

**Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology
University of Oxford**

**Global Elites and Local People:
Images of Germanness and Cosmopolitanism in
the Self-Presentation of German Transnational
Businesspeople in London**

Thesis submitted towards the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Social Anthropology
Trinity Term 2002

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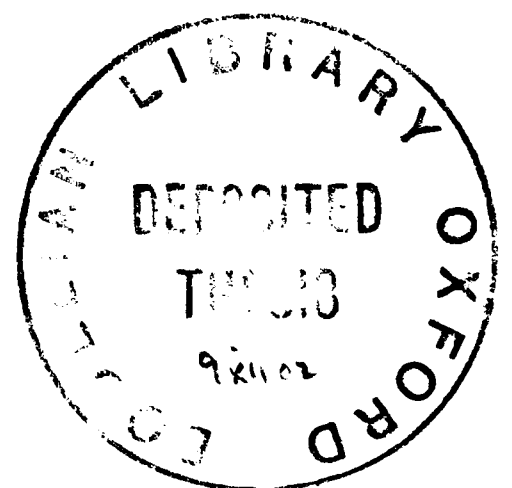


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All translations from German to English, both of written texts and of interviews, are my own except where otherwise specified. All errors and/or missed nuances are therefore my responsibility.

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Although many anthropologists have studied transnational groups, few consider the way in which social organisation takes place in globalising environments. An examination of the use of symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism in the self-presentation of German businesspeople in London suggests that, in doing so, they are not defining themselves as a solidary group so much as they are engaging in complex negotiations between global and local social entities.

Combining Anthony Cohen's theory of the symbolic construction of groups (1985) with Erving Goffman's of strategic self-presentation (1956), I begin by examining Sklair's (2001) hypothesis that transnational businesspeople form a detached, globalised, solidary "transnational capitalist class." I then consider the ways in which symbols are actually used in transnational business, through a case study focusing around the London branches of two German banks, the Head Office of one of them, and German-focused institutions in the UK. My analysis reveals that not only is transnational businesspeople's use of symbols more complex than the construction of a single social group, they also use the multivalency of symbols to shift their self-presentations and affiliations in response to the activities of other actors.

I conclude by postulating a new way of looking at transnational social formations, incorporating Sklair's theory, Castells' "Network Society" (1996) and Appadurai's "Global Landscapes": the Transnational Capitalist Society model (TCS). This is a theoretical construct comprising all actors engaging in business activity across borders at any given time; it also includes the links between transnational social formations, and local entities inasmuch as they engage in transnational capitalism.

An examination of the symbolic self-presentation of German transnational businesspeople thus suggests that, not only are they not a solidary, detached "class," but the complex, shifting nature of their interactions points to the need for a more diffuse, multiply engaged model for considering transnational social formations.

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At one point during my fieldwork in the City of London, I asked the director of an Anglo-German business organisation to define globalisation. His response was to say: “Globalisation simultaneously forges bonds and allows for the actions of culture.” This remark both stems from, and highlights, the fact that the ability to present oneself in ways which are flexible, and which operate on multiple levels, is necessary for social interaction in transnational environments. An examination of the ways in which transnational German businesspeople in the City of London make use of symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism in their self-presentation suggests that, in doing so, they are not so much defining themselves as a solidary group as they are engaging in complex, flexible negotiations between global and local social entities.

This project is based on an eighteen-month study of two German banks in the City of London, which also incorporates material from the Head Office of one of the banks, and from German-focused cultural, support and business institutions around the City of London. Taking recent literature on globalisation, transnationalism and symbolism as a basis, and using interviews, participant-observation and text analysis, I consider the ways in which people in such environments present themselves through the

use of symbols, and the role that this self-presentation plays in their social interactions in the global financial world.

In order to develop a model through which to consider the symbolic self-presentation of German transnational businesspeople, I combine Anthony Cohen's description of group formation through the use of symbols (1985) with Erving Goffman's theory of strategic self-presentation (1956). Cohen argues that groups use symbols as a means of defining themselves relative to others; Goffman proposes that individual actors present themselves through particular symbols according to particular strategies for success. If, as Sperber (1974) suggests, symbols are multivalent and possess many diverse interpretations, and if, as Lakoff and Johnson argue, sets of symbols can be combined if one can find a logical fit between the symbols used, then self-presentation and the definition of group allegiance are inextricably linked. Furthermore, it should be possible to change one's self-presentation and group allegiance by reinterpreting the symbols used in the process of defining these. It should, therefore, be possible for the self-presentation of individuals to combine with their expression of allegiance to particular groups, through the multivalent properties of symbols, to define a constantly changing strategy for constructing their social environment.

The germ of this thesis lies in Leslie Sklair's "transnational capitalist class" theory. Sklair argues that the business world is increasingly being dominated by a globally focused, stateless, capitalist transnational elite, whose members share a common cosmopolitan lifestyle (1995, 2001). Using the evidence from my fieldwork, I demonstrate that the symbolic self-presentation of German transnational businesspeople in fact points to a more complex situation. Although they may appear to be a solidary class on a superficial level, the Germans have a number of engagements with outside

groups, both local and global, and are internally divided into many different factions. Furthermore, these allegiances and divisions change over time, in response to outside stimuli. The German case thus demonstrates that Sklair's model, while useful on a superficial level, does not capture the complexity of the ways in which transnational businesspeople negotiate their environment and define their allegiances.

More than this, however, the self-presentation of German transnational businesspeople has implications regarding interaction in transnational social spaces. The participants in my study did not simply present themselves or express allegiances to particular groups through symbols, but also used the multivalent properties of these symbols to shift their self-presentations and group affiliations according to particular strategies, in response to the activities of other actors both transnational and local. At times in which Germans are subject to xenophobia, for instance, they present themselves as members of a transnational business elite or employees of particular companies; in situations in which it is a social advantage to be German, however, the same symbols used to represent the companies can also be used to express ethnic origin or national affiliation. Furthermore, in the information-focused environment of the global financial world, in which self-presentation is an essential activity for success, actors must be able to change their self-presentation at a moment's notice as the environment changes. In a sense, then, the Germans are constructing multiple, linked selves through which to negotiate between local and global social formations.

In order to describe how actors in transnational situations negotiate between the global and the local, therefore, I propose to build upon Sklair's theory by adding material from two other sources. I combine the "transnational capitalist class" model with Castells' three-volume study of social organisation, *The Information Age* (1996, 1997, 1998), which argues that transnational social organisation takes the form of a

global “Network Society,” and from Appadurai’s “global landscapes” model, which suggests that social scientists should consider the world in terms of unevenly-engaged global social formations which are focused on particular spheres of interest, such as ethnicity, finance and the media (1991). The resultant formulation, which I call the “transnational capitalist society” (TCS) model, considers the Germans, not as part of a global, detached “class,” but as included within a world-wide theoretical construct which comprises all actors engaging in business activity across borders at any given time.

More than simply describing a global network, however, the TCS also includes the links between different transnational business social formations, and particular local entities inasmuch as they engage in transnational capitalism. By combining different theories of social organisation in the transnational sphere, we can build up a more detailed, comprehensive picture of life in transnational situations than has previously been achieved. This picture reveals not so much an isolated, detached transnational group as it does a complex process of negotiation between different social entities, using symbols to link, select between and combine global and local activities.

This thesis is divided into two parts, one more theory-focused and the other more fieldwork-focused. The first three chapters deal with the theoretical background to my fieldwork: In Chapter 1, I define and discuss concepts relating to globalisation, transnational activity and the “transnational capitalist class” theory, to set the scene for later exploration. Chapter 2 discusses Goffman’s concept of strategic self-presentation through symbols (1956) and Cohen’s notion of symbols as an aid to group formation (1985), and formulates a combination of the two as a basis from which to examine the uses of symbols in transnational business environments. Chapter 3, finally, provides an

overview of the symbols associated with Germanness, cosmopolitanism and transnational business as a way of preparing the ground for the ethnographic section.

The next four chapters present and discuss my findings regarding the self-presentation of German transnational businesspeople in light of the earlier theoretical discussions. Chapter 4 involves a broad initial overview of the place of Germans in the City of London, considering the City itself, the history of its German community, and the present social structure of Germans in London. Chapters 5 and 6 consist of case studies of symbolic self-presentation in one of the abovementioned German banks. Chapter 5 concentrates on the social structure of the bank, and its employees' reactions to a recently-instituted restructuring programme; it examines the different subgroups within the bank and how the reactions of each are affected by its strategic position with regard to the restructuring. Chapter 6 discusses the role of communication among transnational businesspeople, first considering the use of language and speech formations within the organisation, and then expanding the focus of the study to consider communications technology in general and its role in symbolic self-presentation. Chapter 7 discusses the place of the Germans with regard to their community, school and support institutions in the UK, and how all of these are used in the strategic self-presentation of transnational businesspeople. Chapter 8, finally, returns to the theoretical arena and re-examines the concept of the "transnational capitalist class" in light of the evidence which we have seen; I then outline the "transnational capitalist society" model described above and explain how it is a more useful way of considering the case of the German transnational businesspeople (to say nothing of other transnational communities) than the earlier theory. I conclude by examining how this new formulation relates to earlier theories of the way in which the

local and the global are related, and how it might shed light on some earlier questions of social formation in the transnational sphere.

The key result of my investigation into the use of symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism in the strategic self-presentation of transnational German businesspeople in the City of London, then, has been that such businesspeople use symbols to present themselves in ways too complex, flexible and subtle for social scientists to define them simply as a transnational capitalist class. Rather, the evidence suggests they should be considered as a part, or several parts, of a wider social construct along the lines of a transnational capitalist society, who actively engage in negotiating between, connecting and navigating global and local social formations.

Introduction

Although much has been written on the subject of transnational businesspeople, the image of such individuals as forming an elite “transnational capitalist class” detached from, but dominating, local subaltern classes continues to recur in anthropological literature. Few anthropologists consider how this “class” is constructed, and how it relates to other groups. Through an examination of German transnational businesspeople in London, I propose to investigate how they use symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism to engage in complex, continuously changing negotiations between global and local spheres of activity according to particular strategies, rather than simply to define themselves as a transnational elite.

Background to the Study

Although anthropologists are becoming increasingly involved in investigating transnational social formations, not much has been contributed to the study of transnational businesspeople. Consequently, when this group appears at all in the social science literature, it is as a globe-spanning, detached, “stateless” elite, which exists in opposition to local and transnational subaltern groups (see, for instance, Ballard 2002; Lindisfarne 2002). By conducting an ethnographic study of a sample of transnational businesspeople, I intend, not only to shed some light on the actual nature of social organisation in the transnational business sphere, but to explore the ways in which all transnational actors define, redefine and negotiate between global and local social formations according to their particular strategies for action.

In order to do this, I will consider the representations of Germanness and cosmopolitanism used in the self-presentation of London-based German transnational bankers. German skilled labour migrants are a particularly interesting group in this

context. For one thing, they have a long history of existence as an elite labour diaspora which maintains active transnational connections among its dispersed units, and yet is not “visible” in the same way that, for instance, the Italian labour diaspora is (see Panayi 1995, Grass 1990a: 120, Banks 1996: 72). Furthermore, the simultaneous admiration and jealousy expressed by the British media for the economic success of German firms in Britain suggests a problematic relationship between a “global” elite and “local” workers (Roth 1979: 115-119; *The Economist* 1998d; see Fig. 1). German transnational businesspeople are thus a group which fits the profile described above, and which can be isolated for study purposes on the basis of its members’ shared nationality.

In particular, I will look at the ways in which this group defines itself in terms of its self-presentation through symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism in light of their transnational field of activity. These particular symbol sets have been selected due to the fact that both are potential discourses of identification for German transnational businesspeople, with one referring broadly to local, and the other to global, relationships. Although the Germans also define themselves through other symbolic discourses—Europeanness, for instance—these will not be discussed here, as it is through narrowing our focus to the two discourses most definitive of local affiliation and global interest that we can examine the ways in which members of this group employ symbols to negotiate between global and local affiliations and engagements according to particular strategies for action.

Studies of the use of symbols to define group allegiance in the



Figure 1. Cartoon from German-British Forum Conference programme, London, 13 October 1998

transnational sphere are nothing new. Since the 1970s, there have been many excellent ethnographic investigations of the use of symbols by transnational labour migrants. Grillo, for instance, discusses how Algerians in France use symbols of belonging to negotiate different social situations (1985), and Abner Cohen describes how the presentation of group affiliation can be used as a means of obtaining resources (1974). However, most of these are “bottom-up” studies, focusing on visible minorities and/or labourers (J. Watson 1977; see also Westwood 1984; Portes 1998, Wallman (ed.) 1979). As Sedgwick notes, while the need to study elites has been recognised in anthropology since Nader’s 1972 call to “study up,” little work has in fact been done on such groups, especially not those from areas such as Germany which are neither “remote” nor “exotic” (1998: 1; E. Ardener 1987). This has led, as we have seen, to a situation in which the relationship between elite and subaltern, and/or global and local, to say nothing of the terms “elite,” “subaltern,” “global” and “local,” are never problematised. A “top-down” study of labour migration will thus not only provide insight into the nature of the transnational business elite, but will help to fill a gap in the anthropological corpus.

Furthermore, although many non-anthropological studies of German businesspeople exist, they are equally problematic in terms of what they say about its nature. Most such studies tend to unquestioningly assume German businesses to be a unified whole, speaking, like Randlesome, of “German” traits which have an existence in and of themselves, rather than considering these as symbols linked to ongoing discourses of nationality and globalisation (1993: 1; Millar 1979: 43). Furthermore, such studies often eschew explorations of the role of nationality in transnational business in favour of simply setting up German companies as the symbolic antitheses of Anglo-American ones, in a manner which strongly recalls the way Japanese companies

were treated by the “learn from Japan” movement (compare, for instance, Sorge and Warner [1996] with Chapter 6 of Vogel [1979]; see also Zukin and DiMaggio 1990: 12; Millar 1979: 41-47). More recent studies aimed at problematising this discourse tend to take a quantitative approach, which yields little information about the construction of group affiliation (Ebster-Grosz and Pugh 1996; Mitchell 1983). An ethnographic study of symbolism in transnational financial corporations might thus provide business studies with a more accurate picture of the role of culture in corporate settings.

By examining the way in which a business-focused transnational minority defines itself as such through symbols of nationality and cosmopolitanism, then, this thesis will not only fill in gaps in anthropology and in business studies, but will also address key theoretical and political issues with regard to the nature of the relationship between global and local, and the way in which transnational groups negotiate these spheres of activity.

Methodology

The material upon which this thesis is based consists of a pilot study conducted between August 1998 and April 1999 at the London branch of a German bank, and two more extended periods of fieldwork, one from January to June 2000 with the London office and Frankfurt headquarters of a second, larger German bank, and one from June to December 2000, which explored the wider German community in London as well as gathering additional material at the abovementioned Frankfurt office. This dissertation is thus the product of nearly two years’ cumulative fieldwork, not in a single community or physical location, but in and around a web of social connections loosely centred on London, England.

The pilot study consisted of a three-month period of participant observation at the bank's London Branch, in which I spent two to three days a week in the Trade and Commodity Finance section. For comparison purposes, I also spent one day apiece in two other sections, Information Technology (IT) and the Dealing Room. More formal interviews (following Fetterman's typology of "formal" and "informal" interviews) were carried out in January 1999 with the bank's seven German locally hired and expatriate employees (1998: 37,11). Three auditors who visited the bank in November 1999 expressed an interest in participating; in the absence of time to conduct a formal interview, I prepared an open-ended questionnaire (following Fetterman 1998: 54; Wallman and Dhooge 1984), which they completed in their own time. I also spoke informally with employees of other, mainly British, nationalities, and some German employees from other branches who spent short periods at the London office. In March and April I showed drafts of the study's writeup to my interviewees, feedback from which has also been incorporated into the current document. I also obtained impressions of the wider context through participant observation at the Goethe Institut London. I was not employed by the bank, but was answerable to its personnel director.

In the case of the second bank, more extensive participant-observation was carried out. To begin with, I was formally engaged by the bank as a researcher, albeit unpaid, the implications of which will be discussed below. I spent five days a week in the office, with access to a desk; the location of this changed three times over the six-month period, enabling me to observe activities in the IT teaching area, the Personnel and General Management area, and the Building Management area. I had access to the staff canteen and other such resources, as well as to meeting rooms in which to conduct interviews, and joined employees in informal social activities such as pub nights and leaving parties. Until August 2000, also, I lived as the flatmate of a UK-born computer

specialist employed by a non-German bank, who provided a certain amount of comparative data.

In the second fieldwork session, formal interviews (again, following Fetterman 1998: 37, 11), were conducted on a periodic basis over the course of the six-month participant-observation period. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with selected employees in the subsequent six months. The interviewees were for the most part junior and middle managers, with three members of top management and two non-managerial staff members also participating. Of my interviewees, six were expatriate Germans, four were Germans living permanently in the UK, two were English who had lived in Germany, and three were English with no German connection. Formal interviews of this type were also conducted with five members of the personnel department and two managers from other divisions in the Head Office of the institution. These were conducted during three week-long trips to Frankfurt in April, September and October 2000, with follow-up contacts by e-mail.

Each participant was interviewed between one and four times, with interviews lasting roughly an hour apiece. Although a standard questionnaire was initially used, it was not normally adhered to once the interview was fully underway. Participants were given the option of being interviewed in English or German; although most at the London Branch chose English, and most at the Head Office chose German, no interview was conducted exclusively in one or the other language. Initially, all interviews were recorded; later, as I discovered that this practice often made interviewees nervous, I largely abandoned it in favour of shorthand, although, mindful of my limitations as a non-native speaker, I continued to tape and transcribe German-language interviews. The tapes which have been made will be wiped upon acceptance of the thesis.

These activities were also complemented by informal interviews and conversations with some of the branch's employees. These were usually conducted over lunch or after work, and followed no set pattern, although I made certain to ask whether or not I could use the relevant part of the conversation in my work. All but four of the people who participated in formal interviews—in both offices—also engaged in informal discussions of this sort; in addition to these, I regularly had conversations with five Germans living permanently in the UK, six non-Germans who had lived in Germany, and nine non-German employees with no connection to Germany.

Approximately two-thirds were junior or non-managerial staff, a fact which made up for the overwhelmingly managerial bias of the formal interviews. Finally, during my trips to Frankfurt, I stayed with a friend from the bank's London Branch (who moved back to Germany during my period of fieldwork), and was thereby able to observe and participate in life in a German transnational banking family.

As implied earlier, my position with regard to the second bank was as an outside consultant to the branch, brought in to gather data and formulate conclusions on the impact of a restructuring programme (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5) on Anglo-German relations in the branch. I was expected to submit a report to the personnel director at the end of the six-month fieldwork period. It is therefore impossible to avoid an element of bias in my results, as my interviewees were aware of this situation and were no doubt on some level tailoring their responses. I have consequently tried to interpret and evaluate each interviewee's answers in the context of their position with regard to the extant situation in the bank. I also endeavoured to compensate for the fact that all interviewees had to be approved by the personnel office by asking individuals who showed an interest in the project to volunteer (although, if

the contact seemed reluctant, I did not press the issue), and/or through conducting the abovementioned informal interviews.

Between June and December of 2000, I remained in peripheral contact with both banks, but concentrated on exploring the wider social context. During this period, I conducted formal interviews with a total of thirty-four key figures in London's German and financial communities, including representatives of the Bank of England, the Corporation of London, and the Deutsche Bank, as well as of five German business and five German cultural support organisations, three educational organisations and relocation agencies, and a total of seven business think-tanks and consultancies. I also conducted several interviews at, and participated in two events hosted by, the Deutsche Schule London, more details on which can be found in Chapter 7. As before, some interviewees were re-interviewed, and follow-up work was done via e-mail. I also engaged in participant-observation between interviews, by conducting my writeups in the public areas of the Goethe Institut, the German Historical Institute London, the City Business Library and the Library of the Corporation of London; by going on field trips to Richmond, the area of London where most Germans are concentrated; and by attending occasional services of the German Lutheran Church. I also spent at least two afternoons per week in a pub, café or library in London's financial district, dressed in business clothing and observing the activities and behaviour of the people around me. Finally, I submitted a draft of the ethnographic chapters to the banks for comment in December 2001 through February 2002, and have incorporated some of the comments and suggestions which I received into the final version.

This action raises another ethical issue. With both banks, I drafted up a more or less formal agreement which included permission for interested participants to look over, comment on and, if it came to a dispute, veto, the material to be included in the

final writeup. Conversations with businesspeople, and with anthropologists who had done research in businesses, had strongly suggested that companies routinely require some form of control over published material. I therefore selected a topic area which addressed the issues in which I was interested in a way which would not require the use of material which the banks would consider sensitive. In the following writeup, also, I have been selective in quoting interview excerpts, and have paraphrased some interview material. The project has thus been designed in anticipation of the banks' position, in order to minimise potential difficulties both for myself and for the study's participants.

I have also followed standard ethical practice, as described by the Association of Social Anthropologists, in terms of respecting the privacy of participants (ASA 1999). For confidentiality reasons, some details of the banks' location and operations have been changed and both the banks and their employees remain anonymous; where names have been used at all, they are pseudonyms, except in the case of such institutions as the Anglo-German Forum which it would be impossible to disguise in this way. Information obtained from publicity material from the two banks has also been presented without citing references. In the case of all interviewees cited, some non-essential biographical data has been changed and on occasion individuals have been presented as "composites," that is, that data from two similar people has been amalgamated under a single heading, although care has been taken to ensure that this does not interfere with the presentation of the data. In doing this, I am endeavouring to respect the need for privacy of my interviewees and fieldwork sites.

There were also more practical, issues regarding my level of access. As a 25-year-old unmarried and childless woman, my ability to obtain firsthand information on the personal lives of people in other demographic brackets was limited (although I was able to learn more about the lifestyles of expatriates with children through my

association with the Deutsche Schule London). Most of my socialisation time was spent with trainees and junior staff, although I also found that my gender and age meant that older employees, particularly male ones, were also willing to talk with me at lunch and in after-work gatherings. The social conventions associated with my gender also meant that older managers and think-tank employees (who were almost universally male) were more relaxed when scheduling and conducting interviews with me than they would have been with a male interviewer of a similar age, whom they would have perceived as a potential business rival, and whose requests for assistance they could safely refuse without seeming unchivalrous. Although my social status did present some problems of access, it also opened up particular opportunities.

Finally, some brief remarks on my role in the organisation. Having discovered during the pilot study that most businesspeople were unfamiliar with (and slightly suspicious of) the idea of an anthropologist in business, I usually described myself as “studying German businesses” or “a business researcher” to casual inquirers, although I provided more detail to those people with whom I had to work on an ongoing basis. Also, the limited amount of time I was able to spend in Frankfurt meant that my perspective on the Frankfurt office is one of an outside observer, analogous, perhaps, to that of a London Branch employee whose job permits her some limited contact with Head Office. Both of these have undoubtedly affected my perspective on the organisation, but again, not necessarily to the detriment of the research.

Practical considerations have also limited the geographical scope of this project. It was unfortunately not possible, in terms of time, resources and access, to investigate the lives of transnational bank employees in any other “global cities” than London and Frankfurt. I have also limited my focus to German businesspeople, because to study every group which falls under the remit of the “transnational business elite” would be

unfeasible. By limiting my focus to a single national group in a particular field in a particular global city, I am better placed to be able to examine the symbolic connections between local affiliation and transnational practices.

While I had of necessity to limit and modify my research activities in certain ways, I was therefore able to conduct a fruitful ethnographic study of German businesspeople in the United Kingdom. My investigations will therefore be able, if nothing else, to contribute to the understanding of the ways in which transnational actors use symbols to operate in a globalising environment.

Theoretical Issues

The nature of this study, an application of anthropological methods to a business setting, has meant that certain theoretical controversies have emerged over the course of its development. One of these is the fact that anthropologists and business studies researchers have quite different definitions of “culture.” The main points of the debate have been effectively summarised by Wright (1994); however, I shall briefly outline it here. While both disciplines seem more or less to agree on what a company’s “culture” consists of—its values, myths and rituals, collective symbols and so forth (Mead 1994: 155-156; B. Turner 1971: 21)—they disagree on how it is formed. Anthropologists tend to consider culture as a common repertoire of ideas which is reworked in ways which are systematic, but not predictable (Wright 1994: 4). Business studies, however, portrays culture as a shared property which is manufactured, and changed at will, by the group collectively or by powerful individuals within it (Ibid., 2-3; Anthony 1994: 2; see Deal and Kennedy 1998, Hampden-Turner 1994). We shall here take a middle-ground

approach, considering culture as a common repertoire of ideas whose reworking nonetheless is sometimes the result of dynamic, deliberate action.

The concept of “identity” is also a problematic one. Although my M.Phil thesis, which was based on the pilot study, was focused around the definition of “German identity,” both it and other studies in this field have found the concept problematic, as it is not so much an object which a given individual or group “has,” as it is a nebulous series of discourses relating to age, class, gender and so forth (Moore 1999; Banks 1996). Furthermore, one can express discourses of, for instance, “Germanness,” without necessarily expressing or referring to a particular “German identity.” This is complicated by the fact that “identity,” aside from a few superficial uses of the term in companies’ promotional literature, has generally been subsumed into the concept of “culture” in business studies (see, for instance, Anthony 1994; Deal and Kennedy 1988), making the finding of common ground between the disciplines rather difficult. In acknowledgement of these developments, I shall here avoid the term except when quoting sources which use it, or when reproducing the already-published report excerpts in Appendix II.

Finally, the nature of this study has also meant that certain areas of self-presentation have had to be ignored or dealt with sketchily. Gender, for instance, is too large a topic to be treated here, and has in any case been extensively dealt with in Part Two of *Anthropology of Organisations* (Wright [ed] 1994, particularly the articles by Pringle and Kerfoot and Knights). Similarly, the problems of East German integration and of multiculturalism in Germany are being studied by other anthropologists (e.g. Borneman 1991, White 1997), and, since most of my interviewees were “white” West Germans, such issues seldom came up. While these gaps are significant, I maintain that by broadly limiting my conclusions to the two most visible discourses relating to

national origin and global activity employed by my interviewees, I will be able to provide a more focused and detailed investigation of the symbols which they use in self-presentation.

This thesis is effectively divided into two parts: the more theoretical and the more practical. The first three chapters will deal with the theoretical background to my fieldwork: Chapter 1 will define and discuss concepts relating to globalisation, transnational activity and the “transnational capitalist class” theory, to set the scene for later exploration. Chapter 2 will discuss Goffman’s concept of strategic self-presentation through symbols and Cohen’s notion of symbols as an aid to group formation, and will propose a combination of the two as a basis from which to examine the uses of symbols in transnational business environments. Chapter 3 will, finally, provide an overview of the symbols associated with Germanness, cosmopolitanism and the transnational business elite as a way of preparing the ground for the ethnographic section. The next four chapters will present and discuss my findings regarding the self-presentation of German transnational businesspeople in light of the earlier theoretical discussions. Chapter 4 will conduct a broad initial overview of the place of Germans in London’s financial community. Chapters 5 and 6 will consist of a case study of symbolic self-presentation in the second bank, with Chapter 5 concentrating on the social structure of the bank and employees’ reactions to a recently-instituted restructuring programme and Chapter 6 discussing the role of communication within the organisation. Chapter 7 will discuss the place of the Germans with regard to their community, school and support institutions in the UK. Chapter 8, finally, will re-examine, and suggest changes to, the “transnational capitalist class” model in light of the evidence which we have seen.

The work which follows is thus an ethnographic exploration of the ways in which Germanness and cosmopolitanism are expressed by German transnational businesspeople in London as part of their self-presentation. In examining this aspect of life among transnational businesspeople, I will not only investigate the nature of social organisation in global business and the way in which transnational actors negotiate between different spheres of activity, but will contribute to the filling of theoretical and methodological gaps in both anthropology and business studies.

I. Global Capital: **Theories of Globalisation and Transnationalism**

In recent years, many social scientists (to say nothing of journalists and popular writers) have come to take for granted the notion that a globally-focused business elite, or “transnational capitalist class” (TCC), is becoming the dominant social force in globalising social environments. This elite are said to have developed out of the processes of globalisation, to operate in the “global financescape,” and to be strongly associated with transnational corporations. An examination of current theories of globalisation, transnational landscapes and the nature of transnational social formations, however, suggests that the current model of the transnational capitalist class is too boundary-focused and internally homogeneous to fit well with what most other writers have said about the makeup of transnational social formations.

In order to consider the social organisation of transnational businesspeople, we must first examine the social context in which they operate. We shall therefore begin this chapter with a brief overview of theories of globalisation, followed by a look at possible ways of describing the relationship between global and local, and from there develop a broad definition of transnational social formations, with a particular focus on transnational corporations, given that these are said to have a particular connection to elite transnational businesspeople. Finally, we shall take an in-depth look at the major works which have been written thus far on the “transnational capitalist class,” and, with a view to what we know about transnational social formations and the nature of the global and the local, we shall outline possible critiques of the current theory of its origins and social structure.

Many Paths: Globalisation and Related Concepts

The proposition that a globe-spanning, business-focused elite is currently rising to prominence has its basis in another theoretical discourse, which revolves around the idea that the world is presently in what is known as a period of globalisation (see Robertson 1992). Globalisation is defined by Waters as a “process in which the constraints of geography on social... arrangements recede” (1995: 3). Most writers on the subject, whatever their discipline, define this phenomenon as characterised by the rise in importance of four things: namely, advances in electronic communication and transportation, which “compress” time and space and have an impact on the importance of the nation state (Ibid., 35; Schein 1998; Stack 1981b); the “freeing” of capital, which leads to a 24-hour global financial market in which the state plays a minimal role in regulation (Beaverstock 1996b: 423; Leyshon and Thrift 1997: 46-47); the rise of a “flexible” workforce, which could potentially lead to a “jobless” society in which few have permanent employment (Sassen 1991: 295; Castells 1996: 264-268); and, finally, a positive valuation of capitalism (Portes 1998: 4). From these have arisen certain social processes relating to interconnections and interdependencies between groups which may be geographically separated, and different ways of viewing time and space (Tomlinson 1999a: 2, 4; Harvey 1989). We shall thus refer to the changes in communications, transportation and economics as the “processes of globalisation,” and define globalisation itself in broad terms as the impact of these processes on human interaction and social behaviour.

Although premodern forms of globalisation remain the subject of debate (see Held et al. 1999: 16-20), the present period of globalisation traces its origins to the 1970s and 1980s. This period saw rapid advances in communications technology, including the development of personal computers and the Internet (Ibid., 342-346). This

was coupled with a series of economic changes, including a crisis over oil prices and the termination of the Bretton Woods agreement, an act which placed world currency rates officially in free-fall (Ibid., 183, 199-201; Thrift and Leyshon 1994: 305-6; Chandler 1977: 491-500). These events have brought about a world in which people can communicate with each other in real time, travel faster and more cheaply than ever before, and in which currency rates do not reflect a predetermined economic hierarchy of nations, but a continuously changing world economic situation in which sharp and drastic changes of fortune are likely (Held et al. 1999: 201-220; Castells 1996: 434). Most writers thus seem to agree that the processes of globalisation exist, have been operating at least since the mid-1970s, and continue to operate today.

Where writers differ, however, is with regard to the nature and extent of the processes of globalisation, and what exactly their effects, if any, have been upon human social behaviour. Held et al., in their seminal book *Global Transformations*, identify three broad stances on globalisation: the hyperglobalisers, the sceptics and the transformationalists (1999: 2). The hyperglobalisers, first of all, take it for granted that the processes defined above are bringing about a new era in which nation-states are decreasing in importance, the old “North-South” divisions are being eroded in favour of a new, more egalitarian economic system and the hybridisation of cultures is celebrated (Ibid., 3-5; see also Ohmae 1990). Furthermore, they argue, people are becoming more globally aware and inclined to think in global, rather than local, terms; again, they seem to see this as a historical novelty rather than a norm or established phenomenon (see Iyer 2000). The hyperglobalist stance thus emphasises that the processes of globalisation are bringing about a new era which differs categorically from any which has come before.

The sceptics, however, provide a challenge to this, perhaps overly simplistic, viewpoint. Sceptical writers, most notably Hirst and Thompson, argue that there is nothing new about the processes of globalisation, if indeed they have the impact which the hyperglobalisers claim for them. Hirst and Thompson note that similar phenomena occurred in the 1300s and the 1870s, suggesting that the present period is less unique than the hyperglobalisers claim, and that the Gold Standard period saw a more interlinked economy than that of the present time (1996: 19, 36; see also Robertson 1992: 80). They also note that there continue to be marked inequalities between countries, with the USA financially and militarily hegemonic, suggesting that globalisation has had little impact upon social order (Hirst and Thompson 1996: 14; see Ghoshal and Westney 1993: 8). Finally, they argue that economic union need not bring about social or political unity, and that recent financial developments could herald the collapse of the so-called “global” economy (Hirst and Thompson 1996: 167). In this, they are supported by others: McDowell, for instance, suggests that the recessions of the 1990s have led to an abandonment of “flexibility” in favour of a renewed focus on social boundaries in the City of London (1997a). It is thus possible that the social phenomena of recent years will have no lasting effects, and that the rumours of globalisation are greatly exaggerated.

There are, however, social scientists who, while they agree that the processes of globalisation do not have the radical effects claimed by the hyperglobalisers, nonetheless argue that one should not therefore assume that they have no significant impact on present-day society. Yeung (1998) proposes that while it is not true that social and geographical boundaries have become obsolete, the processes of globalisation do exist and are having an impact on most if not all states and societies. Tomlinson says that globalisation does not mean the development of a global

monoculture, but that people, even though their actions may be confined to particular areas, consider the world as a whole as they act (1999a: 10). An increasing number of writers argue that the processes of globalisation are having a transformative effect on society.

Other social scientists take the fact that similar processes have occurred before as a point of interest rather than as a reason for discounting their significance. Segal, for instance, suggests that the possibility that globalisation has been the historic norm rather than the exception means that we should reconsider our views of human history (1998; see also Held et al 1999: 77-82). Foner's study of Italian migrants in New York in the early twentieth century (1997), and Mickelthwait and Wooldridge's journalistic account of "globalisation" in the British Empire (2000: Chapter 1), both make interesting comparisons between the earlier and present-day phenomena, to suggest how the concept and nature of globalisation has changed, and what causes societies to become more and less "globalised" over time. These studies also suggest that the fact that communication today is instantaneous rather than near-instantaneous has meant certain qualitative differences between modern and past periods of globalisation, as global interactions can take place today in real time, rather than over hours or days (Vertovec 2001: 22). Some writers thus take a more middle-ground stance, accepting the sceptics' critiques but still arguing that globalisation has effects which should not be ignored.

The sceptics' critique that the processes of globalisation are causing the "West" to become richer at the expense of Third World countries (see, for instance, Fröbel et al. 1980), is similarly challenged by middle-ground writers. Mickelthwait and Wooldridge point out in exhaustive detail that, contrary to Hirst and Thompson's claims, not all of the "losers" of globalisation are in Third World, developing countries

(2000: Chapter 13). Portes (1998) notes that international inequalities have not prevented workers from “developing” countries from operating transnationally. The likelihood that globalisation may be widening the gap between rich and poor thus argues for, rather than against, increased study of globalisation. The middle-ground writers thus acknowledge some advantages to both sides of the debate; they argue that the social formations of past times are not being swept away by the processes of globalisation, but are being transformed.

This middle-ground stance is called by David Held et al. “transformationalism” (1999: 7). Transformationalists generally hold that the processes of globalisation are reshaping the social order of the world, and that the contemporary form of globalisation is unprecedented in terms of its speed and extent (Ibid.). However, they also argue that these effects are historically contingent, and remain sceptical that they will lead to some form of new, egalitarian global order. Rather, they suggest that they are in fact producing new patterns of power (Ibid., 8); while borders and nations remain important, it is in a different form to earlier eras (Ibid., 9). They also eschew the faintly utopian stance of the hyperglobalisers (in some cases to the point where Sparke accuses them of setting up a “straw man” [2001b: 173]). Castells, contemplating the hyperglobalisers’ scenario of a near-fully-globalised world as a possibility, argues that the diminishment of the nation state and the rise in importance of transnational communications would ultimately lead to an end to the welfare state, increased surveillance, less secure jobs, and rising economic imbalances (1996). Mickelthwait and Wooldridge are not reticent in discussing the social difficulties which would follow in the wake of the processes of globalisation (2000: Chapter 13). The less dogmatic transformationalist theory thus appears to provide a balance between the two earlier viewpoints.

To the transformationalist hypothesis outlined by Held et al., however, I would add Tomlinson's observation that globalisation is not geographically universal, and that global activities link in with local ones in different ways (1999a: 84, 130-1). Hannerz's Central African *sapeurs* may regard Parisian clothes as prestige items, but the items of clothing which they consider status symbols would not be regarded as particularly indicative of distinction by the Parisians (1996: 132). Some groups are still, either by choice or due to the action of the market, relatively isolated: Castells presents a grim description of how the processes of globalisation have bypassed post-Soviet Russia and large parts of Africa (1998: 28, 92). We will thus here broadly adhere to the transformationalist view of globalisation as a social process which is changing, rather than eradicating, local actions and social formations, but also emphasise that the effects of the processes which cause globalisation are not universal, and have different impacts in different areas.

It thus seems that the recent changes in communications, transportation and economics have had an impact on human societies, but this has not incurred the total abandonment of local practices. The transformationalist thesis, which argues that globalisation refers more to the transformative effects of these processes on societies, is thus the one which seems to best fit the actual situation, given that one also accepts that these effects are different in different areas in terms of intensity and impact (see Held et al. 1999: 7-10; Vertovec 2001). It thus seems that globalisation, at least as far as the business world is concerned, is not a matter of all or nothing, but of the uneven effects of certain technological and economic practices upon social activity, and on how we perceive "the global" and "the local."

The Great Financescape: Relating “The Global” to “The Local”

One of the key debates arising from the study of globalisation, and one which is inherently relevant to the study of how a particular group operates in globalising contexts and specific national locations, is the question of the relationship between “local” and “global” activities and groups. The term “local,” or “locally based” activities will refer here to those which take place in particular definite physical locations—states, regions, towns and so forth; “the global,” as succinctly described by Tomlinson, will here refer to those activities which take place either in such “disembedded spaces” as airplanes or over communication lines, or in two or more “local” areas via a mediating communication system (Tomlinson 1999a: 149, 107, 25, 152). In this section, we shall thus give a necessarily brief overview of how this aspect of globalisation relates to the ongoing debate over the true nature of its impact.

