of control, key decisions in rely on senior managers flying out to branch office locations several times a year or more regularly than that. Command and control therefore, in these business service industries at least, is by its nature a negotiated, complex and diffuse process that arises through a network of (admittedly differently-empowered) scattered social actors. Where service-sector products are knowledge-based in this way, senior managers operating from head office locations are better understood as heading a network of people who have different inputs and a share of influence in the decision-making process.

4.2 Global Corporate Coherence and Culture

The second example of how managerial practices are being transformed as a consequence of ongoing corporate globalization in business services concerned the role that management practice plays in fostering organizational coherence in a globalized firm and generating a common global corporate culture. The two forms of global managerial practice are of course intertwined as cultural issues represent one dimension to the relations and connectivities that cohere or stick firms together as their operations become more extensive in different locations around the globe. I want again to make three arguments in respect.

First, in many business-service industries senior managers are engaging in a range of practices that aim in one way or another to engender a common sense of corporate culture amongst employees scattered across the globe. Corporate globalization in a divisional or ownership sense does not mean that business service firms become integrated transnational organisations. In business services, where the service product is informational and heavily reliant on employee behaviour, values and practices this is a key challenge for managers. In seeking 'to break free from the multinational corporate model, one of the most difficult but important barriers is 'getting all of the people in the company to think and act as one' [Senior Partner, US consultancy firm, New York]. This is especially important as corporate globalization in many business service industries being often undertaken through merger-based acquisitions of foreign competitors, this is a challenging task:

There are certainly some big tasks for us. I know from past experience that mergers are not always happy marriages, and it opens up a whole number

of issues about culture. Other companies do things differently, people have different values, they behave in different ways. Getting these two companies to blend together is not going to be easy, we know that. But it has to be the long term goal.

(Executive Director, Corporate Finance, Anglo-German Investment Bank, London)

Second, for transnational business service firms it is clear that these global managerial practices surrounding corporate culture are not just aimed at achieving a desirable goal, but are in fact essential if firms are to compete effectively in an increasingly globalized market for business services. Managers are thus increasingly involved in a range of global managerial practices whose focus is in essence on quality control in relation to the knowledge products that business service firms provide to clients. Managers in legal service firms, for example, are engaged in a variety of practices that seek to retain the high degree of behavioural consistency needed for these firms to enter new markets. For a legal service or architecture firm the only practicable way to achieve this is for a senior managers to physically base themselves in a new centre, enabling them both to develop client contact networks but also ensure that employees (whether locally recruited or not) deliver a sufficiently high quality of service to clients:

“Clearly we expect lawyers in this firm to act in a certain way...a high degree of professionalism. Law requires a high degree of trust...often we are dealing with sensitive and of course confidential issues and it is paramount that clients trust both Partners and their teams. That is true of any law firm of course, but it is true different firms have different cultures around that...we would be much more understated in our approach than an American firm, for example, and this is why we need secondments and something new trainees have to learn by experience...you can't teach it to them on a course.”

[Senior Partner, Law Firm, Hong Kong / London]

The challenge we have with our international offices is making sure the client side relationships are well managed...architecture is a lot about keeping the client happy by them understanding the constraints you are working with...so that is about culture, yes, it's a way of dealing with people and you need to be sensitive which is why we need our lead people to be clear on how we would expect things to be dealt with in those relationships...

[Chief Executive, UK Architecture / Urban Design Firm, Belfast]

Third, in a range of different business service industries a growing proportion of managerial practices are becoming concerned with developing recruitment and training strategies that develop global corporate coherence in relation to employee sense of identity, and consistent attitudes and behaviour. Senior managers are thus increasingly involved in undertaking and organising 'global' recruitment and training activities. For

example, in investment banking, management consultancy and advertising managers play a key role in attempts by firms to undertake global scale training for new recruits and other employees:

I am involved with our global recruitment...each year, every cohort goes out to Chicago to our business school where we put them through our global induction course...like going back to college really: lectures and seminars every day, role-playing exercises, as well as some basic technical and numerical skills... it's also about instilling values though... [about] exposing people to the kind of mindset and ways of doing things we want in our consultants...

(Senior Partner, American Management Consultancy, London)

Our main offices are here and in New York, although are slowly getting somewhere in Asia...and that is an issue...the way in which people work is different in the US say to here [London] but you need people to have common behaviours, deal with clients or pitch in a certain way, yes...so we make sure graduates have experience of other office environments...something I think is likely to be important in the future...