Held et al.’s three-way distinction again emerges when discussing the relationship between the “local” and the “global” under the conditions of globalisation. The hyperglobalisers, of whom the best known here is probably Ohmae (1990) take the position that the global sphere of action is becoming (if it is not already) wholly distinct from, and indeed opposed to, such local activities as nation-building or traditional economic practices. Ohmae (1990) argues that the processes of globalisation are producing what Leonard and Nye call a “world without borders” (1983: 474). He contends that people are becoming increasingly freed from national ties; the use of the American dollar as a trading standard has effectively made it an international currency, and the products of such companies as IBM are made and used everywhere (1990: 3,169). In support of this theory, Gould notes that transient sojourners, rather than permanent settlers, are becoming the dominant form of economic migrant (1988: 381).

Hyperglobalisers thus portray globalising activities as being carried out without much, if any, engagement with local places.

Out of the hyperglobalist position has emerged a model of globalising social activity which could be of great value in considering such groups as transnational businesspeople: Appadurai's concept of "global landscapes." In his 1990 essay "Disjuncture and Difference In The Global Cultural Economy," Appadurai argues that the best way to consider the present, "globalising" world is not in terms of nation states, however interconnected they may be, but as "global landscapes," existing as imagined concepts which link particular sorts of activities or interest groups across the globe (Ibid., 296). The "ethnoscape," for instance, consists of all activities taking place worldwide which are related to ethnicity: so, for instance, that the world is not seen in terms of "Ireland" and "Germany" but "Ireland/the Irish diaspora," "Germany/the German diaspora/former parts and colonies of Germany" and so on (Ibid., 297). More important from the point of view of studying global business activities, however, is his concept of the financescape (Ibid., 298). This involves what can be broadly called the "world economy"; that is, global activity as it relates to financial and commercial transactions (see Mickelthwait and Wooldridge 2000: 104-105; Castells 1996: 60). The "global landscapes" concept not only allows for the acknowledgement of social activities which take place across borders and boundaries, but also for the unequal and uneven nature of globalisation. India, for instance, is a fairly small player in the financescape, but a titan in the mediascape. The "global landscapes" model, and in particular the concept of a "financescape," could thus be a useful way of conceiving of the world when studying transnational socioeconomic activities.

The idea of a global financescape is one which has a good deal of support among people who study transnational business, particularly non-anthropologists. Pryke

and Lee (1995) suggest that economic activity is a social and cultural process which does not simply relate to particular local cultures but exists as something above and beyond them. Castells describes economic activity as a kind of world-spanning web running between the three “triad” regions of NAFTA, the EU and the Asia Pacific area (1996: 100). Amin and Thrift, similarly, argue that the seemingly increased localisation of the finance industry—as more and more businesses concentrate themselves in the City of London, New York and Tokyo—is in fact an artefact of increasing transnational contact-building and information-sharing, as such cities become nodes in wider social networks (1992), an image which also occurs in McDowell’s descriptions of a world in which a new, mobile professional class concentrate themselves in particular financial and political centres at the same time as they move internationally through their firms’ international labour markets (1997b: 2). In a later article, Thrift develops this further, presenting the City of London as a site of knowledge transference and information dispersal in an informational and relationship-driven global financial system (1994). Leyshon and Thrift, finally, make the premise of their book *Money/Space* the idea that financial activity has its own geography, distinct from actual physical geography (1997; see also Mounert and Shachar 1995: 208). Writers in several disciplines thus seem to take the idea of the existence of a financescape, above and beyond actual physical landscapes, for granted.

The sceptics, however, contend that so-called “global” activities are simply the furtherance of local interests. Some globalising activities are encouraging increased local connections: diasporas, for instance, are globally engaged groups who also by definition have a connection with a particular area, and often the more globally dispersed the group becomes, the more the interest in the area increases (Clifford 1994: 302, 310; Prevelakis 1999). It is also indubitable that the people and groups which are

often described as “rootless” do in fact have roots; Zachary’s examples of cosmopolitans all have connections to local places (2000; see Chapter 3, this volume). Other sceptical writers argue that what appears to be globalisation is simply the furtherance of American imperialist interests (see Tomlinson 1999a: 81-83). Even the hyperglobalisers are generally forced to admit that a fully globalised world does not exist at present, which begs the question of whether it ever will (Castells 1996: 97). The sceptical position thus suggests that so-called “global” activities are simply local ones carried out abroad.

In the case of the financescape, this argument would seem to provide a challenge to the acceptance of the concept. There are, for instance, a number of articles, books and lectures which point out that nation-states are still important players in the world economy (Yeung 1998; Mickelthwait and Wooldridge 2000; Pieke 1999). Local engagements also have a good deal to do with business; Melvin (1999) and Ballard (2002) have respectively pointed out that Russian and Pakistani entrepreneurs both make use of local social networks, kinship customs and traditions in order to further their activities in the so-called “global” financescape. It is thus possible that the financescape only actually works on paper, as it were, and in practice we simply have a case of one local economy dealing with another local economy.

However, it is also difficult to claim that none of these activities, financial or otherwise, are without a global component. All of the above make use of the processes of globalisation to carry out their activities, even though they may be in local areas. The places to which Zachary’s cosmopolitans connect are not necessarily those from which they or their family originate, and the nature of their connections to them changes over time (2000). Melvin’s Russians (1999) and Ballard’s Pakistanis (2002) are employing their traditional practices over long distances and with the aid of new communications

and transportation technologies; a marriage between Muslim families may be arranged in the traditional manner, but the children in question live not in the same village, but one in California and the other in Bradford (discussion following Ballard's paper also brought up the impact of contact with non-Muslim cultures on traditional practice [see also Shaw 1988: 156ff.]). Documents "indigenous" to the transnational business world, such as airline magazines and financial newspapers, seem to assume some kind of conceptual universe, inhabited by businesspeople and consisting of various financial centres and the means of transport and communication connecting them (see, for instance, *High Life*, the magazine of British Airways; also Hunt 1999). Both of the extreme positions, therefore, are untenable in the face of the evidence.

The transformationalist model, however, provides a more balanced view, suggesting that global activities are grounded in various ways in various localities. Tomlinson, in his book *Globalization and Culture*, argues that the relationship between global and local reflects a "complex connectivity" (1999a: 2, 71). He argues that while people engage in activities which take place in "global spaces"; flying on airplanes, using the Internet, and other practices which cannot be said to take place in one locality or another; they are at the same time embodied and physically located (149, 141-3). As he puts it, this process of deterritorialisation does not mean "the end of locality, but its transformation into a more complex cultural space" (149). The relationship between the global and the local can thus be seen as one of complex, uneven connectivity.

Tomlinson is supported in this by other writers. Appiah's (1998) theory of "rooted cosmopolitanism," for instance, presents a world in which people are cosmopolitan in outlook and live border-crossing, globe-trotting lifestyles, but continue to retain connections to particular locations, especially their places of origin. He cites as an example Gertrude Stein, who famously said "America is my country and Paris my

hometown” (Ibid., 91). Appiah also, shrewdly, notes that cosmopolitanism does not rule out patriotism or even xenophobia on the part of its practitioners (1998: 96). Elsewhere, it has been observed that global practices are given their significance with reference to local values: Hannerz describes the “beentos” of West Africa, who gain status by virtue of having “been to” Europe, but whose global travels are imbued with importance purely in line with local notions of social capital (1996: 139). While people in New York and New Delhi both listen to Michael Jackson and drink Coca-Cola, each of these acts means something different in each locality: Tomlinson remarks that Coca-Cola is used as, among other things, a ritual object in Haiti and a beauty aid in Russia, as well as the fact that the act of drinking it means something different in, say, an Indian as opposed to an American context (Tomlinson 1999a: 84; see also Iyer 1989: 9-17). The transformationalist take on the relationship between global and local would thus seem to be that, while people around the world may engage in practices stemming from the processes of globalisation (communicating across borders, purchasing the same products and so forth), all these practices are locally interpreted.

Some transformationalists have also built upon this to suggest that the relationship between the global and the local is one of “mutual embeddedness,” in which the two “locations” construct each other. Yeung, for instance, points out that nations, far from being superseded, are in fact engaged in globalisation, and Tomlinson speaks in terms of dialectics between global and local practices (Yeung 1998: 299; Tomlinson 1999a: 25). One might cite as evidence the case of the government of the Philippines, which actively facilitates its citizens’ economic migration (Bridget Anderson 2001a). Pieke, similarly, considers globalisation in terms of world systems theory, suggesting, in a critique of Andre Gunther Frank’s *ReOrient*, that there are multiple, interconnected world systems, some Western-focused and others not (1998).

As well as involving the local interpretation of global practices, then, engaging in globalising activities seems to involve the continual construction and reconstruction of the concepts of global and local vis-à-vis each other.

It thus seems that it might be best to consider the relationship between the global and the local in terms of Tomlinson's "complex connectivity" (1999a: 2), in which the expressions "global" and "local" are defined not as concrete entities, but as having a meaning which is largely dependent on the context. The sceptic Smith's argument, for instance, that the increasing interdependence of states binds people closer to the local, speaks less of a globalising or localising world than of many different kinds of relations between individuals and global processes, as "the local" seems to refer as much to regions and ethnic "homelands" as to national entities, and indeed people can find themselves claiming a connection to several localities simultaneously (1995: 159, 60). Balibar describes local boundaries as "vacillating" under globalisation, which "does not mean that they are disappearing," but does suggest that we consider them in different ways than formerly (1998: 220). It thus appears that the relationship between the local and the global is contextually defined, and subject to redefinition.

It seems, furthermore, that engaging in globalising activities involves a continuous process of negotiating between particular locations and global landscapes. Some writers have described groups engaged in globe-spanning activities whose resources flow, not just between the home and host countries, but throughout their social networks (e.g. Portes 1998). Hannerz notes that there are different degrees and kinds of global engagement; there are, he suggests, "people for whom the nation works less well as a source of cultural resonance," but others for whom it is still important (1996: 29, 88, 90). It thus appears that there is no single way of relating global systems

to physical localities, but an infinite number, as individual actors negotiate between the global and local components of their social environments.

Referring again to the financescape, then, we may therefore revise Appadurai's original concept to one which more strongly resembles Castells' "networked" description of global economics (1996: 96, 171). The financescape should not necessarily be seen as a "global landscape" which takes place in some realm divorced from other sorts of social and physical geography, but one which involves global and local components which are continually constructing each other and redefining their relationships, and in which the degree of embeddedness of all actors and practices is variable (see Tomlinson 1999a). Bergesen, for instance, argues that it isn't trade which makes the world system, but the world system which makes people trade (1990: 79). The situation may thus best be seen in terms of Yeung's locally embedded capitalism, in which the processes of globalisation intersect and reinforce each other in complex ways (1998: 303, 299), and which consequently takes into account connections to global entities and the local construction of globalisation. We shall thus here consider the financescape, not as a detached "global landscape," but rather as an extended, business-focused network encompassing particular localities and the globalising activities which connect them.

To take a single theoretical approach, however broad or all-encompassing, to the study of transnational businesspeople's activities in different locations is therefore problematic, as it could cause the researcher to miss out on key aspects of their behaviour (Webber 1999). A better way of approaching the question might be to look in-depth at how a particular group negotiates between the global and the local components of the financescape, and to consider, not what general form these interactions take, but what can be learned from the diversity and types of activities in

which it engages. Rather than try to address the relationship between global and local in general and abstract terms, then, we shall see what conclusions can be drawn about it from examining the sort of interaction which goes on in and amongst particular “transnational” groups.

Flexible Triads: The Transnational Corporation in the Global Context

“Transnational” groups can be defined for the purposes of this thesis as those which have arisen from the transformative effect of the processes of globalisation upon national boundaries. Vertovec, more specifically, defines them as groups possessing “multiple ties... linking people or institutions across the borders of nation states” (1999: 447). Although the concepts of globalisation and transnationalism are frequently conflated, it should be noted that transnationalism is a slightly different concept, as it is predicated on the continued existence of nations and borders in some form where globalisation need not necessarily refer to these. Transnational groups are distinguished from earlier, “international” ones in that their cross-border ties form a conduit along which people, goods and information are constantly flowing, and which enable simultaneous communication between localities; “international” implies the crossing of borders, but without the element of simultaneity (Waters 1995: 18, 27; Portes 1998: 18). An international organisation can have, say, a Paris and a London office, but these would act more or less independently and without much communication between them, where the offices in a “transnational” organisation would be in frequent, simultaneous communication. The term “transnational” will thus be used here to refer to any individual, group or institution which maintains active, simultaneous links across national boundaries, using the processes of globalisation outlined above, and which consequently retains both local and global aspects.

The groups which mediate between the local and the global in this way will therefore be known as transnational social formations (Vertovec 2001). A transnational social formation can be said to be any group, however loosely organised or structured, which operates in two or more geographically distinct locations simultaneously (1999: 447; 2001: 4-5). This definition covers a wide range of social formations, from casual labour networks (Bridget Anderson 2001a, b; T. Lane 1999) through cities or societies which span a national frontier (Meinhof 2001; Sparke 2001b), through refugee communities (Bocker and Havinga 1997). Such groups have a common point, however, in that they are said to have “triadic” links, that is to say, links with home, host and “global” cultures, although it is safe to say that most such formations also have links with other cultures (Vertovec 1996a: 14; see Robin Cohen 1997; Abner Cohen 1974). Transnational social formations are thus any group which has links to, and indeed bridges, at least three separate social formations, two localised and one globalising.

As a result of their connections to multiple locations, transnational social formations are also said to be generally structured as networks with nodes. Castells (1996) argues that the modern social unit is that of a ‘network society’ with nodal points at which different networks and different parts of networks connect. Transnational social formations are also said to be “flexible”; the fluidity and changing nature of such groups and organisations, and the fact that many of them strongly value diversity of one sort or another, is often remarked upon (Hannerz 1996: 61). Castells, similarly, describes the recent organisational phenomenon of “flextimers,” that is to say, people working in part-time jobs, sometimes multiple ones, replacing the full-time employee as the paradigmatic worker (1996: 264-265). Transnational social formations are thus, broadly speaking, triadic, networked and flexible.

The social formation which is most relevant to us here, and on which we will consequently focus, is that of transnational corporations or TNCs, also called “multinational corporations” or MNCs (see Sklair 1995: 52). These can be defined as corporations with physical or conceptual bases of operations in two or more countries simultaneously, of which at least one is in a “global” city, with each of the branches and the centre linked to each other by lines of communication and trade (Bartlett and Ghoshal 1993: 78; Tugendhat 1971). According to Chandler’s definition, still employed by many in business studies, the TNC is distinct from the traditional, localised business, and the later hierarchical organisation with many different operations, in that TNCs are decentralised, with multiple divisions and functions being spread across the world (1977: 14, 1, 480; Ohmae 1990: 88, Kilduff 1993: 259). One might add to this, in light of the present period of globalisation, that TNCs increasingly rely on flexible employment of the sort described above, and, as their hiring-and-firing policies are determined by central office policy rather than local markets, their presence frequently forces people in the locations in which they set up branches into more job flexibility than they had anticipated (Augar 2000; see Chapter 4, this volume, for further discussion). While most of the theoretical discussion has focused on the large, Western TNCs, Stopford notes that small and non-Western companies exist that also fit this paradigm (1998/9). We shall thus consider TNCs as transnational social formations with a corporate structure and a business focus.

As such, TNCs draw their genesis and continued existence from the processes of globalisation. Such corporations reproduce their structure and carry out their functions through the use of rapid communications (Kilduff 1993: 259; see also Nash 1979; Mead 1994; Egelhoff 1993). Furthermore, it is due to the geographical “flexibility” of work that TNCs settle in diverse parts of the globe, in order to obtain the most economical

source of labour, and due to the global nature of the market that they are able to do this at all (Fröbel et al. 1980; Beaverstock 1996b, c; Beaverstock and Smith 1996: 1390). In their turn, TNCs contribute to the processes of globalisation: on one level, they make similar products available all over the world; on another, the flows of capital directed through them perpetuate the global financial system; and finally, their concentration in certain areas facilitates the development of “global cities” (Ohmae 1990; Castells 1996: 380; Sassen 1991). TNCs are thus inextricably linked with the political, economic and social processes of globalisation.

The internal cultures of TNCs are also of a form which is more compatible with border-crossing activities than with those which refer to the interests of specific nations or local groups only (see Egelhoff 1993; Westney 1993), being networks with “component parts... [which] are both autonomous from, and dependent upon, [their] complex system of relationships” (Vertovec 1999: 452-453; Salt 1988). This fact has given rise to a debate on the relative influence of home and host cultures on TNCs (Lammers and Hickson 1971: 403; Rickards and Pathak 1993: 17; Winch 1996: 241). In the 1960s and '70s, it was frequently argued that the corporation's home culture was the most dominant factor, particularly with regard to whether American TNCs were vehicles for American economic colonialism (Behrman 1970; Bergsten et al. 1978; see Wade 1996, Kogut 1993). Several countries either have, or have had, policies promoting the hiring of locals; the most extreme--and telling--example is that of Nazi Germany, which banned all non-German companies (Beaverstock and Smith 1996: 1390; Tugendhat 1971: 39). Subsequent writers, however, have pointed out that TNCs are also influenced by their host societies (Ghoshal and Westney 1993). This mainly stems from the work of Hofstede (1980), whose study of the many local branches of a single American IT company revealed significant differences in the ways in which each

did business, which more or less correlated with the local styles of company operations. Tugendhat argues that TNCs “try... to assume a local character” for strategic reasons (1971: 200): Bergsten et al. cite the case of Opel advertising its products as triumphs of German engineering, although the firm was owned by an American company (1978: 47). The presence of a debate over the relative influence of home and host cultures thus suggests that TNCs are the product of a number of cultural influences.

As a result, many researchers have since been focusing, not on a single source of influence, but on TNCs as continually constructed by activities in both internal and external social networks. Castells notes that the self-sufficient company appears to be a thing of the past; instead one finds networks of producer companies, consumer companies and so forth, all dependent upon one another (1996: 191). Kristensen and Zeitlin’s ten-year-long study of a dairy-product multinational examines how individual branches and subsidiaries of the company have their own distinctive histories, priorities and all-around “cultures” which reflect not only their countries of origin and of residence, but their historical relationship with other parts of the company (2001; forthcoming). TNC employees, even those of a single TNC, thus cannot be said to be a single group, but to be engaged with home country, host country and with many other transnational actors, as well as internally divided along the lines of the interests of their component groups.

Furthermore, it has also been recognised that a corporation is affected by its members’ interests and social connections (Torbiörn 1982: 41; Douglas 1987: 13; Boden 1994: 9). Morgan notes that the concerns, aims and interests of its managers affect the practices of a company; Cyert and March’s study of corporations concludes that firms are not single entities, but are the sum of their employees’ individual and collective interests (Morgan 1997; Cyert and March 1992). Douglas, similarly, defines

organisations as systems of classifying people (1987: 48-51; Wright 1994: 22). The dynamic between different groups in the corporation, for instance management and staff, affects the organisation as a whole (Jackall 1988: 17-74; H. Davis 1979; Schwartzman 1993: 18). Wadel notes that it is also affected by the company's clients (1979: 377-378). All of these groups, furthermore, are to some degree distinct from the corporation itself; TNCs are thus influenced by other groupings that can be either interior or exterior to it, or even both (see Beaverstock 1991, 1996c; Jackall 1988). A transnational corporation is therefore a social entity which is constantly being redefined, and which blends into other social groupings.

TNCs are also affected by, and resemble, another transnational social formation which is often associated with the economic processes of globalisation: the ethnic/cultural diaspora (see Robin Cohen 1997). Robin Cohen cites Safran's definition of diasporas as expatriate minority communities which have been dispersed from an original centre to two or more other regions, who retain an idealised collective memory of the "homeland," to which they hope to return; remain separate from the host community, although this may not always be voluntary on the part of diaspora members; and maintain group consciousness (Ibid., 23, 19, 26). TNCs and diasporas have a number of common features: leaving aside the fact that both are difficult to define, both have complex, "triadic" links with home, host and transnational cultures (Vertovec 1996a: 14; Clifford 1994: 310; see Robin Cohen 1997). Both are flexible, with diaspora members blending in more or less with their surroundings depending on the situation (van Hear 1998; Borneman and Peck 1995). Both have complex relationships with the processes of globalisation: while Robin Cohen notes that present-day telecommunications have made it easier for diasporas to maintain cohesion, it has also been said that the processes of globalisation are responsible for the continued

dispersal of diasporas (Ibid., 169; Portes 1998: 2; see van Hear 1998 for a more extensive discussion).

TNCs do not only resemble diasporas, however, but individuals may belong to both groups at once. Robin Cohen cites several “occupational” diasporas with direct relationships to transnational business practices, such as the Chinese (1997: 178). One might also, like Portes, draw a parallel between Sassen’s international executives and Portes’ own Dominican entrepreneurs (Sassen 1991; Portes 1998: 8). Furthermore, TNCs intersect not simply with diasporas in general, but with several distinct sorts of diaspora; Robin Cohen notes that the category “labour diaspora” includes groups as diverse as Chinese “astronauts” (1997: 93; Mitchell 2001) and Jewish and Lebanese “pariah capitalists” (1997: 101). Furthermore, TNCs also draw on the casual labour networks, refugees and other sorts of transnational social formation which space does not allow us to describe in detail, in order to make up the flexible workforces described by Castells which make it possible for TNCs to be active economic concerns (1996: 264-68). One cannot therefore speak of TNCs as single, definite entities, but rather as involved, not only with diasporas, but with several quite distinct transnational social formations, between which the boundaries are difficult to discern.

Finally, it is difficult to pinpoint, in the case of TNCs, where the transnational social formation ends and the non-transnational social formations begin. The (seemingly localised) nation state often has a stake in the furtherance of transnational corporations (Held et al. 1999: 274-275; 276-278). The Bank of England, a seemingly local financial organisation whose aim is to protect UK interests, also engages in transnational finance and education programmes (Bank of England 2000: 43-44). Many of the subsidiaries forming part of the transnational corporation described by Kristensen and Zeitlin are, in fact, local companies which were acquired by the larger group, which

in some cases continued to operate for the most part as if they were still local companies (forthcoming, Chapter 1). Transnational corporations thus not only have local connections, but it is in some places difficult to draw the line between their local and global engagements.

TNCs thus have a multifaceted culture consisting of engagement with, not a single “community,” but several social formations both local and global, to the point where the boundaries between TNCs and associated groups become indefinite; furthermore, they are not single entities, but are made up of a variety of different subgroups with their own interests. At a 1998 conference at the Goethe Institut, Stephen Hagen observed that much of the emphasis on TNCs developing a distinctive, global “corporate culture” comes from American TNCs who, rather than hiring local managers for their branches, hire American-educated people originating from that area; in such a situation, one might well question whether these individuals are part of “local,” American or corporate culture, if indeed any of the three are separable from the others. Kogut suggests that TNCs are conduits of national culture, not simply from the home to the host country, but also from the host to the home, through their employees’ social networks (1993). Ohmae questions whether IBM, which has a Japanese workforce but American origins and management, can be said to be Japanese, American, both or neither; Boyer notes that, even if firms are (as some hyperglobalisers suggest) converging on a common set of business practices, this will have different meanings and implications in different places (Ohmae 1990: 10; Boyer 1996: 39). It is thus not so much that TNCs are “nationalityless,” as Ohmae argues, as that they are, by virtue of their involvement with the processes of globalisation, engaged in complex “trialectics,” to coin a phrase, between two local cultures and at least one transnationally operating global culture (1990: 195; see Vertovec 1999: 449). In such a situation, the

transnational corporation cannot be seen in simple terms as a definite entity, with a particular boundary between it and other groups, and an engagement either with a particular locality or with particular global activities to the exclusion of all else.

It thus cannot be said that there is a single paradigm which defines transnational corporations, nor that transnational social formations in general can be characterised as specific entities in isolation from each other and from other types of social formation both transnational and locally-focused. The social forms which have sprung up under globalisation, and in particular transnational corporations, cannot be considered in the traditional way as isolated units, but should rather be seen as networked entities with many different sorts of internal and external connections. Much as the nature of the relationship between local and global must be contextually determined, then, it seems that a single theoretical model of transnational social formations is of less value than an examination of the nature and types of engagements possessed by these groups (see Webber 1998).

Rulers of the Earth? The Transnational Capitalist Class

One of the most important social formations which is connected with the transnational corporation is that which Leslie Sklair calls the “transnational capitalist class.” This term refers, broadly speaking, to a transnational elite with connections to business. Sklair is neither the first nor the only social scientist to have described such an elite; however, we will use his terminology because his work is probably the most extensive and comprehensive to be written on this type of transnational actor. In this section of the chapter, we shall endeavour to develop the discussion of globalisation and transnational social formations as we outline and critique the main points of the discussion surrounding the TCC.

According to Sklair, the TCC consists of “those people who see their interests... and/or the interests of their countries of citizenship, as best served by an identification with the interests of the capitalist global system, in particular the interests of the transnational corporations” (1995, p. 8). This model is an expansion of the “managerial bourgeoisie” concept developed by H. Sklar (Sklair 2001: 16). However, where Sklar saw this bourgeoisie as split into global and local wings, and as focused on particular nations, Sklair describes the TCC as the social expression of a global capitalist system, the aim of which is to encourage people around the world to consume more than they need (Ibid., 43-44, 47). He also argues that the TCC’s interests are not bound up with those of TNCs and/or foreign capital as such, but with this global capitalist system, which incorporates these social formations (Ibid., 143). The TCC is thus a worldwide bourgeois dominant group with an identification with the globalising aspects of the financescape.

Sklair, in his book *The Transnational Capitalist Class*, defines the origins and ideology of this group through four propositions: firstly, that “a transnational capitalist class based on the transnational corporation is emerging that is more or less in control of the processes of globalisation.” Secondly, that “the TCC is beginning to act as a transnational dominant class in some spheres.” Thirdly, that “the globalisation of the capitalist system reproduces itself through the profit-driven culture-ideology of consumerism.” Finally, he proposes that the transnational capitalist class is “working consciously to resolve... the simultaneous creation of increasing poverty and increasing wealth within and between communities... and.... The unsustainability of the system (the ecological crisis)” (2001, 5-6). We thus get an image of the globalising world as being dominated by a bourgeois class which is concerned with global financial and ethical issues. In keeping with the discussion above with regard to the relationship

between global and local in the financescape, Sklair acknowledges that this group does have local links. However, his arguments that some local businesses share the TCC's globalising interests and that most elites, even local ones, are becoming globally conscious to some degree suggests more that local groups are increasingly being recruited, as it were, into the TCC than that there exists a genuine global/local social interplay (Ibid., 18). According to Sklair, then, the world is increasingly coming under the domination of one particular transnational social organisation: a global capitalist elite with local links, which operates within the financescape and promotes a globalising ideology.

According to Sklair's two books on the subject, the TCC consists of four broadly defined groups (1995:72; 2001:17):

- 1) The corporate fraction: TNC executives and their local affiliates
- 2) The state fraction: globalising state bureaucrats
- 3) The technical fraction: capitalist-inspired politicians and professionals (in 2001: 17 modified to "globalising professionals")
- 4) The consumerist fraction: consumerist elites (modified in 2001: 17 to "merchants and media")

These groups, taken collectively as the TCC, share four common points with regard to transnational engagement (1995:71; 2001: 18-22):

- 1) Their economic interests are increasingly globally linked
- 2) They seek to exert economic control over the workplace

- 3) They take outward-focused global, not inward-focused local, perspectives on most issues, considering themselves “citizens of the world” (see above)
- 4) They share similar lifestyles, especially with regard to consumption and valuation of the cosmopolitan ideology (see above)

Sklair goes into further detail on their common ideological points over the course of *The Transnational Capitalist Class*: he expands on their values, such as the emphasis on world best practice (2001: Chapter 5), global corporate citizenship (Ibid., Chapter 6), and environmentalism (Ibid., Chapter 7), and on their common self-definition through the consumption of particular goods (Ibid., Chapter 8; see also Miller 1997). The transnational capitalist class thus consists of four interconnected groups defined by common practices and values, whose transnational activities cause them to engage with the financescape in certain ways.

Sklair also briefly notes that resistance by other local and global groups to the TCC’s increasing domination has been limited (2001, p. 18). Although this has more recently proven not to be the case, with the rise in anti-capitalist protests and the activities of international terrorists, one might observe that the resistance has proven to have, often ironic, connections to the elite. As many a journalist has pointed out, most of the anticapitalist protestors at WTO meetings are the children of this global elite, and are less anticapitalist in deed than in word; they use the Internet, own commercially-manufactured mobile phones, and drink imported coffee at the same time as they decry global capitalism, transnational corporations and sharecropping arrangements (Smith 2001; see also www.indymedia.org). The TCC’s own environmentalist ethic causes them to support groups and individuals opposed to global capitalism (see Sklair 2001: 200). During the Afghan conflict, US forces seized a number of Western-made laptop

computers from al-Qaida headquarters and cave complexes; even a group ideologically opposed to Western capitalism apparently sees little wrong in using its products (www.ananova.com 2002). While recent events have overtaken Sklair's analysis of the resistance to the TCC, it would seem that he is correct in arguing that such activities do not provide a particularly counterhegemonic voice in practice.

A number of anthropologists, sociologists and geographers also assume a transnational elite which more or less fits Sklair's definition. Castells, for instance, speaks of an elite with a cosmopolitan lifestyle, whose symbolic environment focuses around transnational social spaces— airports, international hotels, and so forth (1996: 417; see also Iyer 2000: Chapter 2). Although he believes that there is no such thing as a global labour force, elite or otherwise-- it being still constrained by institutions, culture and borders—he argues that there is an increasing tendency towards *interdependence* of the labour force on a global scale (1996). Ong, in an article on Chinese cosmopolitan businesspeople, quotes a banker as saying “I can live anywhere in the world, but it must be near an airport” (1998: 157). From the mid-1980s (which Leyshon and Thrift [1997: 135] characterise as the period in which various economic processes coalesced into a 24-hour, more or less global, financial system) onwards, Beaverstock charts the emergence of a group of high-waged labour migrants, due to the needs of TNCs for a labour pool of individuals with particular skills who could interpret company policy-- i.e. reproduce the company culture-- in the local context (1991; 1994; 1996a; Beaverstock and Smith 1996: 1390; see Torbiörn 1982). People with these skills were rewarded with high pay and “fast track” careers, and thus “must be internationally mobile if they wish[ed] to climb the corporate ladder” (Beaverstock 1996b: 427, 430). These migrants came to form a transnational network with nodes in the “global cities” (422; Smart and Smart 1996), characterised by particular skills, a particular lifestyle,

and a more or less common ideology in which transnational practices are strongly valued (Beaverstock and Smith 1996; Beaverstock 1996b: 427-430; Westney 1993: 64). One may note the popularity of “intercultural training” among TNC employees, and the large number of books intended to instruct them in using cultural differences to their own advantage (Delacroix 1993: 111; see Dahlen 1997, Hunt 1998; I recommend Horovitz [1980], Hickson and Pugh [1997], and Mead [1994], as good examples of the genre.). There is thus support from other social scientists for the concept of a transnational capitalist class, in the form of an inward-focused, globally-engaged elite, which interacts with the local only inasmuch as it serves its economic purposes.

In addition, the TCC model has made it into more popular accounts of globalisation. A pair of journalists, Mickelthwait and Wooldridge, write at length on the subject of “cosmocrats” (2000: Chapter 12). While theirs is a broader definition than Sklair’s, encompassing globetrotting academics, artists and people who work on or with the Internet as well as the expatriate employees of sprawling TNCs (Ibid., 230-1), their description of the capitalist-related fraction of the “cosmocrats” is very close to the above formulation of the TCC. Like Sklair, Castells and other social scientists, they define this elite “by their attitudes and lifestyles rather than just their bank accounts,” these being “cosmopolitan in taste and usually Anglo-American in outlook” (Ibid., 230, 229). Mickelthwait and Wooldridge argue that “global habits” are developing in this elite, with increasing dependence on communication, reverence for intelligence and sharp anxieties about change (Ibid., 233, 240ff). Two economic journalists thus also make an argument that the social organisation of elite transnational businesspeople takes the form, more or less, of a TCC.

While it would seem that most writers, popular and academic, believe on some level that there is verifiably a globally-engaged TCC increasing in power within the

global financescape (and arguably elsewhere), the theory as presented does have problems. These writers for the most part treat the TCC more or less in isolation from other groups, both transnational and more localised; they seemingly assume a lack of engagement with any of these on the TCC's part. Sklair very seldom refers in either of his books on the subject to the engagement of these capitalists with the local; his article about the executives of tobacco companies makes a nod in that direction, but only a slight one (1998b). The question of the relationship of the TCC with less globally-focused groups is thus seldom directly addressed by Sklair.

Other sources, however, suggest more in the way of engagement between the TCC and local groups. The *History of Deutsche Bank* discusses the involvement of the corporation and its management with local affairs both in Germany and elsewhere over the years (Gall et al., eds., 1995). All of the ethnographies of capitalist elite show them to, at some point in the study, claim allegiance with some particular cultural background or other; it is significant that in Goodman's study of the children of the Japanese transnational capitalist elite, his subjects were not urged to reject local roots, but to take "the best" of both their Japanese family background and of the cultures in which they had spent part of their childhoods (1993: 137, see Chapter 7, this volume). Far from being an aloof elite dominating a local group of subalterns, then, the TCC seems to have a number of local connections which have not been considered by most writers on the subject.

Many social scientists, furthermore, appear to consider the TCC as lacking in contact with other sorts of transnational social organisations. While this would seem a pretty incredible feat simply on paper, there is also considerable evidence to the contrary even within the works on the subject. Members of the TCC are also by definition members of other sorts of transnational social formations, be they expatriates

sent abroad by TNCs or wealthy members of an ethnic diaspora, or even both.

Furthermore, they have contacts and connections with less obvious transnational social formations: the expatriate managers of TNCs, for instance, are engaged with anticapitalist demonstrators, if only to refute their claims (Verhofstat 2001), workers both local and migrant (Castles and Kosack 1973; Roberts et. al. 1992), Internet-related organisations and consumers all around the world (Miller and Slater 2000: Chapter 6). In addition, the transnational corporate elite receive their collective attitudes, disciplines and values from the writings of such groups as travel journalists and popular academics, transnational elites in and of themselves (e.g. Barley 1998). Most writers thus fail to consider the engagement of the TCC with other transnational groups.

In addition, while some (including, significantly, Sklair), do acknowledge variation within the TCC, there is also a tendency to treat it nonetheless as a unit. While part of this is simply a drawback of the fact that he is using sociological rather than ethnographic methodology, as the former is much better at extracting quantitative rather than qualitative data (Mitchell 1983), Sklair does not consider the possibility that the four segments he cites have different sorts of relationships with the global and with other groups. A quick comparison of different sorts of transnational capitalist elite also suggests much variation: Goodman's (1993) Japanese "international youth" have a different sort of lifestyle to Ong's Chinese "astronauts" (1998), and Hannerz's West African "beentos" (1996: 139). All of the groups discussed above thus fit Sklair's criteria, but live quite different lifestyles and take different views of the world.

More problematically, Sklair also does not consider the possibility of a TCC which includes elements from developing areas. In his 1995 work *The Sociology of the Global System*, he argues that the lack of technology and information media in the Third World means that few people from developing countries have risen to join the

TCC, a view with which Castells appears to agree (1998: 28, 92). However, this is gainsaid by Hannerz's study of elite West Africans (1996), as well as by a recent documentary on "Bindi Millionaires," transnational businesspeople of South Asian origin who enjoy great status in both South Asia and the West (BBC 2, dir. Murphy, 2001). Mickelthwait and Wooldridge (2000) cite as one of their "five myths of globalisation" the notion that the First World is prospering to the detriment of the Third, citing examples of small, "Third World" businesses which have unexpectedly prospered where General Motors faltered and crashed, leaving many Americans on the edge of ruin (Ibid., 109-114, Chapter 6, 247-251). While one should not lose sight of the fact that a global hierarchy of nations still exists, it remains that talk of the "First" and "Third" Worlds is increasingly anachronistic in the face of a global business elite, and that it is similarly problematic to draw a boundary between a global elite and local subalterns.

Finally, one might well inquire exactly what Sklair means by calling his studied group a "class." While Sklair's description of their situation echoes Gramscian terms of dominant/subaltern class relations to some extent, the context is one removed from the traditional spheres of Marxism; the TCC cannot really be said to own the means of production in an environment in which one company's product is in fact usually produced by another such company (Gramsci 1971; Worsley 1999: 18-21; Castells 1996:191). Most other writers on the subject, significantly, prefer to use terms such as "transnational business elite," thereby situating the group in a broader social sphere than simply the economic, and avoiding the problematic associations of the term "class." While the basic theory as put forward by Sklair, Castells and others appears valid, then, there are a few gaps in the study of the TCC which need to be filled.

While I have been unable to discover much in the way of formal reviews of Sklair's works, the TCC concept has been tacitly criticised by a number of anthropologists. Unfortunately, however, most such critiques tend to make exactly the same mistakes in reverse, describing transnational subaltern classes in much the same disengaged, homogenous way as other writers do the transnational elite (see Lindisfarne 2002). Portes, although he is strongly critical of what he sees as the focus on elite transnationalism in studies of globalisation, does not address the relationship between elite and subaltern in his own work (1998). His study of Dominican peasants dismisses their involvement with state bureaucracy and global capital, portraying them instead as resisting First World domination through transnational practices, when it could be argued that by acting as cheap labour to First World organisations, they are in fact supporting it. It is also actually rather difficult, on the face of it, to argue for a categorical difference between Sklair's TCC and Portes' Dominicans, who are profiting from globalisation every bit as much as, and in similar ways to, their elite counterparts. Guarnizo and Smith cuttingly point out, with reference to such studies, that simply because a group is "oppressed," it does not mean that they do not share exactly the same hegemonic outlook as their oppressors (1998: 24). Tony Lane, in a recent lecture (1999), dismissed suggestions that his working-class seafarers had anything in common with elite transnational businesspeople, and yet the seafarers whom he described had a cosmopolitan ethic, a positive valuation of capitalism, a global perspective and similar consumption patterns to the businesspeople. Consequently, there have been few studies which acknowledge the links between different sorts of transnational social formation, both elite and subaltern.

Furthermore, the studies of subaltern transnationalism also do not usually take into account the possibility of internal variation within the studied group. While Portes

mentions that some of his interviewees were village leaders in their “home” countries, he does not say whether or not there was any differentiation between them and those who did not hold such a position (1998). Tony Lane does discuss the problems of running a multiethnic ship’s crew in some detail, but does not mention whether there are other points of division in the group than ethnicity—religion, for instance (1999). Smith and Guarnizo’s volume, by classifying together studies of all groups which practice “transnationalism from below” in opposition to elite transnationalism, carries the implicit message that Haitian immigrants in New York should be considered in the same category as Hong Kong Chinese “astronaut families” and Mexican migrant labourers (Smith and Guarnizo [eds.] 1998; Schiller and Faron 1998; Smart and Smart 1998; Smith 1998). Most of this would seem to be a drawback of social science methodology, which necessitates the formulation of general conclusions from a sample which is in one way or another subject to limitations (Goldthorpe 2001). However, the result of such an approach is that the possibility of a complex, multilayered and flexible transnational capitalist group or groups is seldom explored. Critiques of the TCC theory thus are not so much criticisms of the basic theory as ethnographies of the exceptions—and these exceptions often appear have more common points than differences with the TCC.

It would seem, then, that what is needed is a more multilayered approach to studying transnational capitalism than simply looking at single “classes” more or less in isolation from each other and from various localities. It might, for instance be worth looking at elite transnational businesspeople in terms of its members’ networks, their interactions with other groups, and how its members consider their position in terms of the global landscapes (see Webber 1998). It might also be worth considering how interactions with other groups, “global” and “local,” affect elite transnational

businesspeople, not to mention the other groups in question. One should also look at the indigenous categories as well as ones which are more clear to external observers; that is to say, one must consider how transnational businesspeople socially construct themselves and the financescape as well as how the researcher views these (see Sperber 1974: Chapter 2). A more organic, dynamic, internally-focused study of transnational businesspeople thus might provide a means of filling one or two of the extant gaps in research.

As such, the best way in which to study transnational businesspeople may be to apply the ethnographic method to a more-or-less identifiable group within this elite. While this approach may seem counterintuitive, as the aim of this study is to problematise with rather than to reinforce artificial divisions, it is worth seeing whether this hypothesis of complex internal and external links will hold true even in the case of a “classic” identifiable transnational elite group. By examining a small number of individual cases in detail, rather than relying on more quantitative data methods, one may be able to perceive the internal “voice” of transnational businesspeople lacking from many of the studies critiqued above.

In addition, by abandoning Sklair’s neo-Marxist framework and looking at the globetrotting business elite as a self-defined transnational social formation rather than an economic phenomenon, one might avoid the problematic associations which are inevitable within the Marxist approach. The question of ownership of the means of production, for instance, is a problematic one in the context of the networked, multifaceted structure of TNCs; a focus on large-scale economics, furthermore, obscures the effect of smaller-scale social activities. While we will continue to use the word “class” since it is the one chosen by Sklair, we will be considering this classification as referring less to rigid socio-economic hierarchies and more to the social

perception of this group as an elite. A small-scale, ethnographic study of transnational businesspeople would therefore be of benefit to the study of transnational social formations in general.

While the present definition of the “transnational capitalist class” is useful in that it highlights the emergence of an elite group which may well be unique (if only in the sheer level of global engagement of some of its members), it is still lacking in merit as a means of considering how individuals live and work in a globally engaged environment on a day-to-day basis. By examining the ways in which these individuals present themselves as members of a particular ethnic group and yet, at the same time, of a global elite, therefore, one may be able to gain further insight into the structure of transnational social formations, as well as ways in which such groups mediate the global and local social spaces in which they operate. A more in-depth exploration of a single group of transnational businesspeople within the financescape may provide the necessary perspective on this subject.

Conclusion

It thus seems that, while the current definitions of globalisation take into account the “complex connectivity” and continual interaction of local and global components, and those of transnational corporations similarly consider their engagement with other sorts of social groups, the same cannot be said for elite transnational businesspeople. While the extant definitions of this group does situate it in terms of the global financescape, they portray it for the most part as isolated, cut off from other transnational and local groups apart from the occasional bout of recruitment. An examination of how this transnational social formation represents itself symbolically, as members of particular cultures and as cosmopolitan elites, may provide a different perspective on the subject.

II. Signs of the Times: **Symbols, Communication and Power**

Before we can consider the uses of images of Germanness and cosmopolitanism in the daily lives of transnational businesspeople, we must first take a look at the nature of symbolism and how it relates to the act of self-presentation in business and elsewhere. An examination of theories on the subject since the 1950s suggests that transnational groups, especially those involved with the financescape, make use of symbols to present themselves to the best strategic advantage, and that this fact causes them to engage with other local and transnational groups in diverse ways.

In this chapter, I will lay out the theoretical background for the case study of the self-presentation of transnational businesspeople. Consequently, I will be focussing firstly on developing a definition of symbolism; secondly, on outlining its uses in group formation, particularly in transnational environments; thirdly, on defining the role of symbolic self-presentation in daily interaction; and finally, bringing all of these together to look at how the community construction and self-presentation of actors in the global financescape combine to create patterns of allegiance within it. We should thus be able to develop a theoretical model which explains how symbols can be used to connect, and to internally divide, groups of transnational actors in the global business environment.

Knowledge is Power: Sperber and Symbolism

Before we can look at the uses of symbols, we must first develop a working definition of what, in this context, they are. Leaving aside Frazer's theory that symbols are simply "primitive" peoples' misunderstandings of natural phenomena, as it is no longer considered an accurate assessment of the situation, and Jung's that symbols

represent some form of collective social memory, as this is something which cannot be demonstrated one way or the other, the first anthropological theory of symbolism which is relevant to our discussion is the structuralist model, which presents it as a cryptic representation of a given society, or particular aspects of a given society (Frazer 1900; Jung 1928: 270-281; see also Skorpuski 1976: 3-7). Levi-Strauss and Turner, most notably, operated on the assumption that by deconstructing symbols, an anthropologist can learn much about a group's structure and values (Levi-Strauss 1968, esp. Chapter 11; Turner 1967: 44). Douglas, similarly, presents evidence that aspects of a group's social system are represented in its key symbols, religious or otherwise: for instance, liminal areas such as doors are given a good deal of ritual attention in the "dirt-rejecting" cultures of India, in which firm boundaries between groups are maintained (1970: 59; 1966: Chapter 7). The structuralist model of symbolism thus constructed it as a way of representing a society's values, with inherent "meanings" being discernable in the symbols by the careful observer.

This theory, however, has been strongly challenged in Sperber's monograph *Rethinking Symbolism* (1974). Sperber questions how much of the "meaning" thus determined actually stems from the symbols themselves, and how much derives from the observer's personal associations (Ibid., 57). He cites a case from his own fieldwork regarding Dorze ritual headgear, which he interpreted as being an obvious phallic symbol, but the Dorze themselves claimed not to see any such resemblance. As the Dorze are the actual wearers of the headgear, Sperber saw no reason why his interpretation should be prioritised above theirs (Ibid., 36). There is also evidence from other ethnographies to support Sperber's assertion that symbolic systems are far too complex for an observer to be able to "decode" them and subsequently make inferences about the society which are more insightful than those of the natives themselves (1974).

One might, for instance, note that in Japan, both funerals (polluting) and shrine rituals (purifying) are associated with the left hand, making it difficult to draw any sort of conclusions about Japanese social values from observation of their symbols vis-à-vis the left and right hand (Matsunaga 1986: 154-155). Symbolism is thus more complex than a single direct relationship between an object, its “meaning,” and society.

Other writers have suggested, following on from Levi-Strauss’ analogy between language and culture, that it is more useful to consider symbolism as a form of communication system, rather than a simple representation of society (Levi-Strauss 1968: 67-68, 140). The best-known work to link the study of symbolism with linguistic theory is probably Edmund Leach’s 1976 book *Culture and Communication*. Leach argues that symbols are a type of semiotic system, whereby one can, if one knows the code, decipher the “message” conveyed by a given symbol set (Ibid., 41). Like phonemes (Hickerson 1980: 54) and words (Lyons 1973: 12), non-linguistic symbols lack meaning on their own and only obtain it in opposition to others: the colours red and green mean “stop” and “go” only when opposed in a traffic light (Lyons 1973: 33; Morris 1987: 229). Leach argues that symbols combine to convey messages (Ibid., 41); “right” and “left” have no inherent ritual meaning in Japan, but in particular Shinto rituals, they form part of communicative acts about society (see Matsunaga 1986). Symbolism, according to Leach and others, is therefore just a way of communicating concepts which are more complicated than can be expressed in ordinary sentences.

Sperber’s argument, however, also highlights some difficulties with this way of considering symbolism. He argues that the multivalency of symbols—i.e., their quality of being able to hold more than one meaning, even at the same time-- makes it less than accurate to portray them as “paired with their interpretations” in a logical system (1974: 85). Sperber notes that among the Dorze, butter on the head at a wedding can be paired

by researchers both with the use of butter on food in everyday life— in which the act would connote the conspicuous consumption of a scarce resource-- and with moss on the head for a funeral, in which the act would connote living as opposed to dead things (Ibid., 55). According to him, to focus on individual symbols is misleading, and he urges anthropologists to consider the whole (real and symbolic) context of the use of symbols: he likens symbols to light sources, valuable for what they illuminate, not what they are (Ibid., 70). Sperber thus criticises the notion that symbols are simply elements of a communication system.

In challenge to these formulations, Sperber develops a different scheme, one in which symbolism is said to be a system of knowledge. Although Sperber does not reject the idea that a symbol may (in some contexts) represent a part of society or communicate complex ideas, he argues that this is not their main or only role (1974: 118). According to Sperber, a given symbol does not denote a particular message so much as evoke ideas in its audience's minds; for example, the image of a fox evokes all that its viewer has personally experienced and heard said about foxes, and the viewer selects the items of knowledge, literal and symbolic, relevant to the situation from this store (Ibid., 108). Sperber notes that, while someone who does not speak Chinese (sic) cannot understand the language, Chinese myths have resonance for people in other cultures (Ibid., 86). The power of symbols, also, depends upon their ability to take on different meanings in different contexts. Symbols thus have the same "life cycle," as it were, as any other item of knowledge: they are selected and imbued with meaning over time by a process of discussion and agreement within a particular culture; these meanings can shift gradually over time, and are reproduced through the same medium by which other forms of knowledge are transmitted to the next generation; they are designated as symbolic through their being evoked in ritual or fictitious contexts, much

as other items of knowledge are evoked in the contexts to which they are relevant (Ibid., Chapter 4). Sperber's theory of the use of symbols, incorporating and expanding upon earlier models as it does, is thus the most comprehensive formulation of the nature of symbolism which we have to date.

However comprehensive it may be, Sperber's work has nonetheless been the subject of valid criticism by later writers. For instance, it can be argued that communication is actually one of the more important roles of symbolism. While Sperber's argument that symbols are more complex than a simple semiotic system is justified, Sperber himself has been criticised by Strecker for ignoring the importance of their communicative potential (Sperber 1974: 39; Strecker 1988: 11). Strecker argues that the multivalency of symbols makes them an ideal medium for communicating sensitive or potentially damaging messages (1988). Symbols are often used as a way of tacitly expressing concepts which are emotionally charged and/or difficult to verbalise: for S. Larsen's Northern Irish neighbours, any object could send a political message, "provided one knows the language" (1982a: 137; 1982b). Brien and David speak of the difficulty of sojourners in adjusting to different societies as a communication problem (1971; see also Oberg 1960). Whatever else they may be or do, then, one of the most important uses of symbols is as a means of communicating concepts too complex or politically sensitive to be put into words.

Furthermore, it has also been argued that Sperber's theory ignores the relation of symbols to power. Strecker (1988), although he acknowledges that a power dimension is present in some of Sperber's examples (e.g. 1974: 123-4), puts it forth that Sperber does not go far enough towards exploring the implications of this fact. Taking Sperber's concept of symbolism as being the evocation of particular associations in the minds of individuals presented with images, objects, and other symbolic items, based on their

system of knowledge, he proposes that symbols are tools of manipulation used to fulfil one's wishes without appearing to threaten the fulfilment of another's (74), or to establish dominance without engaging in physical conflict (172). Strecker thus makes the valid point that the multivalency of symbols gives them a practical use in terms of power relations.

A similar point is made in an article which was published around the same time as Sperber's monograph: Bloch's "Symbols, Song and Dance" (1974). Like Sperber, Bloch takes symbols as something more than a system of communication, and implies that they evoke ranges of ideas and emotions (Ibid., 56). However, like Strecker, he concentrates on how this property of symbols is employed; Bloch focuses on the uses of symbolism in politics and organised religion to restrict a given discourse, and to prevent it from being led off into undesired areas (Ibid., 68, 79). As Bloch puts it, "you cannot argue with a song," as the verses and choruses form a set pattern and cannot be deviated from without breaking out of the song; in religious and political rhetoric, similarly, the use of particular symbols restricts the discourse to the associations evoked by these (Ibid., 71). Recent examples of this can be found in the news broadcasts following the events of September 11th, 2001: by using the language of war to describe the action against the World Trade Centre, American politicians and journalists ruled out the mainstream interpretation of the actions as "terrorism" or even "freedom fighting." One might also note the adverse press reaction when the same politicians began insisting that captured Taleban fighters did not constitute "prisoners of war," suggesting that by breaking the discourse, the politicians were alienating their audience (see also Douglas [1970: 23, 55] for a discussion of symbolism as a Bernsteinian "restricted code"). Bloch thus indicates the uses of symbolism in politics to control the way in which particular issues are presented, and the ways in which this can be a double-edged sword.

An examination of the most useful theories of symbolism in this context therefore suggests that it is best to consider them here as a system of knowledge, but one with communicative aspects. As a system of knowledge, symbols have the potential to allow for multiple engagements; if they are as multivalent as Sperber says (1974), then a symbol which expresses allegiance to one group can be used also to express allegiance for another in another context (an eagle, for instance, can be a symbol either of the United States or of the Hapsburg Empire). As a form of communication, symbols can also be used to convey messages about, among other things, politics and social “belonging” (see Anthony Cohen 1982a, 1986). Symbols can therefore be used to convey an actor’s association with a particular group; however, this act may have different meanings, even refer to different groups, under different circumstances.

Sperber’s basic theory of symbolism is thus the most useful one to have been formulated to date, presenting as it does symbols as part of a system of knowledge, in which given images, scents, sounds and so forth evoke a variety of context-dependent responses. In addition, this theory has opened the way for other commentators to take Sperber’s analysis one step further, and to detail how this quality of symbols makes it possible for people to use them in communicative and strategic acts. Symbols can thus be used to build, and communicate messages about, group allegiance.

This Land was Made for You and Me: Symbols in Group Formation

In the wake of the studies of the uses of symbols in the 1970s, certain anthropologists turned their attention to examining how these could be used in the definition and maintenance of the structure of social groups. Anthony Cohen in particular has detailed this process in his many works on the subject, most notably in *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (1985). Cohen proposes that membership in

social groups is defined by, and expressed through the use of, commonly held symbols, both in ritual and in everyday life (Anthony Cohen 1985, 1994, 1987: 19; see also Brien and David 1971). Although the interpretations given to the symbols vary from individual to individual, Cohen argues, key aspects of these interpretations are shared by all group members, due to their common experience of socialisation (1986: 9). This is the case, for instance, for Alexander's Black British youth, whose image of the "typical black male," although interpreted slightly differently by each person, was more or less common to all of them (Alexander 1996: 64). Cohen's theory is also confirmed by Oberg's original article on "cultural shock," which blames in part the lack of familiar symbols and interpretations for travellers' distress when in foreign countries (Oberg 1960). Cohen claims that symbols are the only means of expressing the sense of belonging to a group, as they are capable of compressing complex ideas and stimulating powerful emotions (1987: 11). According to Anthony Cohen, then, social groups are established and maintained through collective symbolism.

Cohen further argues that this use of symbols creates and reinforces a boundary between one's own group and other groups, who do not use these symbols in the same way. This boundary, according to Cohen, is essential to the group's "identity," or sense of itself as a unit, as it suggests that its members have something in common which they do not share with members of other groups, and as the image of the Other is essential to the definition of the Self (Anthony Cohen 1985: 12, 1982b; see also Douglas 1966, Shaw 1988: 35). Many of Cohen's contemporaries also seem to consider "identity" as consisting of symbolic boundaries between groups. Corrigan, for instance, notes that we are taught socially how to view images, making image-viewing a sort of Bourdieuesque *habitus*, and one in which symbols can be expected to be common to particular groups, like any other sort of social practice (1988: 267). One of S. Larsen's Irish Protestants,

for instance, said that “we can’t tell who are the IRA men [sic], but they can” (1982a: 143; 1982b). Similarly, Jeffery’s Pakistani migrants’ dress sets them off, not entirely by choice, from the rest of English society (1976: 98). Symbols thus relate to group formation as a means of inclusion and exclusion: of reinforcing internal cohesion and creating boundaries.

Although Cohen was writing with reference to small village communities rather than transnational social organisations, his basic theoretical framework can be applied to other, border-spanning groups, as witness Goltz’s use of Cohen’s basic framework to consider the construction of group allegiance among German Jews and Gentiles in diaspora (1998). Among other transnational social organisations, one can observe processes like those of McFeat’s small-group cultures, which maintain their sense of themselves as units through shared information, or Shirley Ardener’s marginal groups reinforcing their sense of their place in the universe through developing “social maps” (McFeat 1974; S. Ardener 1993: 19; see also Ridd 1993). Hannerz, for instance, speaks of people surviving in transnational contexts through developing sets of “decontextualised knowledge,” which can be recontextualised in different cases (1990: 246). Stack argues that “ethnicity” is a powerful force in contemporary world politics not only because it bypasses formal state authority, but because it operates on multiple levels, including the emotional level (1981a: 6). All of these appear to refer to Sperberian symbols by any other name (see Sperber 1974). Cohen’s theory is thus applicable to transnational as well as to the more localised groups with which Cohen worked.

However, while Cohen’s theory has applications above and beyond those originally intended, it is not immune from criticism. One problem lies with Cohen’s use of the somewhat monolithic notion of “identity”: in his works of the 1980s, “identity”

appears to mean a single system of knowledge which everyone in a given group “has,” and, seemingly, of which they only “have” one. Although he acknowledges, in his study of Whalsay, that diverse groups exist within the community, the sense of “being Whalsa’” is, according to Cohen, prioritised above all others (1987: 109). When cases of intersection or potential conflict between an actor’s allegiances to social groups--being female and Whalsa’, for instance, or both a fisher and a crofter--are discussed, it is only as they relate to the general sense of what it is to be Whalsa’ (1979: 257-259). Other writers have critiqued this description of “identity” as a single object or entity which can be had or held. Banks, for instance, argues that one cannot discuss “ethnic identity” without bringing in other sorts of group allegiance and self-definition, such as those relating to “race” and nationalism, and notes that the concept of “identity” as defined by anthropologists varies considerably in different times and places (1996, esp. p. 188; see also Eriksen 1993). For Alexander’s Black British youths, their conception of themselves as “black” was by turns opposed to and in line with their conception of themselves as “British,” and both of these were affected by discourses based on their or their parents’ country of origin, on their own occupation, and on who can, according to their lights, be considered “black” (1996: 51, 31, 27, 59). Frankenberg’s “white women” related to her in terms of several different group identifications simultaneously, including some that were never overtly expressed (1993). All of these works suggest that one should think less in terms of a definite object called “identity,” and more in terms of complex, vague allegiances, symbolically defined, to different groups which are held by individual and collective actors.

Cohen’s concept of the boundary is also open to criticism (R. Jenkins 1996: 98). In employing the notion of groups as defining themselves through boundaries, Cohen is continuing a trend which has pervaded theories of collective self-definition from the

beginning of anthropological interest in the subject. Durkheim and Mauss, at the turn of the century, believed the classification of social groups to be the essential activity of human cultures, as did Douglas, writing in the 1960s (Durkheim and Mauss 1963 [1903]; Douglas 1966). Barth's 1969 essay on "ethnic identity" introduced the notion that cultures define themselves through the maintenance of intergroup boundaries, although both he and his contributors allow that these are permeable (Eriksen 1993: 37; Barth 1969; Haaland 1969). Wallman, however, in her study of two London neighbourhoods, argues, not for a single, permeable boundary, but for multiple frames of reference—ethnicity, occupation, and so forth—whose boundaries, taken together, form that of the whole group (1986a, b). The "boundary" of one neighbourhood appeared "permeable" because having any one of the above in common with extant members provided a means of entry, but in less "permeable" neighbourhoods, two or more such criteria had to be fulfilled (Ibid.). Hannerz says that to see social groups as bounded units in opposition to each other does not take into account such factors as class, which divide them internally (1992: 75; see also McFarlane 1986). While in some cases, the idea of a boundary can be a powerful symbol for a particular group (as for Anthony Cohen's Whalsa' folk) the notion of social affiliation being defined exclusively by group boundaries, however intricate, permeable or frequently redefined, does not account sufficiently for the complexity of the social constructions described in many ethnographic accounts (1985; 1987).

The fact that Cohen specifically bases his concept of the boundary on Sperber's theory of symbolism raises some problems as to the viability of Cohen's model. Although Sperber himself does not particularly explore the use of symbols in constructing social groups, Strecker notes that the multivalency of symbols can make for something more flexible than a boundary: if one chooses to ignore the overtures of

another person, one can do so by choosing a different interpretation for the symbols that s/he uses--but, if one is sympathetic to them, one can adopt the same meaning for these symbols as the speaker (1988, esp. pp. 74, 110). Furthermore, as Hannerz observes, people within a group may be just as divided over the meaning of a symbol as are two separate groups (Hannerz 1992: 74-75). Again, while Strecker's and, by extension, Sperber's theories of symbolism support Anthony Cohen's assertion that symbols are the ideal way in which to express the complexity and mutability of group allegiance, they suggest that the maintenance of the boundary is not essential to the process of its construction.

This problematisation of the boundary causes difficulties for the application of Cohen's theory of the social construction of community to the transnational context in particular. As discussed in Chapter 1, the very existence of transnational social formations is predicated on the crossing of borders. Not surprisingly, members of transnational social formations do not appear to be using symbols to reinforce boundaries, but rather as, in Swidler's phrase, a "toolkit" from which to select different ways of communicating their multiple allegiances to diverse groups (1986; see Vertovec and Rogers 1998: 8). Goodman, to take an example, discusses how at one school for Japanese "international youth," "foreign" activities such as football are encouraged, but are said to embody "Japanese" virtues (1993: 126-127). Transnational social formations thus use symbols as a means of expressing diverse allegiances in the unbounded structure of the "globalising" world rather than to construct boundaries (see Vertovec 1999: 455-456).

This use of symbols—as toolkits rather than as fences-- may be partly down to the nature of the transnational social formations themselves. Castells argues that the economy today is both informational, in that productivity depends on the actor's ability

to deal with information, and global, in that all places around the globe are to some degree economically linked (1996: 60). The organisational form which best fits such an economy, he argues, is the “network enterprise,” the “form of enterprise whose system of means is constituted by the intersection of segments of autonomous systems of goals” (Ibid., 171). Such organisations are not so much firms as international networks of firms: supplier, producer, customer, technology cooperation networks and standard coalitions all coexist within a single organisation (Ibid., 191). In general, Castells suggests that the new social unit is the network, not the individual or the collective (meaning class, state etc.); he holds up as both examples and causes of this the multimedia industry and online “virtual communities.” (Ibid., 198, 364, 334). He also considers “global cities” (see Chapter 4, this volume) as nodes in a network, the power centres of a new form of information age (Castells 1996: 380, 410). Transnational social formations are the vectors of this outlook (1996). Given this sort of environment, in which control over time and space is important, it is not surprising that transnational social formations should define themselves through symbols in the absence of definite physical boundary markers.

One can, however, go further and argue that it is this very *lack* of definite boundaries which makes the construction of group allegiance through symbols essential for such people, as their engagement in many cultures requires an equally multiply engaged medium for communicating their allegiances. Appadurai argues that symbols can be understood across a variety of contexts, and that the global, “borderless” media provide a counterpart to the deterritorialisation experienced under the processes of globalisation (1990). Symbols provide a way of constructing more than one community simultaneously: witness, to take an example from transnational business, Boyer’s German engineers, who express both ethnicity and a sense of professional

distinctiveness through presenting engineering skill as an attribute of “Germanness” (1996: 53). One might also consider the case of Vertovec and Rogers’ Asian teenagers, who wear clothing which expresses their religious and ethnic affiliations simultaneously or sequentially (1998: 1, 4). Furthermore, in a context in which connections with certain groups are prioritised, they could provide a means of expressing allegiances with others, through blurring the boundaries between the dominant and the tacit allegiance in the context (see, for instance, Strecker 1988; Bloch 1974). Finally, Bauman notes that expressions of ethnicity or other sorts of group allegiance can be a way of dealing with anxiety over a lack of boundaries in the newly “open-bordered” Europe (1998: 6). For groups linked to the processes of globalisation, then, it is not only that the expression of group allegiance is not necessarily a process of boundary definition, but that their use of symbols to strategically construct community is predicated on the absence of boundaries.

The best way of considering the construction of groups in the context of transnational settings may thus be to see this as an ongoing process. R. Jenkins describes “social identity” as an ongoing dialectic between “our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and... other people’s understanding of themselves and others” (1996: 5). A sense of group affiliation, he argues, results from collective internal and external self-definition (Ibid., 5, 83-85). Hannerz describes the expression of group allegiance not so much as a monolithic “identity” as a repertoire of symbols, which can be selected from and mixed in different ways, and through which people view the world (1983: 348, 355; 1992: 65). Hannerz also discusses the case of actors with multiple group allegiances, or of subgroups within wider groups, in which the same symbols can be said to define both or all the groups in question, but with different interpretations (1992). Douglas adds that there is an element of ascription as well

(1983). Actors' allegiances thus change from context to context, and are informed by all the different possibilities for interpretation open to the actor expressing, and the actor(s) receiving, the symbols being used (see Dundes 1983; Bausinger 1983; R. Jenkins 1996). Symbols in transnational contexts are thus not so much used to construct bounded "identities," as they are to continually define and redefine the relationships between groups and/or individuals through the selection of different symbols or sets of symbols.

In examining how symbolism is used to define social organisation in transnational contexts, then, it seems that the multivalency of symbols is used less to divide groups than as a flexible means of expressing divisions and connections simultaneously or in series. While Cohen's concept of group affiliation as being so complex that it is best expressed through symbolism is a useful one, his emphasis on boundaries and his view of "group identity" as a solid, unitary "object" can prove problematic (1982a). It is difficult to explain how Ronald Cohen's "plural society" can contain groups at once incorporated within and distinct from the dominant group using a boundary-based model, to say nothing of the "mosaics" of cultures and subcultures described by the more transnationally-focussed Hannerz (Ronald Cohen 1978: 400; Hannerz 1992: 74-75). Consequently, it might be better to consider the construction of social groups in transnational contexts as a continual process of self- and other-definition through social interaction, which can only be communicated through a medium capable of expressing concepts of shifting meaning but static form (R. Jenkins 1996: 116; Gumperz 1983). While the multivalency and communicative potential of symbols is essential to group formation in the global financescape, it is not so much as a means of establishing stability as it is of defining and redefining connections and divisions.

Anthony Cohen's theory of the social construction of community, modified through later criticisms of its basic concepts, thus gives us a model of how symbolism may be used to construct communal groups in transnational contexts. Symbols make for a complex way of identifying and defining a group or culture based on shared representations; however, they are not used so much to define an "identity" or construct a boundary as to provide a flexible means of accommodating multiple allegiances in a context in which the main social form is less like a bounded group than it is like a network. In transnational contexts, then, symbolism is used not so much to define bounded units as to emphasise politically and socially expedient connections.

Positive Self-Image: Symbols in Self-Presentation

The idea that the same symbols which define groups can be used as part of strategic social activity is, of course, nothing new. From the late 1950s onwards, Erving Goffman was exploring the ways in which people define themselves and their allegiances, most famously in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), but also in many of his other articles and books (e.g. 1961, 1963, 1970, 1979). Goffman describes individual and corporate actors strategically combining and selecting between expressions of allegiance in order to maximise their benefits in particular situations, through the careful selection of the symbols used to present themselves (1961: 101; 1963: 243; see Budd 1995: 353). Actors, he says, may define themselves predominantly according to a connection with one group (as "a Jew," for instance, or "all women" or "medical doctors under thirty"), but within that there is a constant interplay of allegiances to many groups and institutions, with different ones prioritised in different situations according to which the actor feels best suits their aims (1961: 143). While Goffman has been rightly accused of verging too much on rational action theory, people do use

symbolic self-presentation strategically to some extent; one might also argue that to act strategically is not necessarily to act rationally, or even, as Bourdieu's theory of social practice suggests, to act entirely consciously (Burns 1992: 119; R. Jenkins 1996: 70-71; 1992: 78-79; see Ahrens 1996b: 15). Robertson sums it up with the phrase "identity [sic] is power"; the fact that self-presentation is conducted through the expression of multivalent symbols means that it can be part of the strategies of social actors in their interactions with one another (1992: 166; Burns 1992: 232).

Although his work predates most of the studies of globalisation and corporate culture under discussion, Goffman has also commented on the role of images in business settings, in his book *Gender Advertisements* (1979). Goffman views advertisements as a form of display, of corporate— and, he notes in the case of celebrities and/or public figures, personal-- self-presentation (Ibid., 11). Goffman says that "the task of the advertiser is to favourably dispose viewers to his (sic) product," (Ibid., 26); he also points out that the images therein are exaggerated, "hyper-ritualised" (Ibid., 84) portrayals of the culture's ideals. While Goffman does not talk directly about corporations and transnational businesspeople, it is evident from his examples that the corporations in question are trying to be seen in as positive a light as possible. He showcases several advertisements collected in the late 1960s through mid 1970s, when the feminist movement became popular in the mainstream, which deliberately use feminist slogans in order to sell such dubiously emancipatory products as watches and razors (Ibid.). Goffman's work, taken in connection with his earlier research, makes plain the connection between advertising images, corporations and strategic self-presentation through symbols.

In this, Goffman is supported by other later works on the social uses of images in business and consumption (e.g. Packard 1957, Williamson 1978; also Miller 1997,

2000). The original, and most-often-cited, study of symbolism in business is Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957). Packard's perceptive, if overly pessimistic, examination of advertising starts from the premise that consumers do not just buy a product, but also the image which goes with it; the corporation projects this image through its advertising (Ibid., 126). He describes how politicians and companies at the time of his writing were beginning to use advertising techniques in order to win votes, ensure staff loyalty and so forth (Ibid., 212-13), a situation taken largely for granted today, and which has echoes in the personal self-presentation techniques which modern businesspeople are urged to adopt for themselves (Lurie 1981: 26). Packard ends by gloomily predicting a future in which corporations and advertisers openly run America, which seems oddly prescient in light of the later studies discussed in Chapter 1 which postulate the existence of a transnational ruling elite with media and financial wings (see Sklair 2001: 17). Studies of advertising thus point out the importance of symbolism to corporations, and the connection between symbolism, strategic self-presentation and (transnational and localised) business, confirming Goffman's work on strategic self-presentation.

Goffman's theory is, of course, not without its problems. One must also note, for instance, as Goffman does not, that it is not just that we present ourselves strategically, but that at the same time our self-presentation is being interpreted by, and incorporated into the strategies of, others (R. Jenkins 1996: 58; Cook-Gumperz 1983: 123; Anthony Cohen 1994: 12). Oberg notes a tendency towards linking individuals' quirks with their ethnic groups, as witness Marsh's anecdote about Mrs Thatcher's 1989 visit to Germany, in which Chancellor Kohl made a strong effort to impress her with his Europeanness, but, despite this, she was heard to exclaim to an aide, "isn't he so German!" (Oberg 1960: 181; Marsh 1994: 45). Hiltrop and Janssens speak of TNC

managers having to juggle their own interests, those of the branch, and those of the headquarters (1995: 362). Furthermore, the multivalency of symbols means that it is not always certain which role is being prioritised in order to achieve one's ends. The complexity of the relationship between multiple discourses of group allegiance suggests that there is more to it than simply the use of symbols to present oneself in the best light possible.

Subsequent studies of the use of images in business settings also suggest about a more complex picture than that described by Goffman. Visual anthropologists working in the consumption area have tended to assign somewhat more agency to the consumer with regard to the reading of advertising and corporate self-presentation (see Miller 1997; Bacon-Smith 1992). Packard's gloomy predictions of totalitarian futures ring a bit hollow in light of even the most pessimistic of current studies: Fjellmann, in an ethnography of Disney World, contends that, while Packard is correct in his prediction that gigantic corporations would ultimately end up controlling the world, the result has been more *Brave New World* than *1984*, with people being coddled and entertained rather than bludgeoned into submission (1992: 2-7). The trend in visual anthropology has, furthermore, been to move away from studies of the production of images and focus instead on the reception and interpretation of these. Harper (1998) argues that images should be treated as any other sort of symbol; Chalfden (1998) similarly, says that the interpretation of an image changes over time and depends on the viewer's perspective (see also J. Berger 1980: 63). All of these, however, still support the notion that the presentation of self through symbols—be they advertisements, theme parks or news photography—is an important part of the business world, and thus to transnational corporations and their employees.

In transnational, cosmopolitan and globally-engaged settings, furthermore, actors do apparently define and establish their positions through strategic self-presentation. In Baumann's account of the multiethnic English suburb of Southall, for instance, although both official doctrine and direct questioning of inhabitants suggests that the neighbourhood is made up of classic, symbolically bounded ethnic groups, observation of peoples' expressions of group allegiance suggests that these symbols come into play, not in defining boundaries, but in communication between actors in negotiating the interweaving of their different frames of reference (1996). Goltz, similarly, shows how his interviewees' discourses about the term *Heimat* (see Chapter 5, this volume) allow them to integrate into Argentinean society and yet, when they deem it fit, to emphasise their German origins; it also allows them to construct a more positive self-image as "Argentinean Germans" in light of the problematic associations of Germany with Nazism (1998: 85, 88). In situations in which people are engaged with many continually changing discourses, such as global landscapes, the symbolic presentation of self becomes a means of establishing and continually redefining one's position within the environment.

More than simply establishing a position in a constantly changing world, moreover, the multivalent properties of symbols also go some way towards allowing their expresser to control the situation, as can be seen in the work of Lakoff and Johnson on the use of metaphors (1980). Lakoff and Johnson take as their starting point Whorf's suggestion that language shapes the worldview of its speakers; while this theory has been modified considerably by later researchers, it is still felt "that there is some relationship between categories through which the world is experienced and the language used to express them." (Ardener 1971: xx). Lakoff and Johnson, consequently, argue that human conceptual systems are based on metaphors which are "so pervasive...

that they are usually taken as self-evident... descriptions of... perception” (Ibid., 5, 28). Furthermore, they structure people’s realities, becoming “metaphors we live by” (Ibid., 55). While nowhere near in as extreme a fashion as Whorf, then, Lakoff and Johnson make a case that one’s worldview is shaped to some, possibly a great, extent by the linguistic symbols which they use to describe it.

This process can also be seen among non-linguistic symbols. Hall’s *The Hidden Dimension* (1966) discusses how spatial demarcation shapes people’s worldviews and how they interact with (and perceive) other people. Borneman describes Germans using symbolic metaphors to describe the reunification; as with Lakoff and Johnson’s linguistic metaphors, how it is perceived depends on the symbols chosen (1992: 322). It thus seems that physical and other symbols, like linguistic ones, shape the ways in which people perceive the world. The symbolic presentation of self may thus also be a way of controlling the construction of the social environment.

The key point about such metaphors, however, is that they can be mixed, provided that there exists “metaphorical coherence,” that is to say, a conceptual fit between the metaphors. For instance, the phrase “he has not constructed the core of his argument” links building (“construction”) and container (“core”) metaphors successfully because both buildings and containers share the concept of depth, causing English-speakers, on some level, to think of arguments as both buildings and containers (Ibid., 102-103). Lakoff and Johnson also cite examples of mixed metaphors which do not work, because they do not share concepts in this way; it would be less permissible, for instance, to say “we can follow the path of the core of the argument” because cores and paths do not share elements (95). Consequently, they argue, the mixing of metaphors shapes the way in which English-speakers perceive such concepts as

arguments, dimensions and directions. It thus seems that metaphors can be mixed, but only in cases where the symbols in question have convergent interpretations.

Although the actual use of symbols in daily life and written literature is outside of the scope of their monograph, Lakoff and Johnson's theory would also seem to be applicable to examples of symbolic self-presentation of the sort discussed above.

Strecker cites the example of a man who makes a romantic overture to a woman who is not entirely sure that she wants to reciprocate, and consequently gives him a gentle rejection by referring to a humorous story about romantic strife (1988: 110). Here, both his approach and the popular story converge upon the symbol of "romantic love," and the woman makes use of this property to change the meaning of his overture in the context and therefore convey the message of rejection. Packard also discusses the role of consumer interpretation in constructing the meaning of a media image; he describes what he calls the problem of the "inner ear," or customers reading interpretations into advertisements which are not read logically or as intended (1957: 148). Today, this is something which advertisers deliberately take into account; they even use the potential misreading of advertisements to sell products, as in Benetton's notorious "negative advertising" campaigns (B. Davis 1998). The art of advertising, it seems, is a sort of mixing of metaphors to create viable and pleasing connections between a particular product and a particular lifestyle (Williamson 1978). The multivalency of symbols, and the fact that certain symbols are therefore common to multiple discourses, means that symbols can be used to actually link different symbolic discourses, connecting together multiple "selves."

It seems, furthermore, that this means that self-presentation can be continually altered to fit the social context. Banks speaks of the cross-culturally variable linkage of form and meaning with regard to images: a particular photomontage is not read the

same way in India as in the UK, and both it and its readings must be considered in context (1998). Gillespie's monograph *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change* discusses the role of television in "defining, contesting and reconstituting... identities [sic]" (1995: 2). Loftus likens visual images to Bernstein's restricted code: impersonal, concrete, condensed, and influencing established socio-political relationships (1988:127). She further notes that any image is the product of a maker, and as such is influenced by the context of its making; that the private and public significance of images is interlinked; and that an image is not static, but its meaning is developed every time it is used (129). Fyfe and Law note that any given image can be "the site for the construction and depiction of social difference" (1988: 1). It is thus possible that the diverse allegiances to which actors can lay claim can be brought together through their convergence on common symbols in the day-to-day self-presentation of these actors; multiple connections can thus be expressed through the same symbols.