(Partner, UK Advertising Agency, London)

This kind of global training obviously entails increased mobility for employees at all levels within transnational business service firms, but managers are again heavily embroiled in these kinds of activities since it is managers who have the capacity and knowledge to communicate and instil the kinds of business behaviours and attitudes that firms need to propagate across a global office network. The research in to various business service industries over the last decade suggests that as firms in these sectors become more globalized, a greater proportion of management practice is being given over to these kind of activities:

Everybody goes to the same place - New York - for the same training; no matter where they're from in the world: London, Hong Kong, Frankfurt...that's how we do it. Part of that, of course, is to get the technical expertise, but probably more important is to build a network. And the strategy behind this is something that has become a major part of my portfolio as this organizations overseas operations get bigger and bigger
(Director of Human Resources [Board], American Investment Bank, New York)

A further aspect to managerial practices associated with global training concerns the need for in knowledge intensive business service work for employees within firms to have good internal contact networks. Corporate globalization makes it more difficult for business service employees to create and maintain these essential kinds of internal firm networks and in several business service industries considerable managerial effort is being expended in trying to address this challenge. In legal services, for example, the management of firms have developed overseas training secondment schemes to ensure

that professional employees gain experience of working practices in a range of the firm's offices in different countries, in part so that the firm coheres through internal contact networks which would not necessarily develop in a globalizing firm without deliberate managerial intervention to facilitate them.

“To be honest, these overseas secondments are really just a taster... it is about trainees learning what it is like to be in an office away from London, and how that works and the difficulties and so on...it is also good for the firm overall to have that through-flow of people who have been elsewhere. If everyone just sat here [in London] then I think there would be real problems in maintaining the sense of those offices being an integral part of the firm.”

[paraphrased] [Senior Partner, Law Firm, London]

5) Conclusions

The goal of this chapter has been to outline the proposition that management practices are being transformed in the contemporary world, and that a management geography approach that takes seriously the new and emerging geographical configuration of such practices has considerable utility in understanding the complexity of these transformations. Such an argument builds on a growing body of work within economic geography that has been concerned with relational and practice-oriented approaches towards economic activity (Yeung 2005a; Jones & Murphy 2010b), and has also begun to engage with the complex challenge of conceptualizing corporate globalization in a way that moves beyond simplistic and territorial-based models of firm internationalization (Jones 2005; Dicken 2007; Faulconbridge 2006; 2008). This chapter has therefore outlined a conceptual framework for theorizing new forms of global managerial practice and how they relate to the ongoing evolution of global corporate form and transnational business activity.

However, this framework for understanding the emerging nature of corporate globality opens up a series of further issues. New transnational organizational forms and working practices correspond to two dimensions by which corporate globality might be assessed, but the degree to which firms have become globalized is a more complex and uneven issue. The research discussed considers the aspects of corporate form and managerial practice that provide evidence of the globalization of firms, but equally many aspects of firms organizational form and operation remain firmly embedded in national and regional contexts. The development of these elements of corporate globality thus represents a partial response by some firms in some sectors to enable them to compete more effectively in international markets. It should be emphasized, however, that these transformations do not necessarily represent the only way that firms can compete at the global scale, and that equally national-level practices may remain crucial in generating competitive advantage. Seeking to identify and measure new forms of corporate globality thus provides an insight into the balance within transnational firms between ‘global integration’ and ‘local responsiveness’ (Ghosal & Bartlett ???).

In that sense, a theorization of global managerial practices does not of course represent a final or complete theory of the nature and significance of managerial actors in transnational firms. Rather, it does provide the starting point to begin to think differently

about how the working practices of managers are being transformed by firm and industry globalization. Such a perspective offers a different set of empirical and conceptual tools to those generally used within management studies in order to understand firm globalization. Adopting this kind of management geography approach provides a complementary – rather than contradictory – set of conceptual tools for addressing the complex ways in which managers are involved in the globalization (or not) of corporate activity. Whilst the management literature has developed an increasingly sophisticated set of firm and industry level models for understanding corporate transnationalization, there has been little engagement with the difference that geographically-constituted practices of key actors (i.e. global managers) make beneath the level of the firm in shaping corporate globality, foreign market entry and international competitiveness.

This chapter has of course developed its theoretical argument* business service case study discussed provided an illustration of the utility of this approach in understanding how corporate control and corporate culture are both increasingly key attributes of transnational business service firms in a variety of industries which are (re)produced through a range of globalized working practices undertaken by managers. Within business service firms, these practices represent a precariously constructed ‘transnational social space’ with ability of TNCs to globalize successfully via these practices being dependent on ‘how far practices, routines, norms and values are different, transferable, adaptable or resistant to change. (c.f. Morgan 2001). It is therefore valuable to increasingly understand business service TNCs as transnational communities maintained and developed by a range of global managerial practices that in some ways exhibit the dynamics of complex social systems.

Yet it is important to emphasize that the research into business service firms also demonstrate the fragility of these forms of global managerial practice. As Morgan (2001) points out, rather than understanding TNCs as unified rational social actors they are better understood as ‘spaces of social relationships that are internally structured in complex ways’ (ibid.: 11). I would therefore end by on a note of caution with respect to the unresolved issues further research into global managerial practices remain needs to address. In particular, this paper has not considered the degree to which the reliance on global managerial practice within transnational firms is problematic and in some cases contested. Key issues include greater pressures on employees to travel, new configurations of managerial responsibility, the need to work with new transnational communities of practitioners within firms and longer term pressures to undertake expatriate work away from the home country (c.f. Beaverstock 2004; Beaverstock *et al* 2010). In that respect, the arguments developed in this paper need further empirical-based analysis in order to better understand how global managerial practices will shape the trajectories of globalizing firms in various industries in the coming decades.

[xxxx words]

6) References

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