It thus seems that the multivalent properties of symbols, as well as being useful in establishing and redefining groups, are also used as a means by which actors can present themselves to the best advantage. Furthermore, following Lakoff and Johnson's theory of metaphorical coherence, it seems that the presentation of self can be used to express multiple allegiances, not just single ones. The implication of this is that, in transnational settings if nowhere else, there can be a strategic advantage to being able to present oneself in this way. The nature of the global financescape, then, is such that presenting oneself to the best advantage means expressing multiple allegiances.

In the global financescape, therefore, actors present themselves to the best strategic advantage through the use of the symbols which define their allegiances to particular groups. However, following Lakoff and Johnson, it seems that they do not simply use the multivalency of symbols to adjust their self-presentation to the situation,

but also to manipulate this self-presentation through the use of the convergence of particular discourses on the same symbols, laying claim to two or more allegiances at once or in sequence using only a single symbol or symbol set. This suggests that there are sound strategic reasons for employing symbols in this way. These reasons may become clearer if we consider the strategic presentation of self together with the construction of community and the nature of symbols in the transnational business environment which we defined in Chapter 1.

The (In)formation of Social Groups: Community Construction and Symbolic Self-Presentation in the Transnational Business Context

Having considered the symbolic construction of community and the symbolic presentation of self, we shall now turn to the relation between the two in the context of transnational business. In order to do this, we shall look at the theories relating to the forms which symbols, the symbolic construction of community and the strategic presentation of self take in the business world, and how this bears on the connections which groups have with one another.

While the global financescape may seem to be devoid of the sort of collective symbols around which traditional groups such as Sperber's Dorze, and Cohen's Whalsa' folk, rallied, it is in fact heavily focussed on the concept of "information." Information, in this context, is constructed as sets of facts which, like concrete objects, can be absorbed, conveyed, selected from and dispersed; offices possess "information technology," provide "customer information" and "keep informed" about clients and competitors. The fact that some floors in the banks which I studied had a terminal dedicated to a news wire, and that the banks subscribed to several newspapers from around the world, the reading of which was considered part of "work," points to the

significance of “information” to the banks’ employees. These “pieces of information” also take the form of advertising images. In the global financescape, then, there exist a variety of symbols, verbal and pictorial, which corporations collect and transmit as they operate in the financescape.

This information, it has been argued, is used to construct a community of a sort. The financescape itself is constructed through the reception and transmission of information: Thrift and Leyshon speak of the world of finance as a “phantom state” made of information transmitted through telecommunications and social networks (1994). The almost religious reading of such international business news publications as the *Financial Times* (as an example of how important it is to businesspeople, there is a sign in the City of London’s City Business Library over the computers reading “Not to be used for e-mail or to access www.ft.com [the *Financial Times* website]”) links in with Benedict Anderson’s discussion of how the reading of newspapers can foster a sense of belonging to a community of people addressed by the newspaper, suggesting also that what it is to belong to that community is in a sense constructed by the newspaper’s contents (1991: 31-36). In an early study of symbolism in business contexts, Sontag suggests that capitalist society is actually constructed out of media images, arguing that as photographs become more like reality, so reality comes to resemble photographs, as people construct their reality with reference to the images they see in the media (1977: 5). More than simply being a means of navigating the financescape, then, symbols actually constitute it to a great degree.

Information is, however, also used by the same corporations as a form of symbolic self-presentation of the Goffmanian sort discussed above. Jackall traces the rise of “public relations” in the business world, which, interestingly, seems to parallel that of the processes of globalisation; he describes public relations as a form of

collective self-presentation which is indispensable in today's business world (1988: 163-170). The banks with which I worked dispensed "information" to potential and actual clients, in the form of booklets which were carefully written so as to emphasise successes (see Ibid., 177). Castells describes the global economy as "informational," as the success of a given actor, human or corporate, depends on its capacity to process information (1996: 60). On another, more personal level, items of general knowledge assimilated through the media can be used to build social capital in the financial world, as witness the fact that business newspapers review plays, offer tips for travel and fashion, and produce periodic popular history and science articles (e.g. Barley 1998; Foulkes 1998). Information can therefore be, and indeed is, used as a strategic resource, both in the quest for social capital to be turned into economic capital, and as a way of learning and of maintaining a knowledge of the appropriate ways to relate to other actors in the financescape (see Bourdieu 1977).

The use of information as a strategic resource has a long history in transnational business. The correspondence between the London branch and the Head Office of Deutsche Bank, for instance, during the period of globalisation taking place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (available in the Deutsche Bank Research Archive) indicates that one of the main reasons for setting up a UK branch at the time was for the directors to acquire information about overseas financial dealings in the days before the advent of the rapid international news media. A large part of the London branch's function in this period seems to have been to send UK newspaper clippings to the Head Office before the news which they contained reached the German press (see, for instance, correspondence for 3 August 1901, 15 October 1909). This became even more pronounced after the telegraph came into common use. The news which was thus transmitted is not always directly relevant to business: a typical example gives the

partial text of an opinion piece in the *Daily Mail*, with no explanation (Telegram dated 17 December 1900). In the present period of globalisation, however, the nature and the speed of the information has changed (see Chapter 1, this volume). The fact that international news and other sorts of information are now available instantaneously in virtually any location, due to the rise of Internet-based news wires, means that, as I was told more than once by a variety of people involved with finance, it is not *having* the information that matters today so much as what one *does* with it. In the global financescape, then, the strategic deployment of information is key to business success; the use one makes of it can also influence an actor's position within it.

It seems, however, that there is an element of community formation in the presentation of self. J. Berger (1980: 55) argues that a capitalist society requires a culture which is based on images to communicate information, stimulate buying and gloss over social inequalities; at the same time as they are defining themselves as a group, then, corporations are also presenting themselves to consumers in a positive manner. Advertising images are also used by corporations both to develop a collective image of the company's values and associations, but also to convey these in as attractive a manner as possible to the consumer (Ball and Smith 1992: 48, 52; see Williamson 1978). Bartlett and Ghoshal put it forward that as firms' successes depend, not just on economics, but on keeping pace with, and to some extent moulding, their clients' tastes and habits, the possession and deployment of information on these is essential to firms' operations (1992: 6). The symbols used in business thus convey meanings which encourage consumers to buy products, but also deliberately construct the corporation for both employees and potential and actual clients (Ball and Smith 1992: 48). Actors in the financescape thus use symbolic self-presentation, not only to portray themselves in the best light possible, but at the same time to construct themselves and their environment.

More than this, however, this process is taking place on multiple levels, as part of the activities of individuals as well as of groups and corporations. When Portes contrasts his Dominican entrepreneurs relying on their social capital in order to do business with TNCs which rely on their “financial muscle,” he ignores the fact that TNCs are made up of individuals who, as Beaverstock’s description of their lifestyles suggests, do make use of their social capital, in the form of networks, knowledge and skills, to succeed (Portes 1998: 9; Beaverstock 1996b). Leonard and Nye argue that the social networks of elites may be a greater force in world business than more formal institutions (1983: 503). Wallman speaks of a collectivity using its members’ common stock of symbols as a way of defining themselves in a multiethnic context (1979: 9). This process of simultaneously creating, defining and redefining social groups and of individual and corporate self-presentation according to strategies thus takes place on multiple levels, with different actors operating both inside and outside their social group to define and present themselves and the groups to which they claim allegiance.

We can therefore go further and suggest that the strategic self-presentation of actors also involves the expression of allegiance with different groups, and the altering of these allegiances as circumstances change. As was noted earlier, diasporas link into trading networks, the ethnoscape and the financescape intersecting, as it were; Z. Baumann (1990: 150) says the boundary-straddler is the key type of actor defining the “post-nationalist” world. Consequently, people today emphasise social forms based on creolisation (Hannerz 1999, also Yon 1999), hybridisation (Zachary 2000) and other sorts of flexible, boundary-crossing activities. It thus seems likely that the multivalent qualities of symbols make it possible for actors to express multiple allegiances simultaneously and consecutively, according to particular strategies for action.

Furthermore, it seems that the metaphorical coherence of symbols is also used to link between discourses of group allegiance, and to bring different discourses to the fore in different circumstances, thus allowing actors to strategically negotiate between these groups and to alter their self-presentations as circumstances change (see Hannerz 1992: 66). Individuals and groups use symbolic self-presentation, not only to make sense of and define their place in a flexible, information-based world, but, through the convergence of multiple discourses upon the same symbols, to construct themselves, not as members of a single, bounded group, but as having multiple connections both inside and outside the groups to which they can claim allegiance.

It thus seems that, in the transnational business environment, the construction of group allegiance and the strategic presentation of self are linked together, forming something of a positive-feedback loop and influencing each other. Consequently, groups are continually defining themselves and each other with reference to their own and others' strategies, as well as with reference to subgroups within themselves. It therefore seems unlikely that any group, even an elite group, could exist within the global financescape as a single, bounded unit; its members must be continually defining themselves with reference to other groups both inside and outside the unit in which they are nominally placed.

Based on an examination of the role of information, community construction and self-presentation in the global financescape, we can therefore conclude that these processes are not in fact distinct, but are connected. Consequently, the strategic presentation of self involves the development of multiple allegiances both inside and outside the group in question, and the use of the convergence of multiple discourses of group allegiance on the same symbols to express these connections. Groups in the global financescape are thus unlikely to be bounded, solidary entities so much as active

units which require the existence of other groups of various sorts in order to maintain their strategies of self-presentation.

Conclusion

It would therefore appear that any German transnational social formation, class-based or otherwise, is likely to define itself through shared representations of, among other things, Germanness and cosmopolitanism (to leave aside many other possible images, for the sake of convenience and simplicity). This is likely to be more so due to the importance of symbolic self-presentation in the culture of the global financescape. However, the multivalency of symbols, as well as the theory of metaphorical coherence initially put forward by Lakoff and Johnson, suggests that these symbols are drawn from diverse transnational and non-transnational sources, that their interpretation (not to mention acceptance) is not likely to be uniform throughout the group, and that the group's members use the same symbols to express outside allegiances. Consequently, it is worth looking at the symbols through which the group describes itself in order to determine whether we have here an isolated global elite or an active, locally-engaged transnational social formation.

The extensive reliance on self-presentation in the transnational financial context, due to the importance of the reception and transmission of "information" to the global business culture as a whole, therefore means that its members develop a shared culture based on multivalent symbols which they use at both the conscious and non-conscious level. However, the uses of these symbols in both self-presentation and group formation at once means that one cannot simply consider transnational businesspeople in isolation from other transnational and non-transnational groups, even, it seems likely, with regard to their representations of ethnic identification and cosmopolitanism.

III. Multivalent *Multikulti*: Representations of Germanness and Cosmopolitanism

Before we can begin an in-depth discussion of the self-presentation of German transnational businesspeople, we must first conduct a brief overview of the symbols through which they might express their Germanness and cosmopolitanism. An examination of these suggests that there are definite and agreed-upon symbolic representations, drawn from literature and wider social practices, which define Germans and “cosmopolitans.” However, rather than constructing these groups as bounded units, the multivalency of the symbols links them to one another and to other groups both transnational and local.

In this chapter, we will be outlining the most common or significant symbols which are used to define Germanness and cosmopolitanism, with a particular focus on those relevant to the German employees of transnational corporations. We will also consider how each of these sets of symbols connects with other symbol sets. Finally, we will consider how these sets of symbols could intersect to define a business-focused German transnational social organisation and, in light of this, whether it appears to take the form of a bounded, identifiable “class” or of something more diffuse.

Beyond Nation and Instead of Nation: Symbols Defining Germanness

The first symbolic discourse which we will consider is that defining Germanness, and how the symbols which are said to define it relate to each other and to those discourses defining other groups in the transnational sphere. To do this, we will be briefly considering the problematic nature of what it is to “be German”; for space reasons, we will confine ourselves to the discussion of Germany in general, and leaving aside for the most part issues of regionalism and of East-West tension. This will be followed by a

discussion, also limited for space reasons, of the more common symbols of Germanness in the literature: *Blut und Boden*, language, economic success and *Weltoffenheit*. We will then consider how these symbols draw links between Germans and other groups in the global financescape, rather than defining Germans as a single bounded social group.

The question of what constitutes “Germany” has been debated for at least the past 150 years. At the time of the nationalising movements of the Enlightenment, Germany remained a collection of diverse states (Weidenfeld 1983: 24; Rovin 1983: 231). The unification of these in 1870 did little to define what it is to be “German”: A. Watson says that, before 1870, most of Central Europe had a claim to being German and many of the regions left out of the union were still considered “German” (1995: 48; Stadtmüller 1984; Kolinsky 1992: 162). Today, the aftermath of the Nazi period has left Germans at once eager to define themselves as a nation, and afraid that to do so is to express a potentially dangerous nationalism (Bruhn 1994: 66; Elias 1996: 16). Shortly after I began writing up this thesis, I was introduced to an elderly German former journalist making a brief visit to England, who, upon hearing that I was writing about “German identity,” said ruefully, “Hitler has taken away our identity.” This sentiment is echoed by Forsythe’s 1989 study, tellingly entitled “German Identity and the Problem of History,” which argues that Germanness in the 1980s was strongly defined in opposition to those symbols which had been held to define it during the Nazi period. Their association with Nazism has thus given rise to an unofficial ban on certain discourses on Germanness, and a tendency to define Germanness more in terms of what it is not than what it is.

Following WWII, the debate on what constitutes “Germanness” was also complicated by the fact that there were at that point two lands with equal claims to being “Germany” (Borneman 1992). Schwann, during this period, remarked that, for

Germans, the political nation (*Nationalstaat*) and the ethnic nation (*Nation*) were not the same (1984: 189). Since reunification, the debate continues to be problematic, albeit in different ways. While Henrich's observation that Germany is still characterised by regionalism may be correct, this has taken on new dimensions in the context of, first, the rhetoric of unity of the immediate post-reunification period, and, second, the subsequent East-West rivalry (1993: 65; Weidenfeld and Korte 1991: 201; see Berman 1993: 6; M. Mann 1992). Habermas' description of Germans as an ethnic community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) rather than a legal community (*Rechtsgemeinschaft*), similarly, relates to the controversy over the official acceptance of the current German borders (1994: 129, 132). The debate is the same, although recent events may have changed some of the details: for most of the past hundred and fifty years, then, Germany has been "something beyond nation and instead of nation" (A. Watson 1995: 16; Best 1993). Germany thus is not so much a bounded group as it is an entity whose form and composition vary depending on the circumstances.

One of the things contributing to the difficulty in defining what it is to be German is the presence of a strong German diaspora, making Germany not so much a single social entity as a geographically dispersed collection of "Germans." As well as maintaining a presence in Eastern Europe and in North and South America, Germans have also had a lesser-known historical presence in Northern Europe, including Britain (Bade [ed.] 1992; Panayi 1995. For more on the histories of the abovementioned communities see Bade (ed) 1992, in particular the articles by Bade [1992a, b], Press, Blaschke, Sautter, Bernecker and Fischer, Thaner, and Bölsker-Schlicht). Germans maintain an awareness of these offshoots, possessing a host of terms for Germans in different areas (Vertovec 1996b: 384; a comprehensive list can be found in Amiraux [1997: 251]). The presence of these contributes to the construction of Germany as a

diffuse, even global, social formation (Bade 1992b: 19): Gunther Grass, for instance, describes Germans in America as part of an imaginary nation scattered all over the world (1990a: 120). Due to their global presence, Germans are not so much a definite, solidary group as something more situationally defined.

Furthermore, notions of Germanness in the diaspora both affect, and are affected by, notions of Germanness “at home.” Applegate’s Rhinelanders maintained such close ties with ethnic Germans in the USA that the latter lobbied politically on the former’s behalf in WWI (1990: 170). Due to this diasporic consciousness, Germanness may be best seen as a subjective continuum, or, in Rätzzel’s words, a “pecking order of ‘Germanity’”: Forsythe’s West Germans saw themselves as the “most German,” Easterners as less so, the European section of the diaspora less again, and so forth (Rätzzel 1990: 41, quoted in Vertovec 1996b: 385; Forsythe 1989: 143). Habermas (1994: 132) implies that this situation has been little altered by reunification. White, also, says that today German citizens, even ethnic Germans, can be deemed “foreign” by other Germans under certain circumstances (1997: 760; Bade 1992b: 20). Therefore, Germany is not a single bounded social unit, but an association of groups engaged in various individual and collective discourses on what it is to be “German.”

Germanness, similarly, is defined through symbols which, while they may appear to define a straightforward intergroup boundary, actually refer to many different (albeit related) discourses of identification. The definitive markers of Germanness are often said to be “*Blut und Boden*,” blood, or German ancestry, and territory, or (a claim to) German land. *Blut* is a long-standing powerful discourse defining what it is to be German: Forsythe says that diaspora Germans prioritise *deutschstammigkeit*, German “genetic” origin, as the most significant aspect of their self-definition as German, and it may also be worth noting that many people, both German and non-German, with whom

I discussed this thesis were puzzled as to why someone with no German consanguines would have an interest in studying Germanness (1989: 143). Hoecklin speaks of the German concept of “a *Volk* (people, nation), i.e. a seemingly homogenous... community” based on “blood” ties (1996: 46). By virtue of their German *Blut*, “ethnic” Germans receive German citizenship, even if they have no knowledge of the language, and Amiraux says that they consider themselves German (Robin Cohen 1997: 105; Amiraux 1997: 252). The concept of *Blut* thus appears to sharply divide the German from the non-German.

However, on closer inspection the discourse appears more problematic. Forsythe says that whether ethnic Germans such as the ones Amiraux describes will be accepted as having a claim to German social status, as opposed to citizenship, by native Germans is less certain; Rea notes that possessing legal citizenship does not make one a “social citizen,” or someone considered as “belonging” to the nation (Forsythe 1989: 153; see Rea 1995). Most people accepted my German relatives by marriage and prior residence in Germany as justification for my interest. White notes that, although Turkish *Gastarbeiter* have usually been seen as “foreign,” they are increasingly viewed as “not foreign” compared to East Germans (1997: 761-2). Furthermore, Vertovec describes initiatives for encouraging Berliners, at least, to define Germanness by things other than *Blut*, and the German government has made moves during the past few years towards revising the citizenship requirements (1996b; Darnstädt et al. 1999). *Blut*, then, does not define a single way of being German, but has different connotations under different circumstances, and in different parts of the German continuum.

Boden is equally problematic. The concept usually manifests itself through the concept of *Heimat*, which, although usually translated as “homeland,” has other associations. Certainly, land is crucial to the idea: the *Heimat* discourse stems from the

writing of the Enlightenment philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder, who argued that the culture of a people (*Volk*) was linked to their territory (Herder 1969; see also Borneman 1991: 14; Dumont 1994: 84). Several of Borneman and Peck's German Jewish interviewees insisted on returning to Berlin, despite their experiences of persecution, because they considered it their *Heimat* (Borneman and Peck 1995: 93; see also Bade 1992a: 9 and Goltz 1998). However, like *Blut, Boden* is not easy to pin down, particularly given the shifting of Germany's borders. The notion that Germany should include all European regions with a claim to Germanness was one of the keystones of the Nazi endeavour, and continues to inspire at least some right-wing Germans (Bruhn 1994: 48; Mehr and Sylvester 1992; see also the illustration in Borneman 1991, facing page 118). In contrast to Borneman's experience, many of the German Jews interviewed by Goltz had very mixed feelings as to the definition of *Heimat* in light of the fact that the Nazis frequently used the symbol in question to justify their persecution of Jews (1998: 2). Also, one cannot ignore the fact that *Heimat* is as much about belonging to a particular region as about being German, although evidence exists that regional consciousness may be less important for expatriates (Applegate 1990: 65; James 1994: 34; Borneman and Peck 1995: 215). Although linked to notions of actual physical territory, then, *Boden* is mostly made up of less definite discourses.

Furthermore, the concept of *Heimat* is more complex than a simple reference to a particular territory. Borneman and Peck render it as "a... sense of belonging, familiarity and security, which might be located in a feeling, a landscape, or even an idea" (1995: 184). Greverus describes *Heimat* as evoking a sense of normality, of *Welt in Ordnung* ("world in order"; see below), more than of small-town life, and speaks of diaspora Germans constructing a "*Heimat* of homesickness" (*Heimat des Heimwehs*) implying that *Heimat* takes different forms at different points on Forsythe's continuum

(1979: 116). Goltz discusses how the concept has different meanings and referents for German Jews than for German Gentiles living in Argentina; in most cases, however, it seems to be less a feeling for a particular place as a discourse revolving around national affiliation and the impact of Nazism (1998: 84ff.). Most feeling about *Heimat* seems these days to be sustained by the *Heimatsfilm* cinematic genre, not by a particular piece of land (Mai 1993: 74; see Buruma [1989] for a discussion of the original *Heimatsfilm*, Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*). The word also has connotations of being where one's ancestral "roots" are, where one was born or grew up, thereby making it problematic whether *Heimat* is more of a *Blut* or a *Boden*-related discourse (Weigelt 1984: 15, 19). *Boden*, like *Blut*, is thus a powerful symbol, but one whose meaning varies depending on the context, and as such, one that incorporates numerous different discourses within itself.

Another symbol of Germanness of at least as long a standing as *Blut und Boden* is that of the German language. Nineteenth-century philosophers took language as an important marker of what it is to be German, as witness the Grimms' work on German dialects (von See 1994: 135-137). Bade notes that for expatriates, speaking German is an important way of expressing Germanness (1992b: 19; Rovin 1983: 236). Engelmann refers to it as a defining marker of Germanness, quoting a nineteenth-century epigram: "*Lernt Deutsch, ihr Jungling, dann ihr seid deutsch!*" or, loosely translated, "learn German, young people, and then you will be German." (1991: 58). However, as with *Blut* and *Boden*, things are not that simple: Forsythe notes that while all German-speaking lands may be viewed by Germans as *deutsch*, they are not necessarily seen as *Deutschland* (1989: 140-1). The importance, and the connotations, of the German language as a symbol of Germanness thus varies in different contexts and at different times.

More recently, economic symbols have begun taking hold as a common means of expressing Germanness. Today, many Germans emphasise the “economic miracle” (*Wirtschaftswunder*) of the 1950s (Henrich 1993: 167), which is seen as having brought a “new order” to a devastated Germany, as instrumental in the nation’s self-definition (A. Watson 1995: 153; Helm 1992: 41; see Mikes [1953] for a contemporary discussion of the impact of the *Wirtschaftswunder* on Germany). More recently, corporate slogans such as Audi’s *Vorsprung durch Technik* have become symbols of national pride--a trend satirised by Engelmann, who proposes an “economic anthem” to replace the national anthem (1991: 227; Head 1992: 105). Head, whose 1992 monograph on Germany is tellingly subtitled “The Corporate Identity of a Nation,” argues that the goods-mark “Made in Germany” is a symbol of ethnic pride; a 1995 report on the relevance of this mark to German businesses says that it is linked to “a range of identity issues” for Germans (Wolff Olins Identity Research 1995: 3). Many Germans feel a similar sort of ethnic pride in the *Mittelstand*, this being the German term for (mostly) small-to-medium-sized, family-owned corporations with ties to particular regions of Germany (*The Economist* 1995; Viehoff 1978). The reunification of 1990 was, for Borneman’s interviewees, symbolised by the flow of consumer goods from West to East as well as by the “greeting money” (*Begrüßungsgeld*) given to Easterners as they came over (1991: 174, 51). Biermann’s book of essays on German society is called *Über das Geld und andere Hertzensdinge*: loosely translated, “on money and other beloved things” (1991). Weidenfeld and Korte sum this up with the phrases *Wirtschaftspatriotismus* (economic patriotism) and *DM-Nationalismus* (Deutschmark nationalism) (1992: 149, 154; see Bachmeier and Fischer 1992: 54). Economic symbols are thus significant ways in which Germans represent their Germanness.

However, these symbols are not uncontested. For one thing, not all Germans view business in the same way, as when Sorge remarks that most Germans do not have a strong work ethic, but feel compelled by “social rules” to seem industrious (Sorge 1996: 77). The *Vorsprung Durch Technik* slogan in particular, as well as defining Audi as a company, also evokes images of Nazism for many non-Germans (Head 1992: 113). Germany’s business success has also been associated with discourses on *Heimat* (Barber 2000). The impact of the Euro, furthermore, is something of an unknown quantity, as it will cause Germany to have the same currency as other countries in Europe and therefore will have symbolic associations with these countries as well (Spiegel 1998b, Mazzacelli 1995: 66); the possibility exists that a *Euro-Nationalismus* is arising (Ibid.), but in that case it would be linked in with the debate over the relationship of German to European affiliation (see below). Again, then, the economic symbols of Germanness are used in numerous discourses, and are not associated with Germanness alone.

The concept of *Ordnung* is also worth briefly considering. While a complete discussion may be found in Hoecklin (1996, 1998), we shall note here that while the word can be literally translated as “order” (as opposed to chaos), it also has connotations for Germans of cleanliness, structure and morality (Hoecklin 1996: 26, 36). Borneman quotes a children’s rhyme: “*Ordnung muss sein/Das weiss man schon von klein,*” which one can translate as “There must be order/one knows that from when one is small” (1992: 8; see also 1991: 192). Hoecklin notes that the discourse is related to notions of Germanness, linking in with ideas of Germanness as involving order and efficiency; she suggests that Germans greatly value structure and logical organisation (1996: 36, 53; see also Lawrence 1980) However, again this discourse is problematic; Boll, in a 1949 essay, satirised pride in “German efficiency” (1992 [1949]; see also

Sorge 1996: 77). Similarly, in articles on Germany, the image of the *Ordnung*-obsessed German comes across as a bit of a self-deprecating national stereotype, rather along the lines of the stiff-upper-lipped Englishman (Scheuermann 1999). *Ordnung* is thus not a straightforward discourse, but one which can be used to indicate narrow-mindedness or demarcate a stereotype as well as define a group.

Another symbol which has recently been adopted in some circles as definitive of Germanness is *Weltoffenheit*. This term, literally meaning “world-openness” but more generally translated as “cosmopolitanism,” refers to a sense of multiculturalism and of having a positive orientation towards intercultural contact (Vertovec 1996b: 394-5). Vertovec discusses the term in an article entitled “*Berlin Multikulti*,” which focuses on a number of recent initiatives in Berlin aimed at encouraging Germans to think of Germanness as a state of mind rather than an empirical category, and Germany as a multicultural (hence the term “*multikulti*”) country of immigrants (Ibid., 389-393). While Vertovec describes these as an innovation aimed at counteracting xenophobic tendencies, it is also becoming adopted as a “German characteristic,” perhaps a little hopefully, by the elite; in the pilot study of this project, most elite Germans listed “*Weltoffenheit*” as a German national trait (Ibid., 383-4; Moore 1999). This *Weltoffenheit* is placed in explicit contrast with the insular nationalism of the Nazi era, and forms part of the initiatives, both explicit and implicit, on the part of the German government to encourage anti-Nazism (Ardagh 1995: 14; McDonald 2001). An ethos of *Weltoffenheit* is strongly promoted as an alternative to nationalism, among the German business elite if not elsewhere in the nation.

The positive attitude towards the European Union on the part of many elite Germans can be seen as an aspect of this orientation towards other cultures (Forsythe 1989: 153; Engelmann 1991: 56). One of my German interviewees (living in London,

and having Eastern European German relatives), who was otherwise very anti-European, said that the one benefit she could see to European unification was that it would prevent a recurrence of Nazism in Germany. Ardagh, similarly, describes how the concept of Europe is held up to Germans as a positive focus for identification (1995: 445; see Spiegel 1998c). *Weltoffenheit*, with particular regard to a positive orientation towards other European cultures, is thus a symbol of present-day Germanness among elite Germans.

Once again, however, this is a discourse which is not uncontested, and which has many variations. It has already been noted, for one thing, that the majority of Germans may not feel quite as open to the world as the elite bracket might believe or wish (Mehr and Sylvester 1992). *Weltoffenheit*, it must be said, is also a bit of a paradoxical symbol of a national (or at any rate nationally-based) group, as it refers to the supranational or the “global” rather than the national. Kosnick has also questioned the extent to which the multicultural initiatives in Berlin have affected mainstream Berliners, suggesting that they effectively constitute preaching to the converted (2001). There also seem to be different variations on the *Weltoffenheit* discourse, with interviewees using it to refer to an external love of travel and interest in foreign cultures at the same time as anthropologists use it to refer to an internal acceptance of multiculturalism in Germany itself (Vertovec 1996b; White 1997; Kosnick 2001). Not all Germans, furthermore, are pro-Europe, even among the more liberal demographic (König 1994). *Weltoffenheit* is therefore not just a simple, straightforward symbolic discourse about Germanness, but one with a variety of interpretations and connotations.

All of these symbolic discourses, also, tend to blend into each other. Bruhn points out that notions of *Blut* and *Boden* inform each other; Applegate defines *Heimat* as a means of expressing national and regional affiliation simultaneously (Bruhn

1994: 94; Applegate 1990: 244). Altmann describes *Heimat* as incorporating discourses on kinship and industry; Rovin adds to this the notion of language (Altmann 1984: 220; Rovin 1983: 236). *Weltoffenheit*, similarly, relates to the discourses of *Blut und Boden*, as it involves a redefinition of Germanness which tacitly alludes to the fact that territory and blood are strong symbols of it; the idea that non-white people can also be “German” is still a definition based on folk genetics, as it extends rather than challenges the definition of “Germanness” based on physical characteristics (see Vertovec 1996b: 390). Given the association of German interest in other lands with the actions of German TNCs, *Weltoffenheit* does also relate to the economic discourses of Germanness (Engelmann 1991: 60). The multivalency of the symbols used to define Germanness thus means that no symbolic discourse can be isolated from others.

Furthermore, the symbols which are used to express Germanness can be used to express other sorts of allegiances, as well as to indicate a state of cosmopolitanism. *Weltoffenheit*, for instance, is a discourse of cosmopolitan openness to other cultures with particular relevance to the German situation. The concept of *Heimat*, as we have seen, can also be reformulated to allow people to acknowledge other *Heimats* than those located in Germany, or to see it as a kind of nebulous concept of “home place” (Goltz 1998). The seemingly essentialist concept of *Blut*, also, allows people to continue to consider themselves “German” at the same time as they acknowledge allegiances to a non-German *Boden* (Blaschke 1992; also Applegate 1990: 170; *Spiegel* 1998d). *Ordnung* also relates to particular transnational corporations, as their success is thereby explained through discourses relating to an alleged national characteristic (Boll 1992 [1949]; Head 1992: 51; Lawrence 1980: 12). The association of German pride with particular transnational corporations of German origin also means that discourses of Germanness can relate to the corporations themselves (Head 1992); such phrases as

Weltfirma Deutschland associate Germany not only with transnational corporations, but a *Weltoffen* awareness of global affairs (Hughes 1994: 36-37). The speaking of German, finally, can also indicate, as well as German origin, a cosmopolitan interest in German culture or membership in a transnational diaspora. Due to the multivalency of the symbols involved, they combine, not only with each other, but with outside discourses of Europeanness, corporate affiliation, cosmopolitanism and so forth.

As a consequence, Germans seem to blend into other groups. The fact that the Germans disappear, following WWII, from Holmes' account of ethnic minorities in England suggests less that they assimilated than that it became more common to express Germanness through other discourses than the national (1988). In fact, Appelius' (1995) account of German Jews in London, and Gilligan's (1995) article about a *Panzerkorps* unit stationed in Wales as part of an ongoing NATO programme, suggest that Germans still have a presence in the U.K., but not as "Germans" alone. Finally, the multivalency of the symbols used in discourses on Germanness mean that the same symbols have different meanings in different parts of the diaspora, in Germany, and in other German-speaking lands: Forsythe suggests that different criteria are used in different cases to define what is "German" (1989: 141-144). As Germany itself is less a definite social formation than an ill-bounded, diffuse entity, so defining oneself as German is not a single process of expressing Germanness, but involves the expressing of other forms of group allegiance at the same time.

The expression of Germanness, then, is not just a matter of a single group being defined in terms of a particular Us and a particular Other, through a definite set of symbols. Instead, the multivalency of the symbols which are used to define it means that the concept of Germanness incorporates several symbolic discourses, some in harmony and some at odds with each other. These discourses, like the Germans themselves, both

appear to be divided from and combining with each other in many different ways depending on the circumstances, and to relate out to other discourses of allegiance, such as those referring to global awareness and cosmopolitanism.

The Beento and the Businessman: Cosmopolitanism and Cosmopolitans

“Cosmopolitanism” is a term which is difficult to define, but which has become much used of late in studies of transnational social formations. Although being transnational does not automatically entail being cosmopolitan (and, as Appiah [1998] points out, vice versa), “cosmopolitan” outlooks and practices are often positively valued among groups which habitually engage in globalising and/or transnational activities (Hannerz 1990: 238; Vertovec and Cohen, forthcoming). In particular, Sklair and others frequently associate a cosmopolitan outlook with the transnational capitalist class, seeing in the ideologies associated with the concept a philosophy befitting a group which, they claim, has few allegiances to particular nations (Sklair 2001: 20; 1998b). We shall thus consider here what makes an individual “cosmopolitan,” and how this condition is symbolically conveyed to the rest of the world through particular practices and artefacts, in particular an interest in supranational organisations, particular consumption patterns, a focus on TNCs and global philanthropy, and the habitual use of travel and telecommunications.

. According to Tomlinson, a cosmopolitan is literally a “citizen of the world,” as the word stems from two Greek words, *kosmos*, world, and *polis*, city (1999a: 184). In the case of transnational social formations, however, its definition is not as simple as that. Vertovec and Cohen, in their article “Conceiving Cosmopolitanism” (forthcoming), significantly, do not provide a hard-and-fast definition, using it instead as an umbrella term for a number of phenomena affecting people on the national,

supranational and personal levels, which has generally to do with concepts of allegiances above and beyond particular states or local entities. They refer to cosmopolitanism as generally relating to the practice of transcending the sovereign nation-state, and of managing “complex affiliations... and multiple allegiances to issues, people, places and traditions,” rather than a simple all-or nothing national affiliation. Cosmopolitanism is thus a concept which relates, broadly speaking, to the transcending of national affiliations, and the word “cosmopolitan” refers, therefore, to individuals and institutions who fulfil this condition.

Vertovec and Cohen go on to develop a typology of six separate meanings of the word “cosmopolitanism.” First, a socio-cultural condition, involving a sense of mounting interdependency among the people of the world, caused by increased travel, communication and commodity acquisition across long distances; a sort of global awareness challenging insular and ethnocentric viewpoints. Second, a philosophy or worldview, urging that “we live in a world governed by overarching principles highlighting rights and justice,” and that we regard ourselves as “world citizens.” Thirdly, a political project aimed towards building supranational institutions, such as the United Nations and the European Union. Fourthly, a political project for recognising multiple affiliations, which involves the maintenance of multiple loyalties and allegiances on the part of individual transnational actors. Fifth, an attitudinal or dispositional orientation, a perspective involving the appreciation of cultural diversity. Sixth and last, a mode of practice or competence; “‘a personal ability to make one’s way into other cultures...’ as well as a built-up skill of manoeuvring through systems of meaning” (Vertovec and Cohen, forthcoming, partly quoting Hannerz 1996), which may be more or less conscious on the part of its practitioners. The common point of all of these seems to be a recognition of and interest in other cultures, a willingness to

participate in multiple social and cultural frames, and an awareness of the global consequences of one's actions. As we are focusing on the case of transnational businesspeople, we shall here consider cosmopolitanism largely in terms of its philosophical and attitudinal aspects, and as a practice or *habitus* of making one's way in many cultures, and leaving aside for the most part its political and institutional aspects.

The multifaceted nature of cosmopolitanism means that the definition of an individual or group as "cosmopolitan" is a problematic exercise. In one of the best-known anthropological works on the subject, Hannerz tackles the issue in a way reminiscent of Sklair's definition of the transnational capitalist class, drawing a rigid distinction between "cosmopolitans" and "locals." According to Hannerz's definition, "locals" are people who never let their cultural perspective go beyond their locality; they can be mobile but do not have a cosmopolitan attitude. They may travel, but for them the experience is simply one of "home-plus"—Africa is home plus elephants, France is home plus fine food, and so forth (Hannerz 1996: 104; Tomlinson 1999a: 185). "Cosmopolitans," by contrast, do not only travel but take a global perspective, considering the world their home rather than simply a particular locality; they want to participate in other cultures rather than simply observe (Hannerz 1996: 102, 105-110). This dichotomy is echoed in such books as Pico Iyer's *The Global Self* (2000) and G. Pascal Zachary's *The Global Me* (2000), which focus on individuals and groups with multiple allegiances or who learn to make their way in many cultures, written by authors who were themselves raised in multicultural environments; both authors and subjects seem to be perpetually waging a battle against the local forces of insularity. It would thus seem that there exists an international stratum of cosmopolitans, whose attitude sets them off from more insular "local" people.

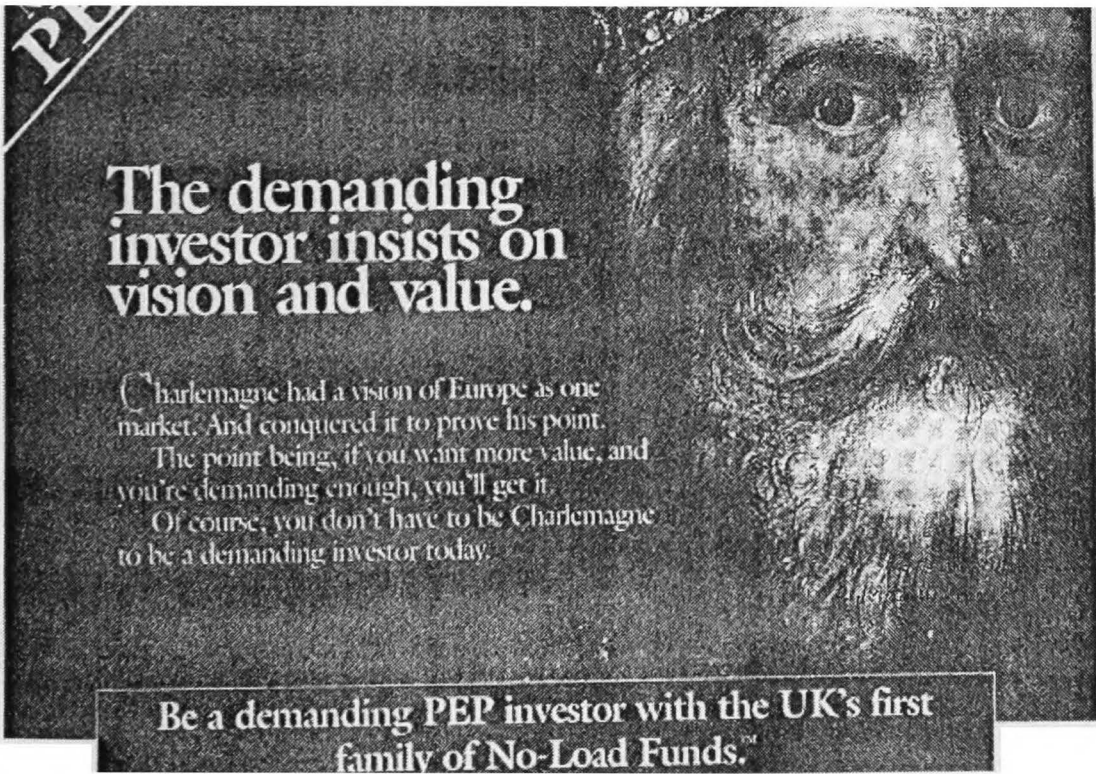
Tomlinson, however, takes issue with Hannerz's definition. According to him (as well as Massey, whom he quotes), this definition of cosmopolitanism privileges white Westerners, and male ones in particular (1999a: 187). While this suggestion is debatable (and seems to be making a bit of a straw man of Hannerz, most of whose examples are from the "Third World"), his argument that this definition can be seen as elitist and superficial does bear addressing (Ibid., 187, 191). Tomlinson argues that cosmopolitans need to also have a sense of cultural commitment, of belonging to the world community as it were, rather than simply a sense of being above local concerns (Ibid., 186). Tomlinson proposes that cosmopolitanism is a sort of "ethical glocalism"; a condition not opposed to the local, but of being capable of living, ethically and culturally, "in both the global and the local at the same time" (Ibid., 194, 195). Cosmopolitans may value local connections to some extent, but at the same time they think continuously in terms of the global consequences of their actions (Ibid., 195). This amendment of Hannerz is supported by the examples given in Iyer and Zachary: Iyer in particular gives a good account of the complex relations between "home" and "abroad" which cosmopolitans experience, describing how, while a Westerner looking for a McDonald's in Kyoto may seem to be the epitome of "Home-plus," it may equally constitute an engagement with the local meanings of McDonald's (particularly as the "Westerner" in question is an Indian American educated in England and claiming Japan as his country of permanent residence), or a transnational one (Iyer admits that the first time he tried many archetypical "American" products was while travelling abroad, and that he shunned these while in America) (1989: 16-17). Cosmopolitanism seems to be less a matter of eschewing local viewpoints as it is of embracing both the familiar and unfamiliar simultaneously.

It is also, furthermore, debatable to what extent different “cosmopolitans” regard themselves as part of the same group. It is debatable whether transnational academics see themselves as similar to globetrotting businesspeople, let alone to West African beentos and Filipina maids. Even if we consider, as we will here, only the elite section of the people who can loosely be defined as “cosmopolitans,” we get a fair range of diversity, from environmental activists through journalists through CEOs and the children of business expatriates (Mickelthwait and Wooldridge 2000: Chapter 12; Sklair 2001; Goodman 1993). Cosmopolitans, despite certain similarities with regard to their outlook, thus do not appear to be a unified group, physically or socially.

The symbols which are used to define cosmopolitanism are correspondingly vague, and refer to different sorts of “cosmopolitans” rather than to a single cosmopolitan class. For instance, one might take the case of such supranational institutions as the European Union. European citizenship, for instance, is seen as such a unifying symbol expressing either a benevolent supranational affiliation or a quasi-nationalistic Eurocentrism—in either case, a sense of belonging to a group beyond the nation (Martiniello 1995; Kastoryano 1999; Morley and Robins 1995: 82; Amiraux 1997: 254). On the cultural side, we have Duroselle’s history of Europe, which celebrates the cosmopolitan by portraying Europe as having been a “melting pot” (a phrase interestingly borrowed from American political rhetoric) from ancient Roman times onwards (Duroselle 1990: 17, 62; also Blasckhe 1992: 176). He holds up a variety of high-culture figures, such as Charlemagne and Beethoven, as collective symbols of Europe as well as of particular regions (Duroselle 1990: 102; also Blanco 1997: 181). Smith (1995:133) and Herzfeld (1987) cite classical Greece and Rome as pan-European symbols. Through an interest in supranational and multinational states, cosmopolitans

can explicitly reject the national in favour of a more multiply engaged means of identification.

However, once again, there are different ways of interpreting Europe as a symbol. European citizenship as a social, not a legal, entity is still filtered through national conceptions of belonging (Janoski and Glennie 1995: 14; R  thzel 1995: 144), and is also linked to ethnic symbols (Amiriaux 1997; Kastoryano 1999: 3). Symbols of European “common history” such as Ancient Rome are also claimed by numerous regions (Duroselle 1990: 62). A common fondness for football is also said to bring Europeans together (K  lner 1994). However, Biermann argues that it does more to increase nationalism, describing football as a “war substitute” (1991: 58; see Engelmann 1991: 183-184). The European high-cultural figures cited by Duroselle also appear in corporate advertising (see Fig. 2), suggesting a connection with transnational corporations, and can equally be claimed by various ethnic groups--including Germans (Bachmeier and Fischer 1992: 32; Henrich 1993: 64). One might also note, along with



Vertovec and Cohen (forthcoming) that not all cosmopolitanism is elite, and consequently that symbols of high culture are not relevant to all cosmopolitans. Cultural symbols of Europe (and, presumably, of other supranational entities) are thus not simply indicative of a

Figure 2. 1998 advertisement, Morgan Stanley Dean Witter Ltd. The text begins "Charlemagne had a vision of Europe as one market. And conquered it to prove his point." (Source: *Financial Times*)

cosmopolitan supranational engagement; furthermore, different sorts of cosmopolitans relate to them in different ways.

Cosmopolitanism is also said to be defined by particular consumption patterns. (Miller 1997: 60). Becker speaks of consumerism as the guiding principle of the “West,” transcending national identifications (Becker 1990). The consumption of goods from one locality in another locality (for instance, European youth wearing Andean caps and ponchos) is often used to suggest an appreciation of global issues and interest in other countries (see Portes 1998: 12). Iyer finds a sense of global connectedness in the fact that peasants in the Himalayas watch the same films as urban sophisticates in New York (1989). One might also note that certain of the markers of elite cosmopolitanism—Oxbridge/Ivy League education, world travel, a house in a particular area—are things which can be bought (Mickelthwait and Wooldridge 2000: 232-233). Much as it represents other forms of transnational activity, then, particular products and symbols of consumption define cosmopolitan practices and outlooks.

Of particular note here is the case of so-called “global brands,” or products which are sold and recognised worldwide. Many corporations (most notably, Coca-Cola, IBM and McDonalds’) attempt to associate cosmopolitanism with the consumption of their products, and have apparently had a fair bit of success in conveying this image to potential consumers (see Sklair 2001: Chapter 6; Miller 1997: 80). The ubiquity of such brands suggests a connection between their consumers around the world (Miller 1997: 57). The advertising of these brands frequently suggests that to consume their products is to be cosmopolitan, showing the product being used around the world, or portraying its users as people who are interested in, and at home in, many cultures (Ibid., 81-82, Vertovec and Cohen, forthcoming; for more on the subject of advertising and its connections to corporations and cosmopolitanism, see Head [1992]

and Vestergaard and Schroeder [1985]). The consumption of “global brands” can thus be a way of symbolising a cosmopolitan global interest.

Again, however, these images link into other symbolic discourses. A European youth can wear a poncho simply because he thinks it looks nice, or to follow a *local* fashion trend, rather than out of a sense of global awareness or “ethical glocalism” (see Miller 1997: 201; Tomlinson 1999a: 194). The educational institutions, travel destinations and so forth mentioned by Mickelthwait and Wooldridge are also located in particular areas, and relate to local conceptions of self. As for the global brands, these also refer to local interpretations as well as global practices: Iyer describes how a single popular American film became differently creolised in different contexts (1989: 9-10, 14-15). Engelmann presents consumption as a German trait, when he says that “*Deutsch sein heißt heute, reich sein und sich alles leisten können*” (to be German today is to be rich and to be able to treat oneself to everything) (1991: 60). Also, the meaning of such symbols changes: the drinking of Coke can be, not only a symbol of cosmopolitanism, but of American imperialism, local practice, or religious abstention from alcohol, depending on the context. The “global” products and consumption patterns discussed here also symbolise particular corporations, often TNCs. Once again, the symbols of consumption do not only define cosmopolitanism, but possess multiple interpretations within this remit, and link into other symbolic discourses which may be more or less localised.

A related symbol of cosmopolitanism is that of TNCs themselves (Zachary 2000: 198). Corporations with a global reach can, in a sense, be said to embody this kind of practice of being above nations but grounded in particular locations (Salt 1988: 388); as noted above, their advertising frequently employs images with themes of global awareness and interests in many different cultures (Millar 1997: 161ff.). The logos of

these companies also become global icons; such images as Apple Inc.'s bitten fruit are universally recognised, even in areas where the company's products might not be sold (see Hampden-Turner 1994: 197-198). Finally, we have the popular image of the globetrotting, rootless CEO, such as Rupert Murdoch, who thought little of changing his nationality in order to acquire a local subsidiary (B. Turner 1992: 61; Mickelthwait and Wooldridge 2000: 226; Sklair 2001: 21). TNCs thus symbolise a rootless, globally engaged lifestyle which is associated with, particularly elite, cosmopolitanism.

Again, however, the symbols used to define TNCs link into other sorts of discourses, cosmopolitan and otherwise. Corporate logos symbolise particular corporations as well as their consumers' cosmopolitan preferences; in addition, specific symbols, such as Apple Inc.'s logo, also link into discourses relating to information technology and telecommunications (Hampden-Turner 1994: 197-198). Furthermore, there is much variation in attitudes towards TNCs on the part of their employees, cosmopolitan and otherwise: B. Turner's interviewees interpreted global corporate "mission statements" as evidence of a "hidden agenda" on the part of senior management, and the popularity of the cartoon *Dilbert*, which interprets such symbols of corporate culture ironically, suggests that they are not always read as their designers intended (1971: 130; Adams 1996, 1998; see Chapter 6, this volume). One might also note that Rupert Murdoch and so forth are not only symbols of cosmopolitan lifestyles and of particular corporations, but also figure in the popular cultures of many countries (see Hislop (ed.) 2000). The traits which constitute a "heroic manager" vary from corporation to corporation, and the Microsoft anti-trust trial demonstrates how a "heroic" figure such as Bill Gates can be easily demonised (Behrman 1970: 1; see Wolffe 1998). Therefore, the symbols through which TNCs represent cosmopolitanism incorporate multiple discourses on the nature of the corporation, and link into the

cultures of the corporation's host and home countries as well as into those of other cosmopolitan groups.

Another important symbol defining cosmopolitans, particularly in the elite bracket and those involved with TNCs, is that of a global philanthropy and ethical awareness (Tomlinson 1999a: 195). Keat describes the environmentalist mantra "think globally, act locally" as symbolising the ethos of TNCs (1991: 9). Many of the top executives of transnational corporations try to project the image of being globally-conscious entities with an interest in assisting development (Sklair 1998b: 30); many have philanthropic wings catering to local issues (2001: 167-181). The above-discussed "global brands" also emphasise a sense of cosmopolitanism through playing up their ethical and political global consciousness (Ibid.); the most famous, and possibly most crass, example of this is Coca-Cola's advertising campaign featuring East and West Berliners sharing Cokes as the Berlin Wall crumbles (Vertovec and Cohen, forthcoming). A sense of global philanthropic awareness is thus a point of identification for cosmopolitans, particularly elite cosmopolitans of the sort described by Sklair.

However, this "global philanthropy" can be viewed with ambivalence. One might note, for instance, that this ethical attitude is likely to be variable: most of the studies above are referring to the official stance of the TNC in general (or, in the case of Sklair, to the views of its top executives); there is no guarantee that employees at other levels take a cosmopolitan outlook, or view global philanthropy as a necessary or desirable thing. Coke's advertising campaign also links in with national and supranational entities, as the collapse of the Berlin Wall is also a strong symbol of Europe, to say nothing of Germany itself (see Marsh 1994: 4, Miall 1993: 8). Furthermore, philanthropic activities are carried out by, and therefore associated with, particular corporations, not simply cosmopolitans in general. The discourse of

cosmopolitan ethics within TNCs thus links into other discourses, and may not be interpreted in the same way at all levels.

Finally, travel and telecommunications also symbolise a cosmopolitan lifestyle and *habitus*. It is significant that the businesspeople Sklair chose to symbolise the global elite are notoriously well-travelled ones (2001: 21). The ideal business executive is today symbolised by travel and international connections: the website of the *Financial Times*, www.ft.com, addresses potential customers by saying that “you need to be mobile and you need to be connected,” emphasising the importance, symbolic if not actual, of travel and telecommunications to TNC employees. Pico Iyer devotes an entire chapter to airports and their place in the lives of cosmopolitans (2000: Chapter 2). One can also make the point that the Internet and other forms of rapid communication have encouraged people to form networks across the globe and to think in global terms (Miller 2001). The frequent use of travel and telecommunications thus defines cosmopolitans.

A good example of the role of telecommunications and travel in symbolising cosmopolitanism can be seen in the portrait which Iyer paints of his old schoolfriend “Richard,” an English-born TNC executive currently resident (albeit nominally so) in Hong Kong:

Bulky envelopes began to emerge from his briefcase—one after another, till I’d counted twenty-seven—and I saw that every single one of them was stuffed with telephone cards, coins and tokens for the twenty-seven countries he was likeliest to find himself in tomorrow. “Bus tickets for Amsterdam,” he said, “...phone cards for Japan. Pesetas for Madrid.”

“And you can still keep working wherever you are?”

“Absolutely. I have voice mail in Japan, Hong Kong, and Boston, and I can check my messages from anywhere. The only trouble is, I don’t have a mobile modem, so I can’t collect my E-mail in a car.” (2000, p. 84)

Iyer goes on to describe his friend as “not rich, and certainly no jet-setter; he’s just an extremely hardworking international management consultant in a global market,” underlining that he sees Richard as a typical rather than exceptional individual (Ibid.). The image of being “mobile and connected” is one which symbolises TNC employees as a group.

Once more, however, this image is not an uncontested one. For one thing, one might well question how typical Iyer’s friend is, as evidence exists that many who are “mobile and connected” do not travel as extensively as this (compare, for instance, the life histories given in Sakai 2000, or Courtney and Thompson 1996). Nash’s transnational business executives felt isolation, powerlessness, and “culture shock” as a result of their transnational activities; they viewed such activities less as desirable than as “part of the job” (1979: 425, 440; Salt 1988: 391; see also Hamada 1992). Aitken’s “multinational man” adapts to other cultures only inasmuch as it allows him to deliver what his clients want (1973: 15-18). Also, as Miller notes, telecommunications media—in particular the Internet and personal computers—are used as much to build a sense of local affiliation as they are to build a global one; computer use is therefore linked to particular localities as well as to the TNCs themselves (2000). Telecommunications and travel are thus discourses with multiple interpretations within the wider discourse of cosmopolitanism, and ones with links to particular local affiliations and to those of other globally engaged groups.

Again, however, the discourses described above do not simply refer to a single phenomenon, even one as complex and multifaceted as cosmopolitanism. As noted above, travel and telecommunications also define the employees of transnational corporations, and the corporations themselves; the travel and telecommunications industries are made up of transnational corporations with their own symbols and discourses (Tomlinson 1999a: 111-112). Tomlinson, furthermore, notes that while an airport may seem “placeless” to the people passing through it, it is quite definitely grounded in place for the people who work in it on a daily basis (Ibid.). Furthermore, the fact that airports all, as Iyer notes, have the same sorts of shops selling the same sorts of goods, links them in with discourses of consumption (2001: 43). Finally, an interest in travel, not to mention in supranational institutions and a “world-open” attitude, is also seen in some (especially elite) quarters as a sign of “Germanness” (see Marsh 1994: 19). Transport and telecommunications thus do not simply define the cosmopolitan, but other groups as well, and incorporate various meanings.

Furthermore, many of these discourses refer to different sorts of cosmopolitanism, not simply that embraced by a globetrotting elite. The downplaying of national affiliation by Germans, or the social construction of the European Union, for instance, can also be said to be cosmopolitan acts (see above). Telecommunications and travel are important symbols for other people than such global elites as Iyer’s friend; a number of diasporas and labour-migrant groups make use of them (Miller 2000), as do organised religions (Lubeck 1999), and persons involved with the computer industry, whether on the legal or illegal side. Mickelthwait and Wooldridge describe impoverished South African entrepreneurs who rent out mobile phones to others as a means of making a living (2000: 42-45). Furthermore, the symbols used to indicate cosmopolitanism also refer to local affiliations: Coke is as much a symbol of American

as it is of global culture (Iyer 1989: 13-14). The products of German TNCs, particularly automotive manufacturers, are continually being imbued with German national characteristics by journalists (Head 1992: 51; see also Purdy 1970). As is the case for Germans, then, the discourses which define cosmopolitans refer to other groups, including individual TNCs and various national affiliations as well as other sorts of transnational and local social formations.

As with Germanness, then, “cosmopolitanism” is a social phenomenon which appears to define a particular set of people around the world. In practice, however, not only is the social phenomenon in question not so much a bounded class as a whole complex of meanings, people and practices, but the symbols which define it refer to other discourses and are subject to multiple interpretations. Having established that both of these social formations to which German transnational businesspeople can claim allegiance are defined in this vague, multiple way, we shall now turn our attention to defining them as a subset of both categories.

Weltfirma Deutschland: German Transnational Businesspeople

German transnational businesspeople are thus a group which can be said to lay claim to being both German and cosmopolitan through the symbols described above. It can be broadly defined as that section of Sklair’s transnational capitalist class which relates to Germany: more or less elite Germans, often affiliated with transnational corporations, who live globe-spanning lifestyles and embrace some form of cosmopolitanism. However, by defining themselves as German transnational businesspeople through these symbols, there exists the possibility for these same individuals to define themselves as members of other groups, both local and transnational, as well as displaying a variety of ways of defining themselves as a transnational capitalist class in the first place.

In this section, as in the rest of the thesis, I will be limiting the discussion to the German overseas employees of German transnational corporations. While imposing a division of this kind may seem counterintuitive in a thesis which argues that traditional boundaries are not relevant to the study of transnational groups, there are several reasons for doing so. Firstly and most importantly, because Sklair and others describing the “transnational capitalist class” focus on the overseas employees of transnational corporations (Sklair 2001: Chapter 3; Iyer 2001: Chapter 3; Mickelthwait and Wooldridge 2000: Chapter 12). Secondly, because by limiting our discussion to one section of German society and/or transnational business, we may better see how it relates to other sections of these groups as well as to outside social formations. Thirdly, because issues relating to Germanness and cosmopolitanism are most likely to be highlighted in a situation in which the individuals concerned are Germans whose lifestyle has caused them to live abroad, and to engage on a daily basis with the global financescape. The transnational nature and German origin of these corporations also must give rise to a constantly changing dialectic between Germanness and cosmopolitanism. We shall thus look here at the connections which this group has with different local and transnational groups.

To begin with, the individuals under consideration are either German or have links to Germany. Although we will here mainly discuss people of immediate German origin, this limitation allows us to examine what, if any, links to particular localities this group possess. In addition, if the people in question are working for German corporations, this makes for a further connection to Germany through the corporation’s affiliation to its home country. However, in expressing links with the local culture of Germany, the German businesspeople are also linking into discourses of economics, corporations and cosmopolitanism (see Head 1992; Forsythe 1989); seemingly

nationalist slogans such as *Weltfirma Deutschland* (roughly, “Germany the TNC”) connect Germanness with corporate affiliation and cosmopolitanism (Head 1992: 20-25; Ardagh 1995: 90; see also Zumwinkle 1995: 71). Not only do transnational German businesspeople have links with Germany, then, but this in turn connects them symbolically to other groups both within and outside German society.

Secondly, German transnational businesspeople are cosmopolitan. Many of them either currently are, or have recently been, living abroad, and in most if not all cases they have also travelled extensively, on business or otherwise, in the past or plan to in the future. As part of their work for transnational corporations, they have to continually maintain a global perspective (see Tomlinson 1999a:195); they are encouraged by the discourses mentioned above to embrace Europeanism and *Weltoffenheit*. However, there are also strong variations within their cosmopolitanism; German transnational employees who are living abroad for the long-term out of a sense of global awareness or fondness for other cultures embody a different sort of cosmopolitanism to those who are continually shuttling between local branches of the multinational group out of necessity (compare Sakai 2000). Furthermore, the association of Germanness with particular TNCs means that their cosmopolitan lifestyle may paradoxically symbolise Germanness, and, for its employees, link the definition of Germanness in with discourses defining cosmopolitanism through symbols of consumption and corporate allegiance. The German transnational businesspeople’s cosmopolitan outlook thus shows strong internal variation and links to outside groups, and may or may not define them as a particular social unit, depending on the context.

German transnational businesspeople thus define themselves through sets of symbols which blend into various different discourses rather than constructing a bounded group. Germanness and Europeanness, for instance, share symbolic discourses

based in economics, not to mention the temporal coincidence, noted by Biedenkopf, between the reconstruction of Germany and that of Europe (1995: 211; Rider 1993: 250; Marsh 1994: 4). Morley and Robins note that the concept of *Heimat* informs the notion of Europe as a community, constructing Europe as a grouping of nations simultaneously loyal to region, nation and supranational institution (1995: 87-89). Dumont argues that German ideology can be interpreted as a regional variant of a pan-European one (1994). Ethnicity and work are also linked by popular literature characterising Germans as hard-working (Ganeri 1992; Mikes 1953). TNCs also, share the image of themselves as transnational social formations with Europe (see Bauman 1998: 5; Beaverstock 1996c: 305; Parkes 1998; Casson et al. 1996: 10). Helm speaks of left-wing politicians constructing the EU as a “Europe of corporations” (1992: 47). On another level, TNCs have allegiances to their host and home societies. Not only does metaphorical coherence enable the simultaneous expression of different affiliations, but it seems that this is inherent in the nature of German transnational businesspeople.

German transnational businesspeople thus are not a single, bounded group within German society and/or the global financescape, but, due firstly to their composite nature (as a combination of German and cosmopolitan elements), and secondly due to the multivalency of the symbols defining the components of the social formation, are a loosely-defined entity subject to internal divisions and with a number of outside allegiances. The images of Germanness and cosmopolitanism which define transnational German businesspeople thus also potentially link them in to a variety of other groups and cultures both local and global, and suggest lines of division within the wider classification of German transnational businesspeople.

Conclusion

German transnational businesspeople, and in particular the expatriate employees of German transnational corporations, can thus be said to be defined as a group through common representations of Germanness and cosmopolitanism. However, the multivalency of such representations, and the fact that the metaphorical coherence of symbols causes the discourses defining the social formation in question to link in with many others, suggests that there is more going on here than simply the definition of a single group. We are therefore not dealing here with a monolithic, undifferentiated, unengaged transnational capitalist class, but with a loosely defined, internally differentiated group of globetrotting businesspeople with links to several other sorts of social formations, transnational and otherwise.

Over the next five chapters, we will examine a sample of German transnational businesspeople—the employees of the London branches of two German financial corporations and several support institutions-- in various settings, and how they define themselves through representations of Germanness and cosmopolitanism in all of these. By doing so, we may cast some light on the way in which members of the business elite construct themselves: as a solidary, bounded group or as the focus of continuously changing dialectics over allegiance to different social formations of varying degrees of transnational and local connectedness.

IV. A Financial Utopia: **The City of London and German Transnational** **Businesspeople**

In the UK's main financial enclave, the City of London, German transnational businesspeople select from the symbols around them to construct a social environment suitable for their activities as global businesspeople and as cosmopolitans. Although this activity may seem to define a solidary, detached transnational capitalist class, however, it is in fact impossible for them to construct this environment without engaging with the symbolic discourses of other groups, or without acknowledging elements of diversity among German transnational businesspeople themselves.

Global cities such as London, are recognised by many (including, among others, Sassen 1991, Castells 2000, and Beaverstock and Smith 1996) as the social focus of transnational businesspeople. Global cities are the key nodes of Castells' transnational networks, and as such are increasing in importance, both symbolic and physical, in the processes of globalisation, as more and more transnational actors concentrate themselves in such cities (2000). Furthermore, the German presence in the UK has historically been focused on the City of London (Panayi 1993, 1995). Finally, if, as Sklair suggests, an understanding of the transnational business environment is essential to an understanding of the transnational capitalist class as a whole, one must consider the cities in which the most transnational financial corporations have branches, and London outstrips New York and Tokyo in this regard (2001: Chapter 3; Rose 1994: 43). In order to investigate whether German transnational businesspeople are in fact a transnational capitalist class, then, we shall examine the global city in which they operate, and the ways in which they construct it as a symbolic environment.

Hiring a Cocker Spaniel: The “Global City” of London

The City of London, being the financial enclave in which most of the German transnational businesspeople interviewed for this project carry out their daily business, is essential to their self-definition as a transnational social formation. The way in which the German transnational businesspeople whom I interviewed described the City appears at first to be consistent with the self-definition of a transnational capitalist class; however, closer investigation in fact reveals not so much a process of defining a group, as of shifting, multiple engagements with local and global social entities.

The City of London (also known as “The City” or “The Square Mile”) is an area of approximately one square mile roughly in the centre of London, the political and economic capital of the United Kingdom. While its physical boundaries are marked by statues of silver dragons, the City’s emblem, its symbolic boundaries are somewhat vaguer, as a number of “City” banks and institutions in fact have their offices in Knightsbridge (a high-prestige area further west), and, while this was still seen as a sort of exile or hinterland as late as 1996, an increasing number are establishing positions further east in Canary Wharf (Augar 2000:18). Furthermore, many connections exist between the City and the wider governmental structure of the United Kingdom (most notably with regard to the Bank of England), with top financial experts frequently going on to more or less formal careers in politics (Stockdale 1957, Kynaston 1995). In conceptual terms, however, the City is a transnational enclave which is symbolically if not physically located in the centre of London.

While the area which comprises the City of London has been occupied since Roman times, the City’s government, the Corporation of the City of London, dates from the ninth century (Jenkins 1988: 6; Dyer n.d.: 1). As the Middle Ages progressed, the City area became increasingly mercantile, and trade associations, known as Guilds,

became the dominant power, headed by the Lord Mayor (Dyer, n.d.: 1-3; Borer 1977: 70ff.). The City was largely trade-focused up until the founding of the Bank of England in the seventeenth century (A. Jenkins 1988; Anonymous 1994:17); the next major boost towards financial specialisation came in the eighteenth century, with the founding of Lloyds' Insurance House and the invention of stockbroking and financial speculation (Winchester Group n.d. [1990?]; Plender and Wallace 1985). The City's period of glory is said by many historians to be the years 1810-1914, as it covered both financial and mercantile functions, supported by Britain's position as the dominant economic and military power of the time. After WWI and II, and the consequent fall of the British Empire, the City became more financially specialised (Courtney and Thompson 1996: introduction; Rose 1994). The City of London thus has an extensive history of participation in international trade and financial activity.

Today, the City is distinct both legally and socially from the rest of London itself, to say nothing of the United Kingdom. It is still governed by the Corporation of the City of London, which is housed in a building called the Guildhall and headed by the Lord Mayor, along with the Aldermen and the Court of Common Council, who are elected by residents and businesses of the City (Corporation of London 2000a; www.corporationoflondon.gov.uk). In addition, the City Guilds elect some of the officials and nominate the candidates for Lord Mayor (Corporation of London 2000a: 7-9). While the Guilds still retain some aspects of their medieval form and function, today their role is partly as networking associations, partly as charity organisations, partly as lobby groups vis-à-vis the government of the United Kingdom (A. Jenkins 1988: 8; see Dyer n.d.). The Lord Mayor, while less powerful than during the Middle Ages, is still the Chief Magistrate of the City, and "within the square mile of the City the Lord Mayor still gives precedence to none except the sovereign of the realm" (Borer 1977:

298; A. Jenkins 1988: 16). Less officially, however, the dominant force in the City consists of the, mainly American, global financial corporations which operate there. The City of London is thus a distinct financially-focused enclave within London.

The City's distinctive "global" status is easily visible to anyone walking through the area. The architecture is a bewildering mix, with streets of elegant Georgian houses (now mostly housing think-tanks and small consultancies) standing alongside glossy glass-and-concrete towers. The streets are narrow and winding, but are cleaner and better-lit than those in most other parts of London. The City boasts several Georgian and Victorian churches, all attempting to draw in the business crowds with signs advertising lunchtime concert recitals and "lectures on modern issues" rather than sermons. The people in the streets are all dressed in near-identical suits, and accents from the Southeast of England dominate; however, a visible—and audible—number are from other countries. A Canadian friend who had come to London to visit me remarked that he had identified five separate languages on the short journey between London Bridge and St Paul's. The City's financial focus is also to be seen everywhere: while there are few of the LED stock-market quote displays which characterise the financial districts of New York and Frankfurt, nearly every building bears the name of a financial firm and boasts at least one security guard on reception. Even the City's architecture and population indicate its distinct status.

Furthermore, the area is visibly one in which few people actually live (*The Economist* 1962). Unlike the rest of London, City pubs and shops close on Saturdays and Sundays. While the City contains a number of sites of historical and cultural interest, tourists tend to restrict themselves to the area immediately around St Paul's Cathedral and the Museum of London, except during the peak of the season in mid-August. Shops tend to cater to a specialised and non-local market, with luxury-goods

retailers, clothing stores and gift and electronic emporiums dominating over the more usual supermarkets and retailers; many of the firms, such as the sandwich chain Prêt-A-Manger, advertise their global-philanthropist ethos prominently (see Sklair 1998b; 2001: Chapter 6). The physical boundaries between the City and the rest of London are visible: to the east of the silver dragons, the streets narrow, the tower blocks peter out, the buildings become Victorian tenements and modern council buildings, and the population become the Bangladeshi immigrants and working-class English of Brick Lane, while to the west the businesses are replaced by the fashionable shops and opulent theatres of the West End. Furthermore, with a few notable (and mainly local) exceptions, the banks found in the City are not what most people would conceive of as banks, with tellers and managers, but rather take the form of the offices in which the buying, selling and political activity which supports the bank branches takes place. The City is thus visibly an enclave for finance-related businesses.

City people cite three main factors as drawing companies to the area. The first is gossip and/or the networking potential of having an office in the same area as other corporations in the same field (Beaverstock and Smith 1996: 1379): one think-tank member remarked that even in these days of instantaneous global communication, “‘buzz’ counts for a lot.” This is also reflected in the use of coffee shops and pubs by many as supplemental offices, where meetings can be held, projects discussed, and contacts at other corporations met. The second is, as one put it, credibility: for all financial corporations, having a London office is a status symbol. The third is the large and mobile pool of skilled labour which the City boasts, which in turn creates a snowball effect, as companies come to London for the labour pool, causing people with the appropriate skills to come to London for the jobs, and so forth. Interviewees who were more financially knowledgeable pointed out a fourth reason: since the

“deregulation” of the mid-eighties the City has had more lenient tax laws and a much less strict regulatory system than the rest of the UK, and indeed than many countries, including the USA (Augar 2000: 49; Plender and Wallace 1985: 2-3). All of these factors cause the City to be dominated by foreign financial corporations.

These factors also combine to make the City one of the principal “global cities,” to use Sassen’s phrase: that is, cities, such as London, New York and Tokyo, which have as many ties to places around the world as in their host countries (1991). Most of my interviewees described the City as culturally “closer” to New York and Tokyo than to the rest of England; asked the question “Is the City English,” all of my interviewees responded in the negative, some adding that while it was *in* England, it was not *English*. The ethnic and cultural diversity of the City aside, the nature of financial activity requires people to be actively connected and communicating with other cities around the world in real time. London also trades in all major currencies, including the dollar and the Euro (Corporation of London 2000: 14). The City’s bookshops have unusually extensive travel and map sections, and numerous City service companies exist which specialise in intercultural training, expatriate relocation and foreign-language lessons (see Dahlen 1997). In a sense, the City can be described as a financial Utopia, both in the sense of being an ideal state for financiers, but also in that the original Greek word “Utopia” literally means “No Place,” and is thus a fitting designation for a place located at one remove from the country which is its host (see Leyshon and Thrift 1994).

Popular histories of the City frequently claim that the City has “always” been a financial Utopia, even though this specialisation is actually less than a hundred years old (Courtney and Thompson 1996: xiv; Cook 2001). Merriman and Visram insist that “London itself was founded by people from overseas and the Roman town was cosmopolitan” (1993: 3). Borer similarly describes the medieval town as a global

financial centre; all the writers mentioned ignore the fact that in both contexts London was a small-scale operator and that it is doubtful that at the time it was at all “cosmopolitan” or “global” in the modern senses (1977: 41). Following WWII, the City remained dominated by old English merchant banks, and like them was conservative and wedded to a paternal-capitalistic ideal; Augar likens the atmosphere of a merchant bank in the 1970s to that of an Oxbridge common room of the 1950s (2000: 20, 35). Although internal sources claim great antiquity for the City as a cosmopolitan and global entity, this state of affairs has in fact been in existence for less than thirty years.

1986 looms large in both books about the City and in its denizens’ personal narratives as a year of transformation, although this date, being the official year of the adoption of deregulation and of the “Big Bang,” actually refers to a series of changes beginning in 1983 and cumulating in the Barings scandal of 1992 (Courtney and Thompson 1996: 218). Deregulation brought in the distinctive regulatory status of the area, making it easier for foreign companies to locate there and compete for human resources and market share with the older merchant banks. The Big Bang, more dramatically, saw the computerisation of all major City institutions; this made face-to-face dealing unnecessary, putting many firms out of business and causing a shift away from the old, slow-paced capitalist ideal to a faster, more globally-focused one (Anonymous 1994: 124-5; Augar 2000). This change was also symbolised by a shift in dress styles from a formal one characterised by the wearing of dark three-piece suits, top hats and bowlers, to the present preference for bare heads, brightly-coloured shirts and two-piece suits among City men (Courtney and Thompson 1996:190ff.) The stock market crash of 1987 further exposed weaknesses in the established traditional structure (Augar 2000: 4); furthermore, as the foreign banks tend to scale back and expand their London offices congruent with gains and losses in their domestic spheres--and as the

local merchant banks were forced of necessity to adopt similar “hire-and-fire” policies--the City as a whole developed a transient ethic placing little value on paternal capitalism (Ibid., 168). Lewis, in his personal account of City life in the mid-1980s, quotes a trader who left his bank for a more lucrative job elsewhere as saying “You want loyalty, hire a cocker spaniel” (1989: 242). The early nineties saw the steady collapse of the old merchant banks, with one or two notable exceptions, and the replacement of the familistic, hierarchical ethic with a more egalitarian but less loyalty-driven system (Courtney and Thompson 1996: 158; Augar 2000).

The present-day City is seen by its inhabitants as fast-paced, egalitarian and globally engaged, with a strong emphasis on flexibility and of the pursuit of personal gain. While one can still find examples of the “old City man,” they tend to be self-employed or retired, and to be most often found in the City Business Library, tracking their own stocks with the aid of the *Financial Times*. People in the modern City tend to change jobs every couple of years and believe company loyalty to be a thing of the past (Courtney and Thompson 1996: xxvi-xxix). Lewis’ cocker-spaniel joke was echoed by numerous City people in interviews, as witness this exchange with a young, male English manager of the “New City” type:

Manager: Ask the first question any human being ever asks.

Interviewer: “Why”?

Manager: “What’s in it for me?”

While the City can be described as having become more meritocratic in that it is now dominated by people from working-class backgrounds and state schools, and is no longer chauvinistically English, ethnic minorities and women are still rare and frequently face prejudice; women adopt a different dress style to men, favouring brightly-coloured two-piece or contrasting trouser suits with scarves or jewellery over the abovementioned dark two-piece and coloured shirt (Ibid., xxviii). Furthermore, there is a fairly anti-intellectual tone to the City; one of Courtney and Thompson's interviewees cynically remarks that the City has gone from a public-school clique who wouldn't hire anyone who wasn't an Old Etonian to a grammar school clique who won't hire anyone who didn't go to a grammar school (Ibid., 167). Nick Leeson, the "Rogue Trader" whose insider-trading activities were blamed for the final collapse of Barings, is celebrated in City stories and jokes ("Have you heard that Nick Leeson was seen walking by the river?... He fell in the water-- the bank collapsed") (Leeson 1996; Beaverstock and Smith 1996: 1382). The modern City thus is seen by the people who work in it as meritocratic, flexible and globally engaged, and yet this state of affairs is also a recent and traumatic development.

The German transnational businesspeople with whom I spoke tended to construct an image of the City using symbols congruent with Sklair's image of a transnational capitalist class. Most people, as noted above, spoke of the City as "not English"; Germans looking for "real Englishness" went to Oxford, Stratford-upon-Avon or Cornwall, or to tourist sites elsewhere in London such as Buckingham Palace. Local symbols, such as the class tension within the City, went largely unmentioned; it seems that the Germans were not unaware of it, as several, mainly trainees, expressed puzzlement at the lack of emphasis on university qualifications in the City, but for the most part it was not discussed. On the other hand, they also tended to define the City in

terms of its English or “Anglo-Saxon” business culture, as opposed principally to the German one (Binney 1993a, b; Millar 1979). Interestingly, however, this Englishness can paradoxically be seen as a form of cosmopolitanism, given that English is seen as the “global language” (see Chapter 6, this volume) and American business culture remains the hegemonic form. In keeping with the TCC’s orientation to the financial and transnational aspects of the City rather than its engagement with the local, the Germans thus have an image of the City as “Utopia”; in England but not of it.

Their descriptions of the City, furthermore, emphasised its cosmopolitanism, in the sense of maintaining a “world-open” attitude. Most people seemed to set up a paradigm in which the UK is presented as narrow and occasionally racist, but the City as cosmopolitan and open. Most German bank employees remarked on the City’s ethnic diversity. Interestingly, however, this discourse did not take into account the fact that the City is in fact *less* diverse than many other areas of London, or acknowledge the possibility that other forms of cosmopolitanism might exist. Additionally, it was never remarked upon that the openness to other cultures was fairly selective; in eighteen months in the City, for instance, I never once saw a woman in a headscarf. The German transnational businesspeople thus construct the City as cosmopolitan, but only in the particular ways most relevant to a transnational capitalist class.

The City was also constructed through symbols of finance and financial speculation. Its distinctive tax and regulation systems, discussed above, figured heavily in interviewees’ descriptions. Political aspects of the City, for instance the Guildhall, were for the most part ignored, likely because these did not feature heavily in bank employees day-to-day lives. Symbols of consumption also featured prominently in descriptions of the City; Lewis attributes the popularity of London as a location site for American banks to “its time zone, its history, its language, its relative political stability,

its large pool of dollar-hungry capital and Harrods (don't underestimate the power of shopping opportunities in all this)" (1989:184). Most of my German interviewees similarly focused on the consumption possibilities afforded by the City's location, whether luxury-goods retailers such as Harrods or, especially among the trainees, bargain-goods areas such as Petticoat Lane; virtually all visitors to the bank went out to a West End musical and/or shopping on Oxford Street as part of their visit. Again, the German transnational businesspeople focused on symbols of elite consumption and trade, of particular interest to a TCC, to define the City.

The historical depth of the City was also constructed in a way which fit with the priorities and interests of a transnational capitalist class. Historical symbols figured in Germans' descriptions of the City, but primarily from a practical or aesthetic standpoint; for the most part the historical buildings and churches were talked about as objects of beauty, or places to go to for a bit of peace and quiet at lunchtime. 1986, more curiously, did not seem to be of much concern to the Germans; while English people at the same banks referred to it continually, only one German interviewee even mentioned it, and he had been in London for over thirty years and had worked for English and American banks prior to working for a German one. It cannot be the case that the Germans were unaffected by the change, as the English employees who mentioned it did so in terms of their (German) bank's reactions to deregulation and the subsequent crash. Historic symbols of the City are thus also restricted to those of interest to a German transnational capitalist class.

This construction of the City, however, is not developed in a vacuum or without engagement with other groups. The fact that two-thirds of the employees of even the most German-focused bank branch in the City are English, mainly of the "new City" type, would suggest that the Germans had quite a bit of contact with this group; few

bank employees outside of top management had contact with “old City” people, employees of the Corporation of London or think-tank members. This fact explains the focus on the financial and consumption aspects of the City, and the lack of emphasis on its politics. Furthermore, it is not in the interest of the “new City” people to delve too deeply into the history of the City, as this would suggest that the dominance of the “new City” type is recent and precarious; hence, while the age of the City is acknowledged, this is done through aesthetic interest in the buildings and through stylised displays of history such as the floats and displays representing Dick Whittington and other semi-mythological figures which are sponsored by Guilds and companies in the City’s annual festival, the Lord Mayor’s Show. This fact also explains the Germans’ relatively low concern with class structure, as it is in the new City people’s interest to emphasise modern meritocracy over traditional hierarchies. The representations of local people thus shape Germans’ own construction of the City.

Similarly, popular works on the City are very much read by Germans as well as English; Courtney and Thompson, Lewis, and Augar were all recommended to me by interviewees. Books on comparative national business cultures, such as Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s *Seven Cultures of Capitalism* (1996) were familiar to everyone in the City; if they had not read them themselves, in most cases they had heard the contents summarised by intercultural trainers (see Dahlen 1997: 79ff; Moore, forthcoming). The Germans’ construction of the City thus is not wholly the product of a transnational capitalist class, but is influenced by a variety of local and global factors.

In addition, London’s German transnational businesspeople are influenced by the local culture of Germany, even while they are resident elsewhere. The lack of emphasis on 1986 may quite likely be because it is eclipsed, in most Germans’ minds, by the events of 1989 (see A. Watson 1995). The ignorance of the class system also

suggests influence from Germany; while there exists some social stratification, at present Germany lacks England's hereditary class structure (Panayi 1995: 255). Similarly, the patterns of consumption and the knowledge of what to consume in London seem to be learned from travel guidebooks and from Germans who had been to England. Finally, even a relatively homogenous part of London may seem cosmopolitan and multicultural to Germans who, despite initiatives aimed at raising awareness, largely view multiculturalism as something which happens in other countries (Vertovec 1996b: 383; forthcoming). My visits to Frankfurt gave me the impression of a financial district with much less visible diversity among the population than the City, and virtually all the buildings had been constructed within the past thirty years. Local influences from Germany thus affect the process of the symbolic definition of the City.

Furthermore, the City is also defined in terms of what it is *not*. Behind the descriptions which German interviewees gave of the City, there seemed to be an implicit contrast to Frankfurt; Frankfurt is smaller, newer, less aesthetically pleasing in their eyes, contains less ethnic mixing (although, despite the lack of visible non-Germans in the financial district, it is debatable whether Frankfurt as a whole is less ethnically mixed than London), and contains less in the way of high culture and shopping opportunities. The other implied contrast was with other groups of Germans in London, such as tourists and students; St Paul's, viewed by most City Germans mainly as a nice place to have lunch, would be seen by the other groups of Germans as a symbol of high culture, religion, or European history. The German transnational businesspeople's symbolic construction of the City is also affected by the symbolic construction given it by groups which they regard as outsiders.

In short, then, the City of London is an area possessing a varied complex of symbols which can be used to define it, from which the German transnational

businesspeople select in order to define the City according to their views and needs. However, this process of selection and definition of meaning does not take place simply within the cadre of German transnational businesspeople, and therefore as part of the construction of a transnational capitalist class. Rather, it is shaped and influenced by local and outside patterns of symbolic selection, by literary and media tropes, and finally in relation to other transnational Germans.

Community, Interrupted: the City's Germans

German transnational businesspeople have a long history and a clear, if tacit, presence in London. Today, they appear to define themselves in ways suggesting a solidary transnational class which is in opposition to local activities, and to other members of the German diaspora. However, once again a greater degree of engagement, both with local symbols and with other Germans in the UK, appears to take place at other levels.

German and German-speaking businesspeople have been a visible group in London since the eighteenth century, and arguably as far back as the eleventh (Panayi 1995: 29; K. Mann 1993: iii). Borer says that "London's foreign trade during the 11th and 12th centuries had been mainly with the Germans, Flemish and French, but by the 12th century the Germans were predominating in the City, as elsewhere in western Europe.... [I]n addition to [importing] German wine, metal work and coats of mail, and boatloads of grain at times of poor harvest in England, they were entrepreneurs for the produce of the East" (1977: 89). Following a period of rivalry between the Cologne traders and those from further east, the Germans combined into the Hanseatic League, which by 1282 had a house on the present-day site of Cannon Street Station (Ibid., 89). The League were granted privileges by the crown, despite objections from local merchants, because England at the time did not have sufficient shipping capacity to

engage in international trade, and because of the revenue and loans which they provided for the crown (Ibid., 90). However, as the years passed their presence caused more and more resentment; by the time of Edward VI, when the English shipping industry was in a better position, their privileges were revoked, and in 1579 Elizabeth I ordered their expulsion.

Following a gap of about 150 years, the next major wave of Germans came to London after the House of Hanover gained the British throne in the mid-eighteenth century (K. Mann 1993: viii). At first many were musicians, sugarbakers and unskilled labourers, but by the nineteenth century an influential elite had developed (Holmes 1988: 43-44). Germans have been associated with banking and finance in England since the mid-nineteenth century, when such figures as Rothschild and Schroeder came to London to start up financial operations (Panayi 1993: 113-114). Most of the institutions which they founded, such as Reuters and Schroeders, have since become regarded as "domestic" (Farrell 1990: 5). In addition, there existed a small number of German banks with London branches from 1870 through 1914, partly, as today, for the purposes of information acquisition and networking, but also to obtain access to trade within the British Empire (Pohl and Burk 1998: part I; correspondence available in the Deutsche Bank Archives, 1870-1914). From 1812 to 1914, the Germans were a visible group, expressing their presence as a community through common areas of residence and membership in ethnic clubs (*Vereine*), some of which became quite powerful (Holmes 1988: 43-44; Panayi 1995: 183-190). The second major wave of German immigration thus bore recognisable similarities to the present one, the main difference being that its members were more visible than their modern equivalent.

WWI, however, marked the end of German visibility. In the years leading up to WWI, anti-German sentiment, tinged with anti-Semitism, was rife (Firchow 1986;

Wraight 1991:42). The Deutsche Bank Archive has in its possession documents and letters chronicling the creation and progress of the Anglo-German Conciliation Committee, founded in 1905 by prominent German and UK business figures in response to the demonisation of Germans in the UK media, for the promotion of good political and social relations between the two groups; the initiative appears to have failed sometime after 1906 (Deutsche Bank 1905a, b, Anonymous 1905, see also *Morning Post* 1908; *Berliner Lokal Ansaiger* 1912). During WWI persons with German surnames were physically attacked and sometimes killed, and in both world wars they were interned (Panayi 1993: 114-115; Wraight 1991:42). The assets of all German businesses were confiscated at the outset of WWI and not returned (Anonymous 1916, 1919). Many ethnic Germans, including the British Royal Family, changed their names and disguised their origins; the prewar practice of ethnic Germans self-identifying as German fell into disuse (Panayi 1993: 114; Farrell 1990:5-7). After WWII, the numbers of Germans in the UK again rose, with most of the new émigrés being either refugees, the wives of servicemen, or exchange students and au-pairs; of the three groups, only the first retained any form of visibility, and that mainly on the basis of shared religion rather than shared nationality (K. Mann 1993: 143; Berghahn 1988; Breitenstein and Hommerich (eds.) 1976). There thus exist sharp discontinuities between the pre- and postwar German communities, even though some of their members are the same.

Today's Germans form something of a non-community in London. When I asked about the "German community," I was repeatedly told that it did not exist. At the same time, however, most of the Germans whom I knew had acquaintances in common, belonged to the same professional associations, sent their children to the same school, and many at least knew of each other (see also Chapter 7, this volume). Panayi, similarly, notes that while the modern German community does not congregate in one

area as the older ones did, it does focus around institutions such as schools, clubs and churches (1993:16). This was borne out by my own experience, although for businesspeople, clubs and churches did not seem to figure strongly, aside from the smattering of families, mainly ones with small children, who regularly attended the monthly services of the German Lutheran Church. The Germans can thus be said to be a community, but one which is largely only visible in symbolic, not physical terms.

Richmond, the area of residence for most of London's German population (particularly those with children, due to its proximity to the German-language school, known as the Deutsche Schule London or DSL), also did not show signs of hosting a visible community. Wandering around the area, it is difficult to find evidence of a German presence: the supermarkets stock the same food as those elsewhere in London, and other than the presence of a small German language section in some bookshops, there is no real German mercantile, religious or cultural presence. The district is an attractive, upscale one, with large houses with gardens, prominent luxury-goods shops and wide, tree-lined, well-tended roads; several famous cultural sites are in the area, and jazz festivals are held in the summer. In this it is no different to many other districts in London whose inhabitants are well-to-do; one might compare the area with others which are fashionable among local elites, such as Islington. The Germans are thus not particularly visible within Richmond.

However, a closer inspection reveals more subtle signs, for instance a group of German teenagers, too young and well-groomed to be backpackers, having a picnic on the riverbank; families of Germans shopping for household staples in the supermarket; the local bus company advertising regular services to the DSL with a German-language placard. The local museum, while it had no exhibits on the German population and portrayed WWI and II very much in the standard patriotic vein of received UK history,

was on my visit staffed by an elderly German volunteer who was quite happy to tell me about the Germans in the area. The German community may have a geographical focus, but this is only discernable through subtle, almost tacit, symbols.

Within this non-community, there was a sizeable group which fell within the definitions of a transnational elite given in Chapter 1. Its members are involved with the globalisation of capital, have a cosmopolitan mindset, and share similar consumption patterns with each other and with transnational elites from other countries. Within the German business world, however, transnational businesspeople associated with finance and banking have low visibility; most interviewees of whatever nationality, asked to name a German company, were much more likely to name Siemens or Bosch than Deutsche Bank. While discussions with the managers of manufacturing corporations suggested that there are fewer German transnational businesspeople in manufacturing than in the financial services industry in England, most people, both English and German, seemed to take manufacturing companies as the unmarked category (as defined in Banks 1996: 159) of German TNCs, and the bulk of German corporations in the UK are in fact manufacturing firms. While numerous, then, City Germans are less visible than those associated with manufacturing.

However, as with the wider German population, those involved with transnational finance distinguish themselves in subtle ways. The managers, particularly the top managers, at both the studied banks knew each other, in some cases personally, and had acquaintances at other German banks and financial corporations. Even front-line staff, who tend to drift between banks, often maintained relations with ex-colleagues at their previous places of employment, and employees who had left one bank for another tended to come back occasionally for social events. Top managers and specialists share membership in--frequently ethnically-based--professional

organisations. In addition, the fact that most of the bank employees live in Richmond and that their children go to the same school creates further networking opportunities. Finally, acquaintanceships are frequently maintained through encounters with colleagues on the Stansted-Frankfurt air service, known in the City as the “Bankers’ Express” (Anonymous 1994: 130). The City’s German transnational businesspeople thus show the pattern of the wider German population of being a non-community, but also have lifestyles in keeping with the definition of a transnational capitalist class.

Most German interviewees, furthermore, tended to describe themselves in culturally mixed terms, fitting with the transnational capitalist class’ reputed fascination with hybridisation (Zachary 2000). Many of those who were permanently settled in England were in relationships with someone from the UK, and defined themselves in terms of this; in fact, the community seemed to be exogamous, with the only Germans who were married to fellow Germans having done so before coming to the UK. Others, including those who were only in the UK for a year or two, described themselves in terms of mixing English and German culture; one manager, who had attended the University of Manchester, half-seriously described himself as “the Manc from Frankfurt.” While many of the more settled Germans encouraged their children to “discover their heritage,” and maintained a number of German ethnic markers (for instance, bread and cheese for breakfast instead of more traditional UK foods), they also spoke with pride of their and their children’s abilities to get on in a UK environment (one recently-emigrated interviewee proudly announcing that he had taken to eating cereal in the mornings). This mixed self-description also fits with Sklair’s vision of a cosmopolitan, business-focused elite class.

Not surprisingly, German transnational businesspeople’s image of the German diaspora in the UK tends to exclude the historical dimension. Most were not aware of

the long history of German banking in England; one young staff member, upon being told, exclaimed in surprise, "I wish somebody would tell the English about that!" Only one interviewee spoke of the German connection to the old UK banks, and he was in fact an Englishman with a German wife, prior residence in Germany and a strong interest in the culture. However, neither he nor the first interviewee were particularly interested in spreading the information. Again, however, this fits well with the construction of the City Germans as a transnational capitalist class; an orientation towards business leaves little room for interest in history other than as a personal quirk, and the focus on modernity, simultaneity and the present is in keeping with the fast-paced, postmodern ethic of a transnational elite. Similarly, if one acknowledges the prominent role of Germans in nineteenth-century London, one must then ask what happened to change their position, which leads one to the problematic question of the events of WWI and WWII. The historical depth of the German community thus did not figure strongly in German transnational businesspeople's views of the City.

Similarly, the City Germans define themselves in implicit opposition to other elements of the diaspora. While they cannot totally be unaware of the presence of refugees from Nazi persecution in the country--aside from the fact that the German Lutheran Congregation was founded by refugees, the *Sozialberatungsstelle* (Social Advice Office) run by the German Consulate was originally set up to help such people and, although it now caters to other elements of the diaspora as well, many are still regular patrons of the office. However, I did not find out about the refugees except through Berghahn (1988), and through acquaintances in the German Lutheran Congregation. One permanently-settled German bank employee who self-identified as having few ties to Germany, and to whom I had quoted a news article which quoted a London German Jewish community leader complaining about anti-German feeling in

England, responded with the words, “that’s *her* opinion.” Again, this fits with the association which Sklair draws between the transnational capitalist class and the TNCs for which they work. German corporations wish to forget the Nazi past as much as possible; it goes virtually unmentioned in all the corporate promotional material which I collected (including, interestingly, that of corporations which were shut down during the Nazi period and thus could not be said to have political skeletons in their closets), apart from cases in which the company has established a reparations programme (*Financial Times* 1999). The primary reason for this silence is, of course, that reviving the Nazi past creates a bad image for present-day German corporations; however, the refugees, for obvious reasons, wish the war to be remembered as much as possible (see Appelius 1996). It could be equally bad for business, furthermore, for Germans to be seen as refugees or in need of charity and assistance. Consequently, the German bankers dissociate themselves from the refugees, partly because of their different position vis-à-vis the Nazi past, but also because of the negative economic implications.

More complicated is the relationship between German transnational businesspeople and the German students and tourists who come to the City. Again, German transnational businesspeople tended to distance themselves from such activities. The symbolic associations of these social formations run broadly counter to those which a transnational capitalist class might embrace; both tourists and students are seen as naive and in search of education (or one of Hannerz’s “home-plus” experiences), as opposed to the more “savvy” world-openness of bankers (Hannerz 1996: 104). Finally, as noted above, these groups take quite different views of history, culture and landscape to businesspeople. However, many of the German transnational businesspeople with whom I spoke were (and, in the case of trainees, still are) students at some point, and many, given the prestige value of study abroad among transnational

businesspeople, were international students (Butcher 2001). Similarly, the boundary between tourist and businessperson is often a vague one: businesspeople go on holiday at least once a year, and it is a common thing during business trips to engage in a certain amount of tourist activity. The Germans thus distance themselves from these groups when they act as a transnational capitalist class, but when they adopt other roles, they may be less distant from them.

As with their views of the City, again, German businesspeople in London construct their image of the diaspora not in a vacuum, but in response to other groups' uses of the same symbols. The tendency to view history purely in aesthetic terms and the dislike of tourists probably owes much to contact with English colleagues, and in particular, the "German tourist" jokes which circulate in the English media. Furthermore, the dissociation of themselves from other groups of migrants to the UK may stem from an awareness of the place of WWII in English stereotypes of Germans (see Chapter 6, this volume). The self-construction of the German population of London is thus not merely down to their being a transnational capitalist class, but also to influence from the local culture's symbolic construction of Germanness.

Similarly, their self-construction is also affected by discourses of cosmopolitanism and Germanness in Germany itself. With a few exceptions, studies of the German diaspora seem to be fairly limited in Germany; most of the activity seems to come from British and New World ethnic Germans (Grass 1990a: 120). Furthermore, the German media also tend to dissociate modern Germany from the refugees of the Nazi and post-Nazi periods. Finally, as before, the symbols which define the community are also affected by those used by groups viewed as outside of it. The Germans with whom I spoke were aware of other groups of Germans in London, and implicitly defining themselves in opposition to these. Consequently, they make use of

certain symbols in different ways to the other groups, and reject other symbols used by these. Again, German transnational businesspeople in London are influenced in their symbolic constructions of the diaspora by the way in which it is constructed in Germany and elsewhere.

The selection of symbols, moreover, is not down to any one engagement but to engagements with many groups on the same subjects in diverse ways. The construction of City and Anglo-German history, for instance, is partly down to City culture, partly to local attitudes to German history, and partly to German attitudes to their own history (see Forsythe 1989; MacDonald 2001). Furthermore, individuals within the German population take on different roles with regard to transnationalism over their lifetime; the same person can be a student, a tourist and a businessperson at different stages of their life or even at the same time. Additionally, a German transnational businessperson may have different degrees of transnational engagement at different times, for instance when studying, working abroad, taking time out to have children or reaching retirement age. This affects their position relative to the key symbols by means of which the group is defined; an individual with school-age children, for instance, might take more of an interest in local history than a bank employee. The self-definition of transnational businesspeople thus does not only not take place in a vacuum, it takes place at a variety of different levels at different times.

The German transnational businesspeople of the City are therefore a non-community of sorts, whose members symbolically construct themselves as economically engaged, transient and cosmopolitan, and emphasise the discontinuity with other segments of the German diaspora in London. However, this process of symbolic self-definition does not take place in a vacuum, or without reference to other

sorts of Germans or transnational businesspeople, varies over individual and group life-cycles, and is shaped by the present-day Anglo-German social and political context.

Loose Change: Recent Events in German Transnational Banking

German businesses in the City of London have been affected by several trends within their environment: the adoption of the Euro by Germany, the recent series of mergers on the part of German companies, and the so-called “e-commerce boom.” Again, the way in which they deal with these issues appears on one level to define a transnational capitalist class; however, the very nature of these issues entails a strong degree of local engagement, internal division and complex negotiation between groups.

According to a 2000 survey by *The Banker*, there were at the time of my fieldwork 27 German banks and/or financial institutions with City branches or representative offices, the latter being a small office of two or three employees set up to keep an eye on the London market and engage in networking. (*The Banker* 2000: 43); see also Braun 1993; *The Economist* 1998e; a set of 1993 statistics on the actual population of Germans can be found in Appendix I). Most banks started out with representative offices in the 1970s, and expanded to full branches in the mid-eighties. In the 1980s, some German banks joined with other European banks in coalition or joint investment banks, but recent years have seen an abandonment of this strategy in favour of independent branches. There are thus a sizeable minority of German companies in the City, with connections to Germany and the German financial system.

The German banking system consists, roughly speaking, of four different types of banks (described more fully in Anonymous 1995). First and most visible are the “Big Three,” Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Bank and Commerzbank. All of these are old established universal banks--that is, banks with a global presence which provide a

“universal range of financial products”-- independent of the state but larger and less specialised than the *Privatbanken* (Chetham 1994: 73; von Stein 1998: 37-8). Recently, following the merger of Bayerische Vereinsbank and Bayerische Hypotheken- und Wechselbank, the resultant entity, HypoVereinsbank, is sufficiently large and universal to be considered with the Big Three (*Financial Times* 1998a; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2000). Secondly, there are the banks owned by the federal state (or in which the state is the majority shareholder), which include cooperative banks (*Genossenschaftsbanken*), savings banks (*Sparkasse*) and the Girobank. Like the Big Three, they tend to have small local branches backed by a Frankfurt-based head office; however, in their case, the branches are effectively independent entities (von Stein 1998: 37). Next there are the *Landesbanken*, banks associated with the various states of Germany, such as Hessische Landesbank (HeLaBa) or Westdeutsche Landesbank (WestLB) (Ibid., 37-8). Finally, there are the *Privatbanken*, merchant banks which tend to deal with trade and corporate customers (Ibid., 36). Most of the banks were founded between 1850 and 1890, with numbers peaking in the 1870s during German unification (see von Stein 1998; Eisenberg 1985; Klein 1997; Gall 1995: 1-17). Both the *Sparkassen* and the cooperatives started as independent small banks from 1800 on, but by the 1860s-70s had established central banks (Eisenberg 1985; Vellerking and Holzgrabe 1990: 9-26). Most German banks were officially closed down and reformed after WWII, although some, as noted above, had been shut down by the Nazi party on achieving power (Klure 1985: 126-148, Holtfrereich 1995: 439-486). German banks in general thus have a distinctive history and structural system.

These businesses have recently been affected by three trends in German banking. The first is the adoption by Germany of the new European currency, the Euro, at the end of 1998. In the London context, this was a controversial subject: while the

German banks were officially pro-Euro, the English position tends to be hostile to the Euro, with the media frequently using it as a symbol of foreign, and often of German, attempts to impose upon the English way of life (Jones 1998). In fact, the English media often conflate the European Union with Germany, and consequently hostility towards the Euro, as towards all European Union development efforts, tends to be tinged with anti-German rhetoric (Ibid.). The City's position, in keeping with its role as a financial Utopia, tends not to be actively hostile to the Euro but it is divided over the question of whether or not its adoption by England--and hence the City-- would be a good thing. The Euro was frequently described to me as "just another currency" by City people; however, a conference paper by David Lascelles of the Centre for the Study of Financial Innovation, presented during my fieldwork, argues that to keep the pound would better enable the City to maintain neutrality between the American and Continental European markets (2000). However, at the London branches studied here, people seemed to be less anti-Euro than others in the UK, due to the banks' official pro-Euro position; while personal views on the Euro tended to be variable, most people were united in viewing it as something to be accepted as part of professional life. In institutions linked with German transnational capitalism, then, the symbolic value of the Euro, to say nothing of European Union development, is subtly different from that of the rest of the City.

Secondly, there has been a recent spate of mergers and attempted mergers in the German business world, with varying degrees of impact. The successful mergers of Daimler-Benz and Chrysler, and, in banking, Bayerische Hypotheken- und Wechselbank and Bayerische Vereinsbank (*Financial Times* 1998a), prompted a wave of merger talks and restructuring throughout German business. However, there followed a stream of spectacular failures, most notably the Rover-BMW merger, which became a

symbol of German and English inability to coexist, and which was frequently invoked by people from both ethnic groups when in a state of dissatisfaction with the other one (*Financial Times* 1998b), and the attempted merger between Deutsche Bank and Dresdner Bank, which was announced as a move which would revolutionise German banking if it succeeded, and which failed with much publicity shortly thereafter (Major 2000). All these combined to create an atmosphere of discontinuity and faster-than-usual change among German banks in London, and to create symbolic focuses for Anglo-German relations.

The third major factor impacting on the banking world was the Internet revolution and, more specifically, the “E-commerce” boom. Over the two years of the study, banks and City institutions made increasing use of the Internet. Finally, in 2000 came the Internet banking explosion, with the establishment of Internet-only banks, and older banks setting up online wings, in the banking version of the so-called “Internet goldrush.” As with the mergers, the “dotcom phenomenon” was viewed cynically by bank employees, but they continued to participate, citing the fact that it made it possible to reach international customers without needing a branch in that country. Not surprisingly, given their transnational connections, the City’s German banks have found themselves increasingly preoccupied with IT-related issues.

However, while it may seem as if all of these trends have had an across-the-board impact on German banks in the City, this apparent uniformity of impact may have more to do with the selection of symbols by the banks and their employees than with actual events. For instance, the differences between the types of German banks are not particularly emphasised, with few English people who are not specialists being able to distinguish between them; instead, they all are subsumed under a general “German” label. The promotional material for one of the banks in the study emphasises its focus

on the *Mittelstand* in the German market, but its UK promotional material labels it as “a specialist in Germany for its international customers.” The larger banks, furthermore, frequently tried to dissociate themselves from Germany and give themselves a more global image, chiefly by merging with British and American financial institutions. Through the use of particular symbols, the German banks give themselves the appearance of a united front.

Furthermore, the fact that the three abovementioned trends take on the significance which they do, and the ways in which these are discussed, also points to a process of symbol selection. The association of industry with Germanness, mainly down to the importance it has to German nationalism (Seeger 1997: 2), takes on a different significance in a country in which this is the norm than in one in which it is unusual; most banks may continue to focus on the *Mittelstand* in England, but generally only mention this when addressing German customers. However, it may also have to do with the fact that the English also conceive of German business primarily in terms of manufacturing, and that German manufacturing companies are the most visible German TNCs (Head 1992). The emphasis on symbols of manufacturing thus also shows a bias towards those symbols which are suited to a transnational environment and an English location.

Similarly, many banks use symbols of Europe, such as European flags or Euro accounts, in their self-promotion. While a pro-European stance, as Forsythe notes (1989: 153) can be a symbol of Germanness, many German interviewees described it as symbolising cosmopolitanism and openness to new cultures; most, even those who were anti-Europe, spoke of it in terms of bringing cultures together and promoting mutual understanding. Many people spoke of European development initiatives, however, in interestingly superficial terms; many spoke of the benefits of the Euro and European

passport to tourism, for instance, and others of the development of closer cultural ties between European countries, rather than of the political issues; the focus on the purely monetary aspects of the Euro is similarly a selection of symbols seen as positive in the City. In the case of European initiatives, then, we also see a selection of symbols towards those suited to the environment.

The e-commerce boom, similarly, is spoken of in ways which highlight its globalising and communicative aspects; it is also presented as an extension of the bank (which the presence of Internet-only banks suggests need not necessarily be so), with an emphasis also on the flexibility of the concept and its links to traditional banking (manifested through the use of the logos and brand names of older banks, and of the same sorts of products and services). Again, the ways in which banks symbolically engage with each other and with the issues important with them shows a process of symbolic selection which is not only congruent with their role as transnational business institutions, but with their current environment; banks and bank employees are taking into account the diversity of the outside groups with which they must interact, and the internal diversity of German transnational businesspeople as a group, and present themselves in ways which can accommodate this.

The fact that these symbols are used in this way points to diverse elements within German transnational capitalism, with different sorts of engagement with transnational capital. The banks themselves, for instance, view presenting a global image as more important for the large banks than the smaller ones; similarly, the employees of different banks have different engagements with Germany and the globe, depending on the company's strategy and position. Furthermore, the issues affecting them tend to blend and intersect in interesting ways; the failed Rover merger at once refers to ambivalencies about Europeanisation on both sides, English xenophobia

towards Germans, and the association of the manufacturing industries with discourses of Germanness. The diversity of elements within the German transnational banking world makes for much variation, and means that, even if the actors within it employ the same symbols and are affected by the same issues, one cannot talk of a uniform German transnational capitalist class.

The diversity of symbolic interpretation can also be said to indicate the diversity of outside groups with which the banks must engage. For instance, in Germany, the adoption of the Euro sparked parties; the head office of one bank distributed packets of Euro-shaped sweets among the employees, and well into the autumn of 2000 one could buy Euro-commemorative souvenirs, including teddy bears, T-shirts and key chains, in most Frankfurt shops (see also *Spiegel* 1998b). That autumn, also, the city of Frankfurt sponsored a project in which schoolchildren and artists decorated four-foot-wide Euros, which were then displayed in the city centre and auctioned off for charity. In the City branches of German banks, by contrast, most employees said that there had just been a bit of extra work around the end of December 1998; there was no evidence of any particular celebrations or commemorative activities. Effectively, then, the types of symbols used, and the ways in which these were expressed and interpreted, was affected by the environment in which the expression was taking place.

There also appears to be an element of strategy in the banks' self-presentation and in their reactions to the various issues at hand (Schwarz 1989). Firstly, in that there is variation between banks in terms of their economic niches, they all tend to follow different strategies. Within the City context, the larger banks tend to be competing with the larger transnational and global banks, where the smaller German banks seem to compete mainly against each other, and so the ways in which they present themselves are different. Similarly, the strategy one employs depends on the client; one senior

manager, who had spent over ten years in the UK, said that he tended to emphasise the image of Germans as good businesspeople only when dealing with English clients. In general, then, banks present themselves according to strategies in response to outside trends.

As an example, consider the e-commerce boom. At the beginning of 2000, most people were talking publicly in terms of e-commerce as a symbol of the future and of a new global order, even if privately they expressed doubts. When the first major e-commerce failures occurred, in the middle of the year, it began to be spoken of more as a symbol of carelessness and poor business practice, of unrealistic beliefs in a global corporate utopia. This shifting of meanings in response to outside trends was, additionally, at least to some extent a conscious process. One UK-born senior manager, for instance, remarked in a formal interview that he felt that a particular programme which his bank was implementing was costly and not well-thought-of as a strategy by most of its managers. I asked him why they were implementing it, if this was the case. He responded that most other banks in the City were adopting similar programmes, and therefore they had to keep up or risk losing clients. The selection of symbols on the part of the German transnational businesspeople thus is done according to a strategy which takes into account local conditions and the actions of other groups, rather than simply occurring in response to internal and/or global trends, and this is consciously recognised by at least some of its members.

In sum, then, the City's German transnational businesspeople operate in the social environment of the German bank branches and representative offices of the City of London. However, the ways in which they symbolically construct themselves within this environment are made with reference to other groups of varying degrees of transnationalism; furthermore, this process is subject to variation depending on the

bank's position in the German and local market and with reference to wider trends in the financial world. Not only do the German transnational businesspeople and their banks construct and represent themselves with reference to other things than simply the world of transnational capital, then, but they adjust and alter their representations of Germanness and cosmopolitanism in line with variations in outside circumstances, according to particular strategies.

Analysis: Being German in Utopia

The German transnational businesspeople thus consistently appear, in the City of London, to project an image of unity which belies an actual diversity. The reason for this dichotomy lies not only in the shifting, fluid and symbol-focused nature of the City environment, but in the use of symbols as a means of self-definition in the global financescape.

From 1986 onwards, and possibly since the oil shocks of 1973 (Augar 2000; Fay 1988: 104-138), the City has been in a state of perpetual flux, both in the financial sense of the "free fall" which the market has experienced since the end of the Bretton Woods agreement, and the social sense of the hire-and-fire, trend-following culture which has developed since then, finding its most recent manifestation in the recent spate of attempted mergers and joint ventures. The City's present ethos, as has been said, embraces change and discontinuity; few City people stay more than a few years in the same job even if they continue to work for the same company, and City dress follows changes in fashion moreso than elsewhere, with the London *Metro* (the free paper aimed at City commuters) devoting large sections to identifying the latest trends (for more on the use of newspapers in constructing City culture, see Owen 1999). Hence, perhaps, the lack of interest in the City's history on the part of its members, and their

emphasis on the discontinuity of 1986 at the same time as their affirmation that London has always been global. The City is thus conceived of as an environment in constant flux, and paradoxically as always having been this way.

Furthermore, due to its engagement with globalisation, the City's ethos is best described as "postmodern," in Harvey's (1989) sense of being comprised of flux, fragmentation and discontinuity, all linked to technological change. City people often voice feelings that they are experiencing ever-more-rapid social changes around them, and tend to emphasise communications technology and travel, both in conversation and in daily activity (Leyshon and Thrift 1997; see also Augar 2000). This again fits with London's position as a global city; one of the reasons why so many financial companies choose to set up a branch in London is because of its position in the middle of the New York and Tokyo time zones, allowing people to operate in both markets, suggesting that time itself can be colonised (Douch n.d.: 57). It is possible, too, that the importance given to e-commerce and the way in which it was wholeheartedly embraced by the City was due to its fitting in with this ethos of change, global activity and discontinuity. The City is thus an example of a postmodern culture: globally engaged, in continuous flux, driven by changes in technology and transportation, and inhabiting, in a sense, a discontinuous, Utopian space-- a place of people living, as one German auditor put it, "above the Earth."

Furthermore, the City contains diverse elements, all defining themselves through the possession of different interpretations for the same symbols. For an "old City" man, shopping at Harrods may be keeping up with tradition; for a "new City" man, it may be a way of demonstrating affluence; for a German expatriate, it may be a way of showing a *Weltoffen* appreciation for local specialities. The use of symbols thus provides a means of handling diversity and allowing for frequent changes within the

City environment, in which no one group can exist without interaction with many if not all of the others, not to mention with groups outside the City.

In such an environment, it should be not surprising that the use of symbols as a means of defining oneself and others takes on such a degree of importance. The City frequently underscores its position as *in* London but not *of* it through ceremonies such as the annual Lord Mayor's Show and signs such as the City police uniforms. There are also more subtle markers, such as the architecturally distinct mix of glass towers with old houses, which makes it possible to identify City areas in Canary Wharf and Knightsbridge. The nature of the City, in particular those traits which make it a "global" city, means that membership therein is more a matter of a symbolic code than anything else, and thus that the presentation of self through symbols takes on a great deal of importance, as it is through symbols that one marks out one's place--and thus, oneself--in the City environment.

The City's Germans, like the City itself, are discontinuous, fragmented and change-focused, lacking a sense of connection with the earlier London German communities, and very much focused on the careers of individuals and temporary residence as a means of defining themselves. Like the City people, also, they symbolically construct themselves as a group, through such connections as membership in particular organisations, sending their children to the same school, experience of expatriation and so forth. By constructing their social structure through internally recognised symbols, the City's Germans remain a distinct group while still fitting in with their City surroundings, and can thus, as one German bank employee noted, take the best of the German and the English worlds. The Germans thus inhabit a doubly symbol-focused environment: the City and the German non-community.

The German transnational businesspeople, furthermore, like the City, include among themselves a diverse array of types of persons, professions, and working environments. Individuals seem to form an undifferentiated transnational capitalist class when considered as a unit, but within this group one can see a number of differences with regard to length of (expected) stay in London, reasons for coming to London, areas of origin, professional specialty and so forth; additionally, these identifying factors vary over the course of an individual's working life. Like the City itself, then, the German transnational businesspeople comprise a number of different elements within the global financescape, and have different sorts of engagement with outside localities and global entities.

German companies in the City therefore employ symbols as a means of defining themselves without reference to a common location or affiliations. German firms construct themselves as a group with reference to their economic niche, position on Europe and marketing and client-finding strategies, and also by their long-termist hiring and business practices (see Stewart et al. 1994a, b), and by their focus on the German or German-related markets. The employees of these firms have similar practices: the employees of one bank described their organisation as "just like any other merchant bank in the City"; the same employees, however, also noted that all their clients, German and non-German, had an interest in Germany. The self-presentation of their firms thus symbolically sets German transnational businesspeople off as a distinct group within the City, even as they form a part of it.

Due to the shifting, "Utopian" nature of the City, however, its Germans have of necessity to learn local uses of particular symbols as well as their own. This process is visible in their interactions with English workmates; a new arrival generally stands out strikingly in terms of dress, manner and behaviour. One German who had lived in

England for over ten years commented dryly that one could always identify visitors from Germany by their preference for clashing patterns and wildly contrasting colours, and another at one point remarked that the fact that Germans have smaller personal space and engage in more physical contact in daily interaction had caused one new arrival to appear overly forward with a colleague of the opposite sex. Within the space of three months they have usually altered all three to be more in tune with the local norm. Newcomers to the firm learn about where to go, what to eat, what to watch on television and where to shop from colleagues. Furthermore, while for the most part the governance of the City does not impact directly on them, they are affected on another level by its regulations and periodic symbolic displays as well as by the English media. Finally, in the case of employees sent over from Germany by their firms, many have contact with relocation agencies, organisations which help them to get language lessons, rent houses, find the “right” schools for their children, arrange to move their families to England, and so forth, and through this learn the symbols and interpretations which are current in the City. The Germans thus learn local interpretations of the symbols through which they define themselves, which they can put into use in the City context.

Because of their engagement with multiple localities, also, the German transnational businesspeople have at the same time to deal with German interpretations of the same symbols. This is primarily, of course, because all the Germans in the study were socialised in a German context; in addition, all have greater or lesser continuing contact with the country. Short-term expatriates make frequent return visits; while longer-term residents may not return as frequently, there are few, if any, who lack an ongoing connection with Germany. The degree of contact also varies; someone who has not had much to do with Germany in the past may become more engaged with it when,

for instance, she has children. Simply working at a German bank causes a degree of engagement with Germany. Many people, including some who were otherwise assimilated, read the German newspapers and some magazines (although only a couple admitted to watching German television via satellite). The Germans thus both learn and maintain knowledge of particular meanings of symbols in the German context through past and continued contact with Germany itself.

The multivalency of symbols, however, provides a means of handling this diversity of engagement, as actors define themselves within the City and global contexts using the same sets of symbols, but distinguish themselves through the meanings they attach to them. The banks, for instance, present a united front to the outsider through their German names and focus on the German market; however, these same names and connections provide a means for people in the German business world to distinguish between them. Similarly, German transnational businesspeople share many of their symbols with the City as a whole, such as their emphasis on consumption, cosmopolitanism, business orientation and meritocracy; however, by virtue of their background and position, these all have different connotations for them. German newspapers, a symbol of Germanness for those who read them, form a symbol of global awareness when on a newsstand with French, Italian and American papers. Through the strategic use of the multivalency of symbols, German transnational businesspeople can remain a non-community, united and yet possessed of diverse elements at the same time.

The multivalency of symbols also comes into play in interactions with other German transnational groups, as with the students, refugees, and tourists. All can be said, and seem to be, German and cosmopolitan, and all use the same symbols: all define Germanness through images of industry and Europe; all value “world-openness”

and the ability to acculturate within other countries. However, a student's "world-openness" has a different sort of cultural capital than a businessman's, and "Europe" takes on a different meaning for an old refugee than for a young expatriate, even if the two are both, as one City thinktank member noted, influenced in their definition of it by images of WWII. Furthermore, all groups seem aware of the others' interpretations of the relevant symbols. Once again, it is not the symbols, but the possession of different interpretations of these, which distinguishes these subgroups and yet allows movement between them.

Interactions in the global financescape take place along similar lines. It cannot be denied, for instance, that the Germans do appear to form part of a global transnational capitalist class, as can be seen in their sharing of symbols of global consumption, cosmopolitanism, business orientation, financial engagement, meritocratic ethos, the value of international education and the aesthetic view of history with other City elite professionals. Bank employees whom I interviewed, who had worked or were still working in New York, Hong Kong and Tokyo, also remarked upon common points between themselves and local employees in these cities on most of these points. Within this, however, they have a distinctive take on the meaning of these, shaped by their being German and by their experiences of the City. Effectively, then, the City's Germans may seem to form part of an undifferentiated transnational capitalist class in that there are common symbols held by the group which can be said to be transnational and capitalism-focused, but their interpretations of these symbols set them off from other ethnic groups and professional elements within this wider social unit.

This internal diversity and external engagement among German transnational businesspeople is therefore made possible by the multivalent properties of symbols. Because the meaning of a given symbol can vary with the circumstances, it allows the

actor to vary his or her self-presentation accordingly; furthermore, it can allow for many different ways of being German, and define different groups within German transnational capitalism. It also allows them to engage with other groups, through adopting their meanings for the symbols which they have in common, or finding common ground for communication with them through these: while this can lead to misunderstandings (see Head [1992: 105-6, 112-113] on how English consumers read German automobile advertising), it can also be a means of positive self-presentation, as with the German bank employees who emphasise their bank's resemblance to local merchant banks in order to appear more locally oriented. Furthermore, actors' uses of symbols are not fixed; they continually learn new interpretations of symbols, and keep aware of the changes in the received interpretation of these. Effectively, then, were it not for the multivalency of symbols and actors' abilities to learn and use other interpretations of symbols, they would be an undifferentiated elite global culture; as it is, however, they form a culture which learns and acts in response to other groups within and outside itself. The multivalency of symbols thus allows transnational businesspeople to operate as a social unit at the same time as maintaining external engagements and internal divisions.

The metaphorical coherence of symbols, additionally, allows actors to switch between one set of meanings and another. For instance, when I asked a board member of the Bank of England whether he would describe it as an "English" institution, he first said that no, it was the bank of the United Kingdom, and then read some statistics to me from the personnel records, indicating that a sizeable percentage of the employees are non-English (see Kynaston 1995: 51-52). However, given the current emphasis on multiculturalism in England and the fact that England is the hegemonic force within the United Kingdom (see Banks 1996: 159), not to mention the City's geographical

location, the same symbols can cause the Bank to be English at the same time as it is being non-English; its service staff are clearly visible in the City due to their early eighteenth-century-style livery coats and top hats. Similarly, a bank can use its connection to Germany to symbolise either Germanness or cosmopolitanism in the UK context. What results is a complex engagement with multiple cultures and multiple forms of transnationalism, using the same symbols--but these symbols exist in all the groups' repertoires, and consequently can be used to bridge the gap from one to the other. While the multivalency of symbols might at first seem to lead to homogeneity, in fact it encourages diversity, and facilitates a complex engagement which is at once local and global.

The symbols which the Germans use to define themselves as an ethnic group also allow them to affiliate themselves with other groups as well, through their multivalent properties. Symbols defining Germanness, such as economic specialisation, a particular clientele, and a positive orientation towards Europe are also symbols of transnational business (see Head 1992). Furthermore, the historical German community, and other elements of the German diaspora, are defined by the same symbols as the businesspeople (common residence, WWII, ethnic clubs and so forth), and yet the various groups view themselves as distinct from each other. The fact that the Germans are influenced by the symbolic construction of other groups, if only to avoid these usages, speaks of the use of the multivalency of symbols in the process of day-to-day interaction. In addition, the multivalent properties of symbols explain the selective way in which the Germans can remain a "non-community"-- not a solidary unit but a symbolically connected population. Through the multivalency of symbols, then, German transnational businesspeople can exist as a unit, as part of larger social units (e.g. the German diaspora) and can maintain diverse internal and external engagements.

Furthermore, the multivalency of symbols allows the Germans to interact with diverse groups in many settings simultaneously, as the interacting groups pick up on each others' symbols and interpretations in a process of mutual construction. The multivalency of symbols provides the common ground on which such interaction occurs, and allows a bank to operate in two contexts, Germany and the City, simultaneously: a bank may be a *Sparkasse* in Germany, but in the City it is just another German bank. The same process allows the City to be located "in" England but at the same time to be not actually "of" England. The engagement of both the German transnational businesspeople and the City with other groups and cultures of varying degrees of transnationalism is possible due to, and is carried out through, the multivalency of the symbols of the groups involved.

German transnational businesspeople are therefore adept at switching back and forth between sets of symbols and the meanings assigned to them as part of their strategies in this symbol-focused, diverse environment (Schwarz 1989:41). The Germans in question have to operate in the same environments as the other groups mentioned. Consequently, they have to learn the meanings other groups attribute to the symbols in order to judge the impact of such means of self-presentation as advertising campaigns, self-presentation and market position. Hence, also, the importance of gossip, advertising and maintaining an Internet presence for success in a transnational market through keeping abreast of the diverse interpretations of symbols. Furthermore, the manipulation of the symbols through which a company presents itself can to some extent allow it to adjust its image, even reconstruct itself totally. Many German banks attempt to appear "more global" by dropping the local tag from their name or disguising it, as in the case of WestLB and others; it is interesting, and rather telling, that the Big Three do not feel any need to do so. There is thus a strategic element to the self-

presentation of actors in the City, as they attempt to define themselves as they feel best fits their situation.

In a complex, “Utopian” place such as the City, then, symbolic self-presentation provides the means of constructing the environment, and thus it is essential for individual actors in the City to have a good grasp on modes of symbolic self-presentation. Symbols, and especially their multivalent properties, are thus essential to the strategy of banks and individuals within it, as witness the huge emphasis placed on advertising campaigns, reports and other forms of self-presentation (Schnyder 1989: 50). Actors thus become adept at the use of the multivalent properties of symbols to present themselves as positively as possible to as many people as possible. It is this which allows the group to exist as a transnational social formation; symbolic self-presentation is therefore essential to their existence. Transnational businesspeople are thus engaged with symbols by their very nature, and as such are a varied and flexible, rather than homogenous and undifferentiated, social group.

The multivalency of symbols thus not only allows businesspeople to define the City as a distinct entity and its Germans to remain a distinct group, but is that which allows the City to be global and the Germans to be a varied and diverse group. It seems that not only are the City and its German transnational businesspeople much more diverse and internally complex than Sklair’s description of the transnational capitalist class would suggest, but this complexity is in fact inherent in their nature as transnational social formations.

Conclusion

In sum, while the German businesspeople who operate in the City of London may appear to fit with Sklair’s description of the transnational capitalist class, the shifting,

financially-focused, globally engaged nature of both the City and the Germans themselves makes it difficult to claim either as an undifferentiated social formation. Similarly, the internal diversity of London's German population, the fact that its members act according to particular strategies which vary over the actor's life cycle, and the shifting, postmodern nature of the City, combine to foster diversity and discontinuity rather than solidarity and unity. German transnational businesspeople thus appear to comprise a variety of modes of transnationalism and engagement with the financescape rather than be a single group with a uniform symbolic definition of Germanness and cosmopolitanism. Due to the multivalent properties and metaphorical coherence of symbols, German transnational businesspeople are internally differentiated and externally engaged, rather than a single, solidary class.

The images of Germanness and cosmopolitanism in the social and physical setting of the City of London are held in common by the Germans who work in the City, and seem therefore to define a unified, cosmopolitan, elite transnational capitalist class. However, the multivalency of symbols, and the strategic use of this property, makes for a diversity of interpretation, suggesting that internal diversity and outside engagement, rather than homogeneity, is their defining property. While the City's Germans do in some ways resemble a transnational capitalist class, they are by no means a unified and united force, even in the financial Utopia of the City of London.

V. Branch Mentality: **Change And Self-presentation At The London Branch Of A** **German Bank**

In the London branch of a German bank, an examination of the structure of the organisation and the self-definition of its employees suggest that both it and its transnational German personnel form unified and solidary social entities, detached from local concerns. However, an examination of the impact of a restructuring initiative on the way in which employees present the bank, the branch, and themselves suggests that neither the bank nor its German transnational businesspeople are as united as they might seem. Rather, both include a number of subgroups, whose members are distinguished through their different interpretations of the same symbols used to define themselves and the organisation.

According to Sklair's theory, it is impossible to study the transnational capitalist class without considering transnational corporations, as the two are closely connected (2001; see also 1995). By examining the sets of symbols through which German transnational businesspeople describe their places of work, particularly under conditions of social change, one can gain a greater insight into the nature and structure of the group itself. I will here focus on the second of the two banks which I studied, occasionally amalgamating relevant material from the first bank in order to further disguise its identity. In particular I will look at issues relating to the restructuring initiative in which the second bank was engaged, and with which I was peripherally involved.

A Small World Here: London Branch as Constructed by its Employees

Although an outsider coming into the bank branch under study might see it as a unified institution whose adherents all define Germanness and cosmopolitanism according to

the same symbols, in fact, an examination of these symbols reveals a diversity of interpretations within the same office. By looking at the use of symbols in the branch, we can see a number of lines of division, which do not exclusively relate to ethnic origin, transnationalism or elite status.

The bank which is the focus of this chapter is a Frankfurt-based universal bank which, while it is one of the largest banks in Germany and maintains an above-average number of foreign branches, is still fairly limited in its international operations, a not-atypical state of affairs in German banking (see Ebster-Grosz and Pugh 1996). It has maintained a presence in London since the early 1970s, with a full branch being opened in the early 1980s. The longest-serving employee (a senior manager) had been with “London Branch” for fifteen years at the time of the study, the shortest-serving (a trainee), three months, and the General Manager had been in his post for nearly ten years. The branch had about 160 employees, including trainee, temporary and service employees (the latter frequently being on contract from other organisations). Of these, about one-third were German, Swiss or Austrian, one-tenth were non-German foreign employees (mainly from former colonies of the United Kingdom) and the rest originated from the United Kingdom. Contrary to the usual pattern for German overseas bank branches, in which the German employees tend to be concentrated in the upper echelons, the Germans were fairly evenly distributed throughout the branch (Arthur D. Little Ltd. 1979: 73). This was partly due to the relatively large number of trainees, partly to a management initiative to place more UK employees in the top echelons of management, and partly to certain specialised functions within the branch’s remit which required a knowledge of German, making the presence of a number of German-speaking front-line and junior-managerial employees necessary. Apart from its unusual ethnic

distribution, then, the branch is more or less typical of the London branches of German banks.

When describing their workplace, employees tend to refer first to its economic sphere of activity. The focus of the bank as a whole is on the German market; London Branch's main function is to administer the bank's foreign investments (in contrast to the branch featured in the pilot study [Moore 1999], whose aim was to support German clients in the UK and UK clients investing in Germany). Employees also frequently referred to the branch's close-knit social structure (as defined in Bott 1957: 59-60). The branch boasted a subsidised onsite canteen and social activities prominently advertised in the branch newsletter, with group excursions once a month and branch-wide sports teams. Informal parties and pub nights were also regularly held, with news of these gatherings spreading by word of mouth. The branch was repeatedly described as a "very friendly office," along the line of Fuchs' "office as club" model (1997: 44); temporary employees and trainees were frequently encouraged to stay on after their initial contracts were finished. Occasionally, however, some were uncomfortable with this solidarity, one English middle-manager describing the branch as "like Sleepy Hollow," and a German who had been with the branch for over five years remarking with slight irony, "no one here is ever not happy." Employees felt less solidarity with the rest of the bank: interbranch exchanges and meetings occurred, but for the most part the branch seemed to be relatively isolated. To its employees, then, London Branch is "German-focused," "friendly," and "independent," in keeping with its role as the overseas representative of a German bank.

The branch occupied six floors of a building in the City, which two or three offices on each floor (the exceptions being the second and ground floors, which were taken up with meeting rooms, the canteen and the main reception area). All floors other

than these also had a small kitchen with coffee machine, water cooler, fridge and bulletin board with announcements, adverts for charities, cartoons and flyers. The second and ground floors, as well as the third floor (which housed the personnel department and senior managers' offices, and as such was the "backstage" area most likely to be seen by visitors to the branch), were decorated in a formal style, with thick pile carpets, rose-tinted walls, elegant rosewood-veneer contemporary furniture and pieces of modern art strategically placed about the corridors. Other floors (as well as the canteen area) were decorated in a more utilitarian fashion, with grey walls, industrial carpeting and fluorescent lighting; the furniture was more modern and functional, and the decorations, apart from a few potted plants, largely restricted to personal touches added by employees (for instance, posters, calendars, and, in managers' offices, the occasional framed print or photograph). There was thus a sharp visual distinction between the "public" and "private" areas of the organisation.

All offices were open-plan, with managers' areas usually separated from the rest of the floor by glassed-in partitions, marking the social division between "managers" and "staff" (for reasons of clarity, "employees" will refer to persons employed by the bank at all levels, and "staff" to those employees who are not managers). Beyond the managers' offices were small "islands" of desks, with employees with similar functions being grouped together in clusters of two to four. Desks were strongly associated with the people assigned to them: as one put it, "you need a desk. Even if you're never at your desk you need some place to pick up your mail." The fact that floor plans are continuously changing, with whole departments moving between rooms at a few days' notice, gives desks even more power as a symbol: the location of the person may shift, but their desk gives them a permanent symbolic position. This was further marked by the fact that a desk's occupant was expected to add items symbolic of their personality

and interests: photographs and cartoons taped to the computer monitor, a stuffed toy or action figure perched on a corner, and so forth. The fact that all of these are easily transportable and yet instantly recognisable also contributes to the mix of permanency and flexibility seen throughout the branch. The office's geography is thus both stable and shifting.

Less visible is another core distinction within the bank as a whole, that between "Front Office," "Back Office" and other divisions. Front Office divisions, as it was explained to me, are those relating to the day-to-day functions of a bank (e.g. the Dealing Room), while Back Office divisions are those relating more to long-term and support roles (e.g. Marketing). Other divisions, such as Personnel, were considered even further removed from the bank's main activity. While no physical or geographical distinction was visible between these divisions, it was clear from observing who spoke and socialised with whom that there were certain social distinctions in London Branch, occasionally tense although never erupting into active rivalry, between the bank's functional groups.

The official length of the working day is 9 AM to 5 PM, but this schedule was adhered to by very few. Most employees arrived by eight-thirty, and certain of the dealers were at work at seven in order to operate in the Japanese market. Most left between 5:15 and 6 PM, but on exceptional occasions people would work until eight or later. Additionally, in some departments, staying late had a quality of "machismo," as it were: one member of such a department half-seriously said that there was competition as to who stayed the latest. Lunch was usually half an hour long, taken between 11:30 and 1:00; sandwiches were also available for those who did not wish to leave their desks. Occasionally people would go "out to lunch" at a nearby restaurant; this was a special event, taking up to 1.5 hours and often ending with drinks at another

establishment. These occasions, along with “meetings next door” (informal working sessions held in a nearby pub or cafe), tended to occur around the end of the week. This schedule seemed to be more or less typical for German bank branches in London.

People in the branch were also graduated according to a particular life-cycle. Trainees and junior employees, for instance, were generally in their early to mid twenties, single or in an informal relationship, and it seemed to be expected that many of them would move on to another bank after a while. Most were more fashion-conscious, and more given to making jokes or outspoken remarks in a private context than their seniors (in a public context, they were generally quite circumspect). Junior managers, middle managers and more “senior” staff members were generally a bit older, more conservative in dress and tastes, more experienced and had worked at other banks; many were married or in permanent relationships, and some had children. While they had some mobility, it seemed to be expected that after an employee had been with the bank for more than five years, they would not leave except under unusual circumstances. Senior managers and senior staff members were generally in their forties through sixties, all married with children (and, in some cases, grandchildren); where the other two groups were more mixed, they were almost exclusively male. They tended to be the most conservative in dress and outlook; while this is not always the case, the senior managers at this branch were well-respected and spoken of with approval in both private and public contexts. The senior staff members did not have the formal rank afforded the managers, but were accorded a certain amount of respect based on their experience. The different stages in the life-cycle of the bank employee—as well as employees’ behavioural expectations—are thus visible in their dress, status and comportment.

With reference to Germanness and cosmopolitanism, four cohorts could be broadly discerned within the branch, which were distinguished by such symbols as language (which is the subject of the next chapter, and so will be only superficially dealt with here), favourite topics of discussion, sitting together at lunch and in meetings, and so forth. These categories, which I will outline below, can best be described as “semi-indigenous.” That is to say, people at the branch definitely spoke in terms of it being divided between “English” and “German,” and acted in ways which presupposed the existence of two further subdivisions of this, but in the final analysis these groups are an artificially simplified classification device used for the convenience of analysis. For the purposes of this chapter, however, we shall divide up the employees according to these categories.

The first cohort was the German expatriates, which can be split into two subgroups: specialists and trainees. The specialists, much like the elite labour migrants described by Beaverstock over a series of articles (1991, 1994, 1996a, b, c), had been brought over from Head Office to remedy a skill shortage or ease a department through a transition period (1991: 44), usually for between one and three years. All had at least a vocational-college education; most were in their thirties, had spent seven to nine years at Head Office, and, with one or two exceptions, had prior experience of living, studying and/or working in London. All had volunteered to be there, mainly to gain international experience and/or to “see the world.” Trainees, similarly, were either from other branches of the bank or from an outside trainee programme, and had applied to spend time in London. All were or had recently been students in higher education, and were with London Branch for between three and eighteen months; most were from small German towns. They formed a close-knit social group, spending most of their free time together, and were the subject of gentle teasing by more long-established

employees. As most were not directly involved in the restructuring of the bank, they do not figure heavily in this chapter. The expatriate employees thus seem to be a unified group, but are a relatively small part of the organisation.

The second cohort were the locally hired Germans. They were fairly diverse in terms of age, background and length of time at London Branch, but all were living in England permanently for one reason or other which was not business-related. They tended to be more oriented to UK than to German business practices and culture, and are seen by many UK employees as “more like Anglo-Saxons than the other Germans” (to quote one UK-born senior staff member). Most have worked at other (frequently, though not always, German) financial institutions before coming to this bank, and tend to follow the City pattern of employment; all are fluently multilingual, and do not show any particular solidarity with each other or the expatriates. The Germans of London Branch are not a united group, but an assortment of people with greater and lesser orientations to Germany and the UK.

The third cohort consisted of “Germanophiles”: non-German staff members who felt a strong connection with Germany and its culture, and who spoke the language with relative fluency. This group showed a good deal of variation, including as it did people with German partners, ethnic Germans born elsewhere, and people who had been sent on employee exchanges to Head Office. Some had joined the bank due to their interest in Germany, while others had acquired their interest due to working at the bank. Many also form part of the pool of German-speaking skilled workers who circulated among the German banks of the City, along with German local hires and a scattering of Swiss and Austrians (see Wraight 1991). Most, though not all, tended to have university degrees, and to socialise mainly with each other and with German employees. Some UK people were thus more oriented to Germany than others.

The final cohort is the “Anglophiles”: UK, mainly English, employees with no particular connection to Germany or German banking beyond their having been hired by this particular corporation. This is not to say that they bear any particular antipathy towards Germany, but they were not as strongly oriented towards it as other groups. They tended to conform more to City norms and behaviour; few had university degrees, most having been educated on the job. They were, however, no less transnational than other groups, frequently travelling or having worked abroad, or having relatives and friends in other countries. The bank branch under study thus contains a number of diverse groups, all of whom approach their workplace from different starting points.

The German expatriates described the bank in terms of symbols evoking a particular sense of Germanness. They emphasised its position in the German banking system, comparing its history and structure with those of other German banks. All spoke of the “Germanness” of the institution as a whole in terms of its focus and “business culture,” by which they seemed to mean the sets of vaguely stereotypical “traits” attributed to businesses from particular national origins in business literature (e.g. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1996, Hickson and Pugh 1997). However, when describing London Branch, they tended to focus on stereotypically “Anglo-Saxon” traits. Most also described the branch as being in tension between the Anglo-Saxon and German banking systems, the trainees adding to this the perplexity with which they viewed the English bureaucracy in general. One noted London Branch’s small size relative to Head Office, and one brought up the paradox of London Branch being smaller than Head Office but “more global” because of its place in the City, and thus being at once superior and inferior to the Head Office. The bank was thus presented by the expatriates as German, with London as an aberrant segment.

All expatriates also emphasised what they saw as the multiculturalism of London Branch as a sign of cosmopolitanism (*Weltoffenheit*), one of them, a single man who had spent a year in London as a student ten years earlier, saying “So London, there is a small world here.” It is significant that the branch is actually not very multicultural in UK terms, in that there were relatively few non-White or non-European employees, and the European employees were divided mainly only between two ethnic groups, English and German. However, by the standards of Head Office, in which I did not see a single non-White bank employee and very few non-Germans, the branch was multicultural. Once again, also, very few expatriates particularly discussed UK culture, except with reference to the images of UK “business culture,” taken more or less wholesale from interculturalist texts (see Schnyder 1989). Asked how they would define their *Heimat*, some expatriates gave fairly classic descriptions, referring directly to particular regions where they were born or where their family came from; others, however (generally those who were better-travelled), said either “the world,” or “Europe.” The German expatriates thus presented London Branch in cosmopolitan terms, but the symbols of this which they used were German ones.

Finally, a few described the branch in terms of a conflict between English and German “business cultures,” as defined by popular business literature (see, among many others, Scheuermann 1997; Hickson and Pugh 1997; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1996; Lynn 1997). While the employees generally believed that the traits attributed to each nationality were actually present, they tended to use the concept of “national business cultures” more as a symbol marking the division between the social categories of “English” and “German”; they did not anticipate inevitably finding “English” or “German” traits in their colleagues in actual practice. The symbols which

German expatriates use to describe the bank and its London branch thus emphasise symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism in particular ways.

Locally hired Germans define the bank using similar symbols to the expatriates, but with significant differences in emphasis. While they too spoke of the bank in terms of its position in the German banking world, only one, a senior manager who was in regular contact with Head Office, referred to its history and structure; others spoke about it in comparison to other German banks, at whose offices some of them had worked. They also described the bank in terms of its German focus and business culture, one younger staff member noting that the average length of service for employees was quite long in comparison to similar banks in other European countries, and one middle-manager noting the relatively high degree of centralisation of the bank (see Stewart 1994: 81). While only one (older male) manager spoke of the branch's multiculturalism as a distinguishing feature, most defined its business culture as "a mix" of English and German traits drawn from the literature. All, however, emphasised the difference between English and German business cultures, and in virtually identical terms to those used by the expatriates. The local hires did, however, tend to speak in more general terms rather than applying lists of traits to the bank in question, as can be seen in this quote from a manager in his mid-forties:

The real difference between English and German is how they react. Germans like to argue and the English never do. It's not that they won't disagree, it's that they'll disagree with you behind your back. Whereas German people will argue in meetings.

They also tended to express more ambivalence about the benefits of the bank's German focus than the expatriates. The same symbols were used by the local hires and the expatriates, but with slightly different glosses.

The concept of *Heimat* was more complicated for the local hires than the expatriates. Some, interestingly, said that they had no sense of *Heimatsgefühl* (feeling of *Heimat*) for any particular place, German or otherwise. One, a senior manager in her early forties, said that she thought of England as her *Heimat* when she was in Germany and Germany as her *Heimat* when she was in England. A female staff member in her late twenties identified as a "cosmopolitan" (she used the English word) which she seemed to define in the Hannerzian sense of being open to all cultures but also a bit removed from them (1990: 238). Those who did claim a *Heimat* tended to name a city to which they had moved rather than their birthplace, suggesting that they constructed their positions relative to Germany with a degree of detachment, and thus had more of a stake in emphasising the mixing rather than the tension between groups in the branch (compare Borneman and Peck 1995: 76). East Germans usually claimed the Western region where they settled after coming over from the East as their *Heimat*, rather than their birthplace. A few—generally older employees, and usually managers—claimed London or England as *Heimat*, and one, slightly younger than average, named Europe. The locally hired Germans thus defined *Heimat* in a more complex way to the expatriates.

The Germanophiles, like the expatriates, also focused upon the bank's place in the German banking world. However, the Germanophiles defined it in terms of its smallness and insularity rather than its structural and historical traits; it was through them that I learned about the presence of the labour pool of German-speaking skilled workers. Many were more emphatic about the bank's Germanness than were their

German colleagues. One said that the bank was not so much “global,” as a German organisation pretending to be global through maintaining overseas branches whose focus was nonetheless German. They shared with the other cohorts the same notions of German and Anglo-Saxon “business cultures,” and expressed these in virtually identical terms to the others, referring to Germans’ reported emphasis on bureaucracy and focus on the long-term customer relationship over the quick deal (see Carr et al. 1994: 210, The Bank Relationship Consultancy 1997). Unlike the native Germans, however, they focus on such minutiae as German dress styles, body language, and attitude to the working day, as witness this remark by a male staff member in his forties, who had participated in an exchange to Frankfurt a few years earlier:

It strikes me that the Germans... don’t work as hard as we do. You see them and they’re always having a laugh. It’s like the Americans.... They never work late, they’ve always got their free time— they get the job done, but they work smart not hard. I was in a meeting in Frankfurt and at 7:30 these guys just walked out, said they couldn’t stay past 7:30. End of story.

The Germanophiles thus had similar constructions of Germanness to the Germans, but interpreted these constructions in different ways to them.

The Germanophiles tended to express the bank’s cosmopolitanism differently to the Germans, however, seeing it as stemming from the bank’s German connection. They distinguished themselves by a willingness to talk about Germany with other Germanophiles and with Germans (although not so much with the Anglophiles). Interestingly, where the locally-hired Germans tended to distance themselves from Germany through loss or transformation of *Heimat*, Germanophiles achieved the

opposite through constructing “ersatz *Heimats*,” claiming *Heimat*-like affiliations with the part of Germany where they once lived, or with their partner or parent’s *Heimat*. The German language, similarly, is for them both a symbol of personal status as a Germanophile, and of the bank itself. Once again, the Germanophiles define the bank and London Branch according to the same symbol sets as German colleagues, but with different interpretations.

Anglophiles also used more or less the same symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism as their colleagues, but again, with different interpretations. The structure of German banking did not feature strongly in their descriptions; however, its “business culture” was once again said to be very significant. Once again, this was explained in the same terms drawn from popular business literature, without reference to other forms of “culture.” One senior manager, who was one of the longest-serving employees at this branch, argued during several formal interviews that there was a fundamental conflict between the Anglo-Saxon and the German business cultures of the branch, the former being, in his opinion, conflict-oriented, the latter being consensus-oriented. He also repeatedly stressed the hierarchical nature of German business as compared to what he saw as the egalitarian UK one. Other Anglophiles of all ages and backgrounds spoke in terms of textbook images of German bureaucracy—one junior manager complaining “if your head’s on fire in this organisation, you can’t put it out with a bucket of water without the proper forms”—sense of humour, and so forth, recalling such works as C. Lane (1989) and Lawrence (1980). As with the expatriates, the ethnic mixing of the branch was a defining symbol of its cosmopolitanism for Anglophiles, but the Anglophiles focused more on the relatively high percentage of English managers than did the expatriates. The Anglophiles’ use of symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism to define both bank and branch thus superficially

resembled that of the other cohorts, but was aimed largely at constructing differences between Englishness and Germanness.

The Anglophiles, like the expatriates, also tended to focus on the Englishness of the branch. When preparing for the annual interbranch football tournament, younger staff members suggested making UK-style football-fan gear for the London Branch cheering section. Afterwards I was informed by those who had attended (mainly young and single employees, with one or two older and/or attached ones who were either skilled footballers or were among the branch's "party animals") that London "lost the game but won the partying," evoking images of rowdy UK football supporters (see Powell 2000). The trainees, similarly, were often said by older Anglophiles to have spent too much time in higher education and not enough learning the ways of the world, reflecting a common Southern English working-class view about the value of education vis-à-vis experience. All Anglophiles seem to take for granted the presence of diverse ethnic minorities more than do the Germans. In sum, then, the Anglophiles define the bank and its London branch with reference to the same symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism as the other groups, but the meanings and interpretations which they associate with these are different.

It thus seems that all the ethnic cohorts at the branch do employ the same symbols in self-presentation and group definition. However, the interpretations of these vary from group to group. All, for instance, spoke of the branch as being symbolised by a combination of German and English "business cultures," and did this using virtually the same trait-focused model of "culture" in all cases. However, whether these "cultures" were described as mixed, harmonised or in conflict varied from group to group, in accordance with its position in the branch. While all acknowledged the German business system as a distinguishing feature of the bank as a whole, the

significance of this varied depending on whether the speaker was from a group regarded as “close to” or “distant from,” Germany and/or Head Office. Multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism were also key symbols of the branch, but where the Anglophiles constructed this as “taking a global perspective,” other groups tended to refer to it in terms of ethnic mixing. It is also worth noting that what was seen as constituting multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism varied considerably. Finally, definitions of *Heimat* varied strongly from group to group. Again, then, people at London Branch define the institution through common symbols but with different interpretations.

The key to the differences in interpretation appears to hinge on the position which each cohort occupies relative to the others in the branch, and on their strategic activities relative to each other within the institution. During formal interviews, I was aware not only that my interviewees were making their statements with reference to their own agendas vis-à-vis the personnel department (which I believe also affected what was said to me in less formal contexts), but that in volunteering, they were acting for reasons relating to their personal interests and strategies. In addition, the expatriates’ representations of themselves and the bank shifted gradually over the course of the study, as they picked up on and adopted local meanings for particular symbols. This suggests a strategy for adaptation to, and cooperation in, different settings, much as Beaverstock (1996a: 468) describes expatriation as not only the transfer of knowledge, but as the embedding of labour in a local context, and the development of networked social relations. The meanings of the symbols thus do not only vary from cohort to cohort, but according to the cohort’s position and agenda within the group as a whole.

Finally, it is worth noting that these strategies of symbolic self-presentation are developed with reference to other cohorts and their positions in the branch. A German who describes London Branch as more “deal-focused” than Head Office, to take but one

example, is adopting a symbol used by the Germanophiles and the Anglophiles to define UK business culture (see Peppercorn and Skoulding 1987). It is also significant that all four groups, despite their different origins, had very much the same definition of “business culture” and what it entailed (see Wright 1994: 1-5). Thus, no cohort is operating in a vacuum, but all are learning from, and acting in response to, other groups within and outside the bank and its London branch, hence the differences in their interpretations.

London Branch thus seems to present a unified front as a German bank branch in the City of London. Within this apparent unity, however, one may discern at least four different cohorts, all of which use the same symbols in describing themselves and their workplace, but which distinguish themselves through different interpretations of these. Even its German transnational employees are divided along symbolic lines. The diversity of interpretation, furthermore, hinges upon the fact that each cohort has a different position with regard to the rest of the bank, and acts strategically with reference to the actions of other groups. Therefore, the TNC seems to be unified, but in fact incorporates a number of diverse symbolic discourses, which vary according to the strategic behaviour of the actor.

Take the Initiative: The Globalised Restructuring of a German Bank

At the time of the study, the bank had embarked upon a two-phase restructuring initiative, which it had almost completed by the time I left in June. An examination of how the different cohorts reacted to this restructuring programme reveals not only their different positions within the branch, but also how their self-presentations relate to their particular strategies for action.

From its establishment until July 1999, London Branch had effectively operated autonomously from the rest of the bank; the heads of individual departments reported to the General Manager, who mediated between the branch and the Head Office, and who was as such the only employee in regular contact with superiors in Frankfurt. Under the restructuring initiative, however, individual department heads now reported directly to individual departmental superiors in Frankfurt. My own position within the bank was related to this initiative, as I had been brought in about six months into the process with instructions to assess the impact of the restructuring on Anglo-German relations in the branch (see Appendix II for excerpts from my report). The new initiative thus entailed a number of changes in the social organisation of the bank for its employees.

The main result of the restructuring was that many employees were brought into closer daily contact with Head Office, and that there was an increased presence of visitors and expatriates from Frankfurt at the London branch. At Head Office, those involved with the restructuring expressed the hope that the initiative would bring the foreign branches more into line with the domestic group, some saying that they felt that the increased contact would allow Head Office to learn from the branches and vice versa. However, London employees expressed a sense of uncertainty regarding the outcome; many spoke of practical problems of adjusting London Branch to the Head Office system, and an atmosphere of suspicion prevailed. The result of the initiative was thus to cause the branch's employees to engage in strategic activities in order to establish themselves within the renewed institution to their best advantage.

This tension was also visible in a two-day meeting of personnel managers from all non-German branches and the Head Office in order to discuss the form that the structure and culture of the reorganised bank should take. Much of the meeting seemed to involve defining ideals which they felt the restructured organisation should hold,

which were expressed in very general terms such as “fairness,” “success driven” and “responsive and flexible” rather than with reference to the specific (and possibly contested) images of Germanness and cosmopolitanism which employees expressed outside of such meetings. This suggests that, by sticking to neutral terms, participants were avoiding potentially controversial symbols. Additionally, when the meeting was unable to achieve all its stated goals before the end of the session, the Germans wanted to stop and make do with what they had done, while the English and American employees wanted to schedule another meeting in order to complete all their goals. This was interpreted by participants as highlighting the differences between national “business cultures.” A marked ambivalence was also visible, with attendees tending to sit with their fellow branch- or office-members rather than to mingle. While there was more mixing during the coffee breaks, conversation was mainly on neutral topics such as work and travel. When the new system was discussed, it was mainly through jokes, suggesting both a certain tension and the redrawing of flexible symbolic boundaries to fit the new organisation (see Cohen 1985: 31). The meeting thus suggested that part of the strategic activity taking place around the bank was an active redefinition of the self-presentation of the organisation and its parts, and a source of some tension.

Within the branch itself, the German expatriates described themselves as forming a bridge between Head Office and London Branch, as all had been sent from Head Office to ease key departments into the transition. Most of them described the initiative in terms of London’s former independence, and its now being brought into line with the rest of Head Office; they said that Head Office had, and still has, very little to do with London and consequently has difficulty understanding the culture (by which, as above, they seemed to mean the mixed Anglo-Saxon/German “business culture” which they attributed to London Branch). Some, generally those in functions, also spoke

of the tension caused by the fact that they had taken jobs which local employees had wanted. They noted that the reporting structure brought in by the initiative is not new for them as it is to other London employees, and one even questioned the applicability of Head Office's structure to the much smaller branch. The expatriates thus described themselves as mediators between the global Head Office and the local London Branch.

Expatriates, furthermore, described the initiative very much in terms of tension between German and UK business cultures. One, who had travelled extensively in other countries prior to coming to London, said that the main issue was that in Head Office "you get people who've never been outside Germany... who have difficulty understanding certain things which are going on over here." He noted, as an example, that in his experience Germans, if they say they will call at 9:00 AM, will call at that time and be upset when nobody is there to talk with them, and do not like working on their lunch hour. The English, he explained, expect delays because of their legendarily bad transportation system, and have less of a problem with a flexible schedule, working through lunch if necessary. Furthermore, the expatriates tended to broaden their focus to speak of the differences between the educational systems, social systems, and career paths of UK and German bank employees (although, significantly, they did not refer to these as "culture"), rather than simply focusing on the business aspects of culture. For instance, the length of time which the expatriates had spent working at a single bank was considered unusual among UK people of the same age. The expatriate employees thus not only portrayed themselves as bridging the segments of the bank to develop a global organisation, but also adapted extant symbols of the branch, regarding its Anglo-German cultural influences, to support this self-presentation.

The locally hired Germans also defined their position vis-à-vis the restructuring as a transnational, culture-bridging role, but in a different way to the expatriates,

presenting themselves as both German and of the City rather than as external mediators. Many described their role in the branch as that of interpreters between German and English, linguistically and (business) culturally; they often expressed frustration with both Anglophiles and recent expatriates, due to their lack of familiarity with the customs of other group. Most, interestingly, did not speak of the restructuring so much in terms of the globalisation of the bank as in terms of its Europeanisation, which has more ethnic connotations for Germans. This seems to be particularly true for Germans living abroad, as an identification as “European” allows them to present themselves both as German and cosmopolitan (see Forsythe 1989: 153, also Bachmeier and Fischer 1992: 32; Moore 1999: Chapter 5). Many, also, seemed to feel that their origins might cause people to assume them to be partial to Head Office; all members of this cohort often began sentences with “While I’m German, I disapprove....” The locally hired Germans thus expressed their role in the restructuring initiative using the same symbol sets as the expatriates, but with different interpretations in accordance with their different position in the branch. They presented the situation not so much in terms of general tensions between Anglo-German business cultures as in terms of local conflicts, and emphasised that their ethnic origins did not necessarily make them partial to Head Office.

The Germanophiles also portrayed themselves as a transnational elite mediating between Germany and the City using the same symbols as the German groups, but once again the interpretations which they gave these were slightly different. Like the locally hired Germans, they expressed frustration with what they perceived to be the other two groups’ local orientation, and were in fact more critical of the Anglophiles than were both groups of Germans. Germanophiles who had participated in company programmes which allowed them to spend time in Head Office and “learn the culture” often

criticised Anglophiles for not taking advantage of such programmes. Interestingly, by this they seemed to mean the wider culture of Germany rather than only its “business culture.” Like the Germans, the Germanophiles spoke in terms of clashes of Anglo-German business culture within the restructuring; however, they implied that this was less an inevitable conflict, and more a matter of individuals failing to understand.

The Germanophiles, like the other groups, tended to emphasise the Germanness of Head Office. One middle manager, prior to making a comment critical of his Frankfurt opposite number, asked me “have you any German blood?” implying, like the local hires, that German ethnic origin implied approval of Head Office. Many also described the initiative as an aggressive action on the part of Head Office, saying that it imposed a new set of rules, nomenclature and structure on the branch without consulting those directly affected. Again, then, the Germanophiles defined the issues involved in the initiative in similar ways to the German employees, but with an angle on the affair which emphasised the responsibility of individuals rather than the effect of external “cultures.”

Finally, the Anglophiles, like the three other cohorts, describe themselves as a transnational elite bridging the gap between cultures. However, in this case they do this by separating the German and the cosmopolitan, presenting the City as global and Head Office’s focus as overly local. Most spoke in terms of “English” and “German” business cultures, but as the imposition of one upon the other rather than as conflict between them, as witness this statement from an interview with an English senior manager who had spent over ten years at the branch:

What we’ve got here is a structure which derived from Head Office—in a branch. Which is in my judgement organised as if it were part of the Head

Office. You've got a bunch of people in a different country, with a different character and background, and a different sort of— a different *understanding* of the way business functions.

The Anglophiles thus symbolically constructed the initiative and their position with regard to it in similar terms to the other groups, but their interpretations of the relationship between “business cultures,” and of their own function, is quite different to that of the others, portraying the situation in terms of hostile takeovers rather than misunderstandings and bridges.

Although these diverse cohorts appear to be unified in terms of the symbols which they use to present themselves and describe the initiative, all of the cohorts have a slightly different interpretation of these symbols, which relate directly to their strategies, backgrounds and positions with regard to the initiative. However any of the cohorts may have described it, furthermore, the initiative did not seem to be a case of a head office in conflict with a branch, but of diverse groups within the same organisation in competition with each other over a particular occurrence. While there are common symbols of German business culture, for instance, the groups with more of an interest in staying close to Head Office tend to place a more positive interpretation on the initiative than those with more City-focused interests. The different cohorts were divided, also, over whether the bank was “more transnational” when constructed as a pyramid or as a set of reporting lines; transnationalism being positively valued, again, this depended on whether the speaker had more of a stake in the old or the new system. The cohorts thus use the same symbols to define themselves and the bank, but make use of their multivalent properties to compete for status within the restructuring.

However, the same symbols can be a means of facilitating the acceptance of the initiative. By interpreting the restructuring in different ways, actors can define themselves within the branch and the bank as a whole, and reinterpret the symbols through which they have always defined themselves to fit the new situation. Also, within each cohort there are a number of subgroups and individuals, all with their own interpretations of the symbols, which may or may not become an issue at various stages in the implementation of the initiative. Within the branch, then, symbolic unity and interpretive diversity are the means through which different groups carve out their niches in the restructured bank.

Furthermore, all of these diverse positions on the restructuring are not formulated in isolation, but with reference to each other's strategies. The presence of other interpretations affects the process of interpreting a symbol: people show their allegiances by accepting or rejecting different interpretations in different contexts (Strecker 1988). A junior manager might, for instance, talk about the globalising potential of the initiative in a meeting but to an anthropologist describe it as an exercise in orienting the branch towards Germany. Finally, people were also aware of the use of the same or similar symbols in outside cases: during a difficult point in the initiative, for instance, two or three interviewees brought up the conflict-fraught Rover-BMW merger. People thus are aware of other groups' interpretations of the common symbols, and operate strategically with regard to these.

This strategic activity, furthermore, is inevitable in the case of a corporate restructuring (see Cody 1990). For the changes to be accepted, bank employees must be able to shift from one structure and self-image to another. This is achieved by using the same symbols for both, but reinterpreting them in light of the changes, and this in turn takes place through the conflicts and tensions between groups as they struggle for

dominance. Given that change is such a large part of banking culture, furthermore, and the emphasis placed on flexibility in popular works on business (e.g. Heller 1995, Hussey 1995, Falham 1999), this sort of symbolic game-playing is an inevitable part of business life; as the different groups within the bank adjust their interpretations in line with the situation, so the bank's collective strategy is developed. Furthermore, the fact that symbols possess this multivalent quality means that new discourses can come to the fore and old ones be accepted by various actors. The diversity of interpretation and the strategic use of symbols is thus not only inherent within a transnational business setting, but is part of strategic operation in the global financescape itself.

While the restructuring necessitated by the initiative has temporarily polarized London Branch along visible fault lines, these lines are evidence that there is more diversity within the seemingly-unified branch and its German transnational population than a cursory survey might suggest. Furthermore, this fact suggests that the diverse interpretations of symbols develop out of the multiple strategies within the organisation, as different groups attempt to define both the new institution and their political position within it using the same symbols.

View from the Forty-Ninth Floor: Head Office-London Branch Relations

Crucial to the self-presentation of London employees is the relationship between the branch and its Head Office. In the case of the symbols which each uses to define itself and the bank, we again see quite similar images but different interpretations, according to the position of each within the bank as a whole. However, the different symbolic constructions held by the branch and the head office are informed by each other's strategies, and by local German and UK interpretations of symbols.

Head Office consisted of a complex of modern buildings close to the centre of Frankfurt; the buildings were linked by a series of underground tunnels. At the time, it employed approximately two thousand people in total, with all employees belonging to particular departments generally being housed in the same area of the complex. The main building, containing the divisions most vital to the bank's functioning, was a modern one, with a grey marble-faced lobby and a rotating display of sculptures by modern German artists; visitors must announce themselves at a reception desk and wait in a designated area nearby to be picked up by an escort. Inside the main part of the building, the corridors were decorated in shades of grey, with art photographs at intervals. Each floor contained a small kitchen (none of which, as far as I could see, had bulletin boards), meeting rooms and offices. The offices themselves were sparsely decorated and painted in the same shades as the corridors, with two or three people sharing an office or two connected offices rather than the big open-plan offices of London. My impression was, however, that this was not as much of a deterrent to social interaction as might be thought, as people were frequently "out of the office," in quest of some colleague down the hall. The décor also tended more towards framed prints than pinned-up cartoons and calendars, and with fewer of the personal touches on the desks than was seen in London. A recent expatriate to London, who had worked in Head Office for over five years, described it by saying that "it's a lot of politics in the organisation, very bureaucratic. Here it is a small branch, no need to phone, you just go next door and talk to someone... in Head Office I would be one of many, but here I am just one." Head Office is thus larger, more formal, possesses fewer demarcations between public and private areas, and maintains more obvious spatial divisions between employees than London Branch.

It was more difficult to tell whether, as many London employees asserted, employees in Head Office kept more rigorously to the traditional nine-to-five schedule than those in London: only one of my Frankfurt-based contacts would see me outside of these hours, and this contact worked in a division which is said to keep an unusual schedule. In purely impressionistic terms, there were far fewer non-German employees at Head Office than there were non-English employees at London. While I could not obtain educational statistics on Head Office, I spoke with a number of people there who possessed postgraduate degrees, including doctorates, which was almost unheard-of in London. Head Office thus appears much larger, more monoethnic and more education-focused than London Branch.

Employees at Head Office described it in terms of its Germanness above all. Several spoke of its German focus and clientele: others, in terms of its relation to the German banking system as a whole. London, one said, may be a big branch, but the main reference point of the bank is Germany. Other than one (a personnel manager), however, they did not speak of it having a “German” structure, but focused on its history and place in the German banking system, and of the distinguishing points of German law as it relates to banking and finance. Only two (again, both middle-managers with the personnel department), furthermore, described the bank in terms of the reputed traits of German business culture such as bureaucracy, hierarchy, loyalty and long-termism (see Binney 1993b; Lawrence 1980; Posen 1993). Another, from a Front Office division, said that the bank as a whole is associated with Germany due to its links with *Mittelstand* companies, which are strongly tied up with discourses of Germanness (Hutton 1996: 266-267; *The Economist* 1995; Viehoff 1978: 11). By contrast, the branches were said to be strongly oriented to their particular regions: the same manager spoke disparagingly of “regional princes” who run branches according to

their personal agendas (see Pralahad 1987: 267). As at London Branch, people at Head Office thus define the bank in terms of its relation to the German business world; however, their descriptions are more detailed, and also present the German business system as crucial to the bank's very existence rather than an external factor.

Head Office's main strategy appeared to be a drive towards being seen as "global" in the eyes of its customers and competitors. As one member of a Front Office division put it, "globalisation is a very good word at the moment." Consequently, many emphasised what they saw as the globalising aspects of the restructuring initiative. One personnel middle-manager attributed its inception to the increased globalisation of the German companies who were the bank's main clients, meaning that the bank would have to become globally integrated in order to serve them (this was somewhat counterintuitive, as the overall trend in the restructuring was towards increased centralisation). Branches, by contrast, were said to take only a local perspective: one manager described London as important to the banking system simply because many German businesses operate in the UK, rather than due to its global reach. Another, a personnel manager associated with the restructuring project, said that local influence was what distinguished the branches from Head Office. People at Head Office thus, due to their strategy to be seen as "global," play up the globalising aspects of their own activities and play down the transnational engagements of foreign branches.

This affects the way in which the restructuring is symbolically constructed. Head Office employees spoke in terms of local and cosmopolitan focuses; one senior personnel manager involved with the restructuring, after saying that the impression she got of the reaction to the initiative was that the employees of the branches felt that Head Office was imposing its business culture on everyone else in the bank, she added that the branches described this as acting like "typical Germans—they all say typical

Germans.” She then remarked that the restructuring was “good for Head Office because it helped us to realise that we are not a German, we are an international bank” and for the branches, it “helps them realise they are not just lone banks but part of a big family.” She was the sole person at Head Office to ask for a copy of the results of my project (which had by this point been published internally). Although the same symbols emerge in Head Office of the restructuring initiative as in London Branch, their interpretation here constructs Head Office as global and London as local.

All people at Head Office, furthermore, spoke of the value of cosmopolitanism, in the sense of *Weltoffenheit*, but with strong associations with one particular culture over others (see Vertovec 1996b; Vertovec and Cohen forthcoming; Appiah 1998). A Front Office manager defined the “typical cosmopolitan” as being like Tara Palmer-Tompkinson: wealthy, with a superficial knowledge of many cultures but at home in none (see Vertovec and Cohen, forthcoming). A personnel staff member from the division which dealt with expatriation said “It is good to know where my perspective lies as a German, but not to say as a German [that] only German is right” (This interview was being conducted in English, at the interviewee’s request). Again, these are images of cosmopolitanism which, although they use the same symbols seen in London, differ in that they are made with an eye on the globalising aspects of the initiative, and their need to establish the bank as a “global” institution. The Head Office employees with whom I spoke thus had particular takes on cosmopolitanism in their construction of the bank, which relate to their strategies for success in the Frankfurt business environment and the global financescape.

In addition, people in Head Office spoke of expatriation in terms relating to the globalising aims of the bank in general and the initiative in particular. One personnel manager said that the aims of expatriation—and in particular the recent increase in

expatriate numbers following the initiative—were to instil better knowledge of Head Office in the branches and vice-versa (see Beaverstock 1991: 1134, 1996a: 468). However, he also noted that many returnees came back disoriented and upset to discover that the skills which they had learned in foreign branches were not considered useful in their “home” departments, and disappointed that their international experience was not, as they had hoped, a “fast track” to promotion (see Hamada 1992: 153, Beaverstock 1994: 327, 1996b: 430). Interestingly, of the personnel department employees with whom I spoke, only one had direct personal experience of expatriation. Outside of the personnel office, and in particular that section of it with specific responsibility for contact with foreign branches, moreover, few in Head Office seemed to have much contact with, or even be aware of, current and/or former expatriates (see Beaverstock 1996a: 459). In Head Office, then, expatriation was constructed through symbols which reflected its “globalising” strategy, and the relevance of the branches to them, and thus in contrast to the views of London Branch on the same issue.

On the part of London Branch, the same symbols were used but in a different way, reflecting a similar valuation of globalisation but a different strategy for action. Relations with Head Office were not unpleasant, or in any way atypical for any German foreign bank branch with which I have had contact (or indeed, according to William Kelly [2001], for foreign bank branches of other nationalities) but London employees said that there was little contact between the two sections of the bank. Some employees continued, even after the restructuring, to speak of Head Office as if it were a separate entity. Several employees, from all categories, likened the restructuring initiative to a merger with, or a takeover by, another bank. Head Office was thus spoken of as distant to London Branch.

In fact, contact with Head Office occurred more often than was acknowledged. A small number of employees were “commuters,” travelling back and forth between London and Frankfurt every week or two weeks. Most employees visited Head Office at some point, if only on a two-day business trip. Managers from certain departments would send people on three to six month exchanges to Frankfurt. All the expatriates, and some of the “local hires” who had come over as expatriates and stayed, maintained contact with former colleagues in Frankfurt. However, by maintaining a symbolic distance from Head Office, London Branch could preserve an element of autonomy. Head Office was thus portrayed as aloof and disconnected, in a way which obscured the large number of connections between it and its branches; however, this symbolic divide was a strategic move on the part of London Branch to maintain its independence.

For similar reasons, Head Office was also presented as indifferent or hostile to the branch. Many, particularly Anglophiles and German local hires, said that “they don’t understand how we do things out here.” A certain ambivalence was expressed about Head Office, perhaps because it is not quite part of London Branch and yet not in truth a totally separate entity; as is often the case, the liminal position is expressed through jokes and criticism aimed at keeping it at arm’s length from London (see Douglas 1966: Chapter 7). Many participants both commented on, and employed with varying degrees of consciousness, the practice of using Head Office as a “scapegoat” to blame for the branch’s troubles; while my experience of other German banks suggests that this was not atypical behaviour, it varied in intensity with the state of the restructuring initiative. Any interest in the branches on the part of Head Office was described as suspicious. One Germanophile manager, a former exchange-programme participant, described some colleagues as having a certain hostility towards it, born of indifference:

Manager: I mean, some people don't even want to GO there. I'm not, well, you look at that and you say I'm not going to force people but you should at least GO, and see what they say in Head Office—

Interviewer: So you know what it's like?

Manager: Yeah! Yeah... I'm used to it... it doesn't just happen. You have to make it happen.

London Branch employees thus often described Head Office as an outside force which attempted to exercise control over them without understanding their position. This symbolically reinforces for employees the notion that London Branch should ideally be independent, and reflects London Branch's strategy for performing as an overseas unit within the bank as a whole.

In addition, Head Office was constructed as German by London employees, but in particular ways which reflected the branch's strategy in the group. Head Office was described as German-focused, and without much interest in the international market, employing Head Office's own self-description but interpreting the images of Germanness as denoting parochiality rather than a global focus. Certain of the phrases used to describe Head Office—such as “bureaucratic,” “slow,” and “hierarchical”—were also associated with stereotypes of German business culture. Most contrasted London's “hybridisation” with Head Office's German “monoculture”: one senior manager spoke of a non-German at Head Office who, after twenty years at the same firm, was still called “*der Ausländer*” (the foreigner) by colleagues. Head Office's Germanness was thus constructed in terms of the shared notion of “German business

culture”; here, rather than viewing this as a central core of the bank, it was compared unfavourably with London Branch’s self-construction as possessing a mix of UK and German business cultures. By doing so, they are setting themselves up as global and cosmopolitan according to City standards, which emphasises multiethnic offices and cultural mixing, rather than Head Office’s vision of a German bank with offices in every port. London’s distancing of itself from Head Office and presenting Head Office as a German monoculture thus reflects its strategy in the City market.

Head Office and London Branch thus have the same symbolic representations of Germanness and cosmopolitanism, but different interpretations, which reflect their different environments and strategies. For instance, both value cosmopolitanism and are critical of what they see as overly localised views, but Head Office interviewees construct cosmopolitanism in terms of international experience and superficial knowledge of other cultures, where London Branch employees describe it in terms of multiple cultural competencies (Vertovec 1996a: 32-36, forthcoming). Furthermore, London employees describe Head Office as “too German” and consequently not cosmopolitan enough, while Head Office employees, for their part, speak of London as being German by virtue of belonging to a German group, and as overly insular due to its efforts at distancing itself symbolically from its Head Office. Similarly, one portrays the restructuring initiative as a way of bringing the bank (more or less forcefully) together as a global unit, where the other describes it as the (more or less hostile) introduction of an outside, foreign institution into their own system. The symbols that both use to describe the bank are the same, but are interpreted differently in each context according to their different roles within the organisation and the resulting different strategies which each employs in its daily business.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the strategies of each are in fact constructed in relation to each other. London's position, as a small offshoot maintaining a presence in a global city, both looks to and contrasts itself to Frankfurt. Similarly, Head Office is the hub of the business, and as such emphasises an ideal of uniformity throughout the bank. In London Branch, the differences between internal cohorts is partly reflected in how close their interpretations are to Head Office's, and the various cohorts maintain an awareness of Head Office's interpretations of symbols in their definition of the bank and of their position within it. This suggests that these interpretations are, while not necessarily adopted, at any rate employed as a means of defining oneself and one's allegiances in branch politics. The multivalency of the symbols involved means that the branch and the Head Office are linked and divided on different levels, a situation which is continuously changing, and which is reflected in the relations between the interpretations of the symbols which both groups use to define the bank.

This diversity and complexity of the interpretations of symbols is in fact integral to the operation of the bank. For instance, London Branch, in order to operate in the City, needs to adopt some of the local constructions of cosmopolitanism (for instance the focus on "business cultures" and the valuation of hybridisation), but in order to communicate with Head Office must also construct itself in terms of its links to Germany. Head Office likewise must be able to maintain connections with the foreign branches at the same time as it focuses on the German market. The tension between branch and Head Office was said to be inevitable by people at this and other German banks, because of a tacit understanding that foreign branches have to operate in different circumstances, but Head Office provides the main focus for the organisation. In order to run a transnational corporation, diverse elements need to be incorporated in a way which also permits cooperation on some level. The multivalency of symbols thus comes

into play in the interaction between branch and head office, and is part of the strategic operation of the bank in the diverse environments in which it finds itself.

While Head Office and London Branch define themselves, each other and the bank through the same symbols, therefore, they differentiate their positions through their interpretations of these. The result is a sort of connected independence, which allows each unit to operate in its own context and yet to maintain a connection with each other, which changes as the strategies of each element in the group change in response to their outside environments. Although this inevitably results in a certain amount of tension, it also makes it possible to maintain an organisation which incorporates multiple strategies, allowing it to adapt to diverse settings, and to be flexible enough to operate within the global financescape.

Analysis: Banking on Culture

The key to the significance of this flexible self-presentation within the bank thus lies in the environment within which it operates. The bank is by definition globally engaged. Its dealers operate in a global market; employees tend to be transnational individuals; it is part of the global financescape. Consequently, much as an individual's desk gives them a continuous symbolic presence within the organisation, self-presentation is essential to its survival in this symbolically-defined environment.

This fact is visible from the moment one walks into any part of the bank, from the décor to employees' continual emphasis on the impression which clients and competitors receive. One of the more senior trainees stopped by my office one day to complain about a situation in which, a meeting room being unavailable, he had been forced to leave a group of clients in a free area while he arranged for another. He exclaimed angrily that they would therefore not think well of the bank: "What sort of

image does that project to clients, to *customers*, to these people if we put them in a room where they are staring at our *garderobe* [coat closet]?” Business letters are written to a particular formula, without which, I was both reliably informed and personally discovered, they will not be read. The bank’s logo appears on stationary, e-mails, websites, publications, and, at Head Office, on Post-It notes, pencils and the maps of Frankfurt given to overseas visitors. Strategic self-presentation thus is a major part of the operation of the bank as a whole.

Self-presentation is also a key factor in differentiating subgroups within the branch (to say nothing of the bank as a whole), and defining their relationship to each other. The decor of particular offices reflects the ethos of the department: Information Technology, for instance, which is generally said (including by its own members) to be a young and fairly offbeat department, has posters of popular comedians Mike Myers and Sasha Baron Cohen (“Ali G”) on the walls; Auditing, spoken of with ambivalence by most of the rest of the branch, had several faintly insubordinate cartoons. Personal deportment is also a factor: a few people told me that they could tell I was an outsider to the business world simply from the way I moved and spoke. The bank’s Germanness is subtly expressed: while there is nothing in the branch’s public spaces to suggest a German connection (the decor being neutral and the artwork from international sources), the machines, computers and telephones which kept the system running were all manufactured by German companies (a situation which my experience suggests is not atypical for German bank branches in London). Within London Branch and the bank as a whole, then, groups and individuals habitually rely on strategic self-presentation to communicate their status, orientations and allegiances on a day-to-day basis.

Furthermore, it is clear that the symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism used to define the German transnational businesspeople are not their exclusive province.

The Germanophiles, for instance, use the same symbols as actual German transnational businesspeople to define themselves. In some cases, furthermore, the boundaries between the categories are hard to discern— some members of the Germanophile group are ethnic Germans, some are married to Germans, and all are engaged with Germany, which suggests that it might not be totally out of line to define them in some ways as *part* of the “German transnational capitalist class,” particularly as Sklair counts local managers in TNCs as part of the TCC, regardless of whether they are actively engaged in globalising activity (1995: 72). The symbols used to define the German transnational businesspeople thus do not define a bounded group, but blend into and incorporate non-Germans into themselves.

Furthermore, among German transnational businesspeople themselves, the categories are flexible. Not only are there actually *two* different sorts of German transnationals, the expatriates and the local hires, but an expatriate can, if s/he remains in London for long enough, become a “local hire” and, although I heard of no cases of this happening, a local employee could equally become an expatriate. The distinguishing marker was, again, the interpretation of symbols: time spent in London, for instance, can serve either as part of a self-construction as an *Auslandsdeutsche* (roughly speaking, a German living abroad, a self-description adopted by some local hires) or as a brief stay by an expatriate to improve his/her resume. In the setting of a bank, the strategy and self-definition of the German transnational businesspeople is thus influenced by people who are both affiliated with it and with other groups, such as the City, the English transnational businesspeople, and the wider global financescape, calling into question the notion of a solidary transnational capitalist class.

The Anglophiles, furthermore, while they may be engaged with the City, are also engaged with Germany by virtue of the work they do and because of the fact that the

German business system provides, for them, a classic Other against which they define their particular Self. At the same time, the two groups have to work together: the Anglophiles' perspective on the organisation is thus likely to inform that of the other cohorts. The German transnational businesspeople were quite definitely aware of the Anglophiles' views, as witness expatriates' concerns about "offending the English" due to ignorance of local customs. The Anglophiles, furthermore, also provide expatriates with much of their vision of the City. The German transnational businesspeople, like all employees in London Branch, thus are acting according to particular strategies which are developed through mutual influence on and from other groups within the bank; the strategic nature of interaction in the City means that the German transnational businesspeople cannot operate in a vacuum.

Finally, the German transnational businesspeople are also affected by external groups and their constructions of Germanness and cosmopolitanism, from consultants brought in to assist with the restructuring initiative, to outside contracting firms which supply the catering staff, language teachers and so forth, to pub and cafe staff. This influences the symbols which they use to define the office, and the interpretations which they give these. The bank's German transnational businesspeople, just by virtue of being in the branch, are in contact with other outside groups of varying degrees of Germanness and types of engagement with Germany. In short, while the bank is a symbolic unit on one level, at another, it incorporates diversity, through different uses and interpretations of the symbols which define it. This diversity reflects a variety of influences on German transnational businesspeople, and the way they alter their strategic self-presentation in accordance with these influences.

It might, at this juncture, be worth considering the question of *Heimat*. As discussed above, most Germans in London had quite diverse notions of where, and

what, *Heimat* was. Some said that they did not have one. Of those who admitted to having a *Heimat*, answers ranged from classic references to specific regions of Germany (Borneman and Peck 1995: 272, 76; Weigelt 1983: 19), to simply stating “*Deutschland*” or “Europe” even when asked to elaborate. Others gave more complicated definitions along the lines of Borneman and Peck’s transnational journalist, who maintained a sense of *Heimat* by reformulating it to include German overseas institutions (1995: 76), or of that given by an interviewee who did not work at this bank, a German who had married an Englishman, who stated that while her *Heimat* is Germany, for her children, *Heimat* is London, and that she knows other women in her position who “adopt” London as *Heimat* upon arrival. As noted, Germanophiles would even develop ersatz *Heimats*. Rather than as a simple image of “homeland,” *Heimat* was defined in diverse ways by German transnational businesspeople.

This trend is even more surprising in that it goes against the standard literature on *Heimat* (e.g. Greverus 1978, Applegate 1990). While many interviewees said that they considered England “home,” or, as one put it, his “*zu Hause*” (an expression roughly denoting a place where one “feels at home”), this does not necessarily mean that England was their *Heimat*, as the words are not entirely equivalent. Similarly, while it is possible that some interviewees may have been less vague about the location of their *Heimat* if they had been speaking to a German interviewer, the fact that some explicitly said that they had no *Heimat* is remarkable, particularly given the place which *Heimat* is said to occupy in German consciousness (see Applegate 1990). This diversity of ways of defining *Heimat* goes against the classic formulation of the expression.

However, more recent studies of *Heimat* have suggested that, in transnational situations, the concept may be quite flexible, as in the case of Goltz’ Argentinean Germans (1998) or Borneman and Peck’s Jewish “sojourners” (1995). The varied

definitions—even rejections—of *Heimat* by my interviewees suggests that they are adapting the concept to fit the English/City of London context, particularly as strong, classical associations of *Heimat* with a particular region or town might make it harder for individuals to show a connection with the UK local culture (Borneman and Peck 1995: 184). The variety of answers also suggests that there are many different strategies for self-presentation being deployed in the same social context. It seems, then, that German transnational businesspeople adjust the concept of *Heimat* to their situation, whether by losing it altogether, transferring it to other locations— or even, in the case of those who cited Europe as *Heimat*, concepts— or by reformulating it in terms of multiple *Heimats*. There are thus diverse ways of constructing a *Heimat* in a transnational situation, and the way in which it was constructed depended on the history and strategy of the actor in question.

The presence of multiple forms of *Heimat* suggests many ways of constructing Germanness and transnationalism, and of engaging with UK culture, among my interviewees. Even if some interviewees were tailoring their responses to my questions, this still implies a flexible concept of *Heimat*. If an interviewee is defining their *Heimat* in different ways to interviewers and others, then the individual is changing his/her self-presentation to give the most image which s/he feels will be most useful in that situation. The various constructions of *Heimat* thus show how images of Germanness are used to strategically define different groups and positions within the German transnational business world.

Furthermore, at times of stress— such as the restructuring— the different elements within German transnational business become visible as the interpretations of the symbols used to define it are challenged and reinterpreted. For instance, the polarization of the branch along ethnic lines suggested a rethinking of what it is to be

German, and what this means within the branch. It is interesting also to note that the local hires did not seem to have a particular solidarity with the expatriates even though both were German transnational businesspeople; in fact, the two groups tended to set themselves off from each other, for instance through their choice of language. Again, they are displaying different ways of being German, transnational and a businessperson. The expatriates were brought together as a group through shared experience and common language, but also because they were assumed by the others in the branch to be a unit. There thus exist diverse elements within the bank's German transnational population, which at times of stress appear as fractional, even opposed groups, even while using the same symbols which give them at other times a unified appearance, as the introduction of a new system causes them to redefine their strategic positions both in and on the bank and its London Branch.

Similar things can also be seen in the reinterpretation of symbols relating to Head Office in light of its new social proximity to the branch. For example, the German transnational businesspeople seemed to be split along lines of proximity to Head Office; certainly the expatriates' portrayals of the bank and of good business practice appear more in line with the views in Head Office than those in London Branch. Germans in general were assumed to be sympathetic to Head Office, meaning that some German transnational businesspeople—chiefly local hires—felt obliged to define themselves explicitly in opposition to Head Office. At the height of the restructuring, furthermore, the branch employees constructed the inevitable tension with Head Office in terms of ethnic incompatibility. However, by the time the study was ended, people were well established in the new structure, and new interpretations of symbols were becoming the norm. The restructuring thus not only highlights the diversity among German

transnational businesspeople, but also the role of multivalent symbols in allowing people to adapt to a changing system.

The branch's strategic engagement with other institutions in the bank are also made possible through the metaphorical coherence of symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism. Head Office, for instance, is part of the same bank as is London Branch, and so its employees use the same symbols; however, both groups have different interpretations. Nonetheless, Head Office has an influence upon London and its employees' uses and constructions of symbols: with the restructuring, they are brought into closer contact with Head Office's perspectives. Consequently, people rely on the multivalency of such symbols as the Germanness of the bank, its friendliness, and the persons of the expatriates to bridge the divide between the two institutions, and allow communication between them. The multivalency of symbols thus permits a strategic relationship with Head Office in which both institutions can at once interact and keep their distance from each other.

This multivalency also comes into play in interactions with other bank branches in London. While nobody talks directly about the competition, the progress of other restructurings taking place at the time affected how people at other bank branches felt about what was going on in their own offices; the restructuring initiative was itself a response to then-recent events in German banking. Furthermore, most employees of all nationalities had worked for other banks, both German and non-German. The bank also required symbolic engagement with other banks in order to compete with them in the City environment, and to remain aware of their symbolic self-presentation in order to define themselves relative to them. Consequently, the multivalency of symbols permits these banks to maintain varying degrees of closeness to each other, according to their changing strategies in the London and global markets.

The globally engaged nature of the financial market also affects the symbols of the bank as it struggles to be, in its employees', clients' and competitors' eyes, both German and global. In order to call a bank "German," there has to exist a symbolic category of "non-German"; furthermore, to define a bank as "global" is to define that which is not global. In order to present themselves as a "global" firm, then, they have to know how to present themselves as German, and which symbols converge upon those locally used to connote globalisation. In order for the bank to be German but not isolated as such, its employees turn to symbols to bridge the gap and allow it to be simultaneously German and global. Furthermore, different groups within the bank have different interpretations of the symbols, but these nonetheless are all subsumed on another level within the symbolic construction of the whole. The actions and symbolic self-presentation of German transnational businesspeople are formed and developed through strategic interaction with other groups; therefore, they cannot be considered in isolation, without reference to other actors in the global financescape.

The bank, furthermore, requires all of these different engagements with diverse groups as it continually adapts to the changing environment of the financescape. Whatever its employees may say, neither the bank nor its branches are, or ever have been, islands. Head Office, London Branch, other branches and outside banks both German and non-German all influence each other's strategies and symbolic self-presentation, even if this may be more obvious at some times than at others. By the same token, the different groups within the bank are not isolated from each other, having to interact through the makeup of the branches and the nature of its structure. The bank effectively needs a way to be diverse and solidary at once, which is provided by the multivalency of symbols. For the bank to operate as a unit, the symbols defining it must be common but multivalent, to allow for diversity, but to possess common

points which allow interfacing with each other and with other groups. The internal diversity of German transnational capitalism is thus integral to German transnational businesspeople' interaction with other groups.

Finally, this symbolic engagement allows them to compete in the wider financial sphere. Within the global financescape, the bank needs to carve out a niche and present a united front, but it also needs to be flexible, respond to other groups, and blend in with these if necessary, in the cases of merging, restructuring and periods of greater and lesser expansion. TNCs appear to alternate between centrifugal and centripetal periods, depending on politics and economic currents in the world as a whole (compare Behrman 1970; Bergsten et. al. 1978; Pralahad 1987 and Bartlett and Ghoshal 1993). A continuous strategy is thus impossible; instead we see a continual dynamic between unity and diversity, achieved through changes in symbolic self-presentation. The multivalency and metaphorical coherence of symbols thus allow for a dynamic between flexibility and stability, unity and diversity, which is necessary to the bank's operations in the global sphere, but which mean that neither bank nor its the German transnational businesspeople can be considered as a single unit.

While the bank's German transnational businesspeople may seem from the outside to present a symbolically united front, a closer examination reveals the different strategies of the diverse groups within it and outside influences upon it, as well as their varying degrees of engagement with the German and the transnational. This diversity is not only inherent within the bank's structure and composition, it is an asset to it in the environment of the global financescape; consequently, the bank's German transnational businesspeople are diverse and multiply engaged by virtue of its globalising nature and strategic interactions in a constantly changing environment.

Conclusion

An analysis of the images of Germanness and cosmopolitanism used in the strategic self-presentations of the various types of employees of a German bank branch in London thus suggests that its German transnational businesspeople cannot be studied in isolation from other groups. Rather, any study must take into account the bank's internal diversity, and the strategic discourses of symbols between them and other groups both local and engaged with the global financescape, and the place of all of these in the bank as a whole. Furthermore, it seems once again as if this diversity is not only natural within the transnational business environment, but it can be a strategic advantage in it. It remains unclear, however, exactly how this strategy is played out in daily communication within and outside the German transnational business world.

VI. Handykrieg: **Language and Communication Technology**

While the use of language appears to mark off German transnational businesspeople as an elite group which dominates an English local group in the London branches of German banks, this hypothesis is incapable of fully explaining the complex symbolic uses of communication in a transnational business environment. A closer examination of material from the bank discussed in Chapter 5, with occasional supporting material from the pilot project, with regard to employees' choice of language, jargon, jokes and uses of communications technology, suggests that language is in fact part of a strategic discourse between diverse forms of transnational capitalism.

Language and symbols have been linked from the very beginning of anthropological studies of communication. As noted in Chapter 2, Leach (1976) used a linguistic analogy in his theory of symbolism, and language itself has long been known as a symbol of group affiliation in its own right (see Benedict Anderson 1991: 87). As they are applied to transnational communities, studies of communication often draw from linguistic works which focus upon the uses of language as an agent of domination and of resistance in situations in which one group is oppressed by another (e.g. Lakoff [1979]). Roberts et al.'s 1994 study of immigrant labour is typical of the way in which theories of language and power have been adopted into the study of transnational workplaces, discussing how language and "officialese" are used by UK managers to control and dominate the—largely immigrant—workers. Transnational communication technology is also portrayed either as an agent of Western dominance (Sklair 1995: 9; Drainville 1998: 41) and/or a means by which transnational actors can organise themselves worldwide against oppressive local governments (Zachary 2000: 21; Cesari 1999). Most studies of linguistics in transnational situations thus argue that language is

a site of contestation between groups in a borderless world. Following the logic of these studies, it must also be the locus of conflict between German transnational businesspeople and local groups. It thus remains to be seen whether this will prove to be true in this case.

Speak English: “Global” and “Local” Languages

In the present period of globalisation, English is generally agreed to be the lingua-franca of the transnational business world, or, as some commentators put it, the “global language” of business (Klein 1998; Crystal 1997). This was visible, not only in the bank itself, but in the environments in which German transnational businesspeople were found. To take but two examples, in multiethnic settings such as the educational institute which supplied the banks’ trainees, English was used as a *lingua franca*; in Frankfurt Airport, the signs were in English as well as German and there were a large number of English-speaking attendants. English-speaking was also treated as a marker of cosmopolitanism, and as such accorded high status among transnational businesspeople, German and otherwise. I will here explore a variety of scenarios which illustrate how English and German are used relative to each other in business settings.

Scenario A: Head Office

It might be instructive, first of all, to consider the relation of German to English in the bank’s Head Office. The head office has been extensively described in Chapter 5; I therefore simply reiterate that the office is located in central Frankfurt, and that almost all the permanent employees were German. As discussed in Chapter 5, the office was very “German-focused,” which applied to its linguistic aspects as well; while no statistics were available on the linguistic competency of employees, anecdotal evidence

suggested strongly that relatively few employees spoke English fluently. The consensus at London Branch was that Head Office, as one older male Anglophile manager put it, “suffered from lack of English.” Head Office is therefore an environment in which German is theoretically the dominant language.

Even though it may be seldom used, however, English is still rated more highly than German as a business language in Head Office. One expatriate described for me how his entire department in Frankfurt had used the announcement of the restructuring initiative as “an excuse to sign up for English lessons.” Most of my contacts at Head Office initially agreed to interviews at least partly to improve their language or practice on a “genuine” native English speaker. Most of the trainees at London Branch cited wanting to improve their English as a key reason for requesting to work in London. For the expatriates, speaking English was a symbol of “*Weltoffenheit*.” A telling incident also occurred at the meeting of personnel managers from all branches mentioned earlier (at which, significantly, English was used as the lingua-franca): when two Head Office delegates briefly conferred in German, and an American exclaimed “Speak English!” in a faintly exasperated tone, the Germans complied without surprise, comment or evidence of hurt feelings. The most visible received linguistic discourse at Head Office is therefore that English is a more global, cosmopolitan and prestigious language than German.

This attitude also seems to hold true in the rest of Frankfurt as well. German as used in business and the media possesses a large number of English loanwords; a *Spiegel* article describes how English is used in advertising in Germany for no reason other than to seem “cool” (1998a; see Fig. 3). According to an article in *The Economist* (1998a) a number of German banks, even those without a sizeable global presence, have made English their official language in order to appear more cosmopolitan. The

available evidence thus suggests that the use of English as a marker of cosmopolitanism is common in Frankfurt business circles, and thus that English is socially the dominant language.

German, following this pattern, is constructed as a local and therefore low-prestige language in a business context, even a German one. On my first visit to the Head Office, the employee who showed me around expressed her surprise that I spoke German (as had most of the expatriates in London). I replied with, “Why not? *You* speak English.” Her reply was “Yes, but you’re English (sic—I am Canadian)—you don’t *have* to learn it.” She, like

most Head Office employees, had not worked outside of Germany. Subsequently, many personnel managers remarked to me that German skills are not much of an asset in global business. Consequently, the learning and speaking of English acquires a strong symbolic value for Germans, and in particular for those involved in transnational business. Even in a German setting, then, English is a symbol of cosmopolitanism and German one of parochialism.

However, in its dealings with its overseas branches, Head Office would subtly assert the dominance of German over English. Internal memos had German letterhead or instructions (confidentiality envelopes, for instance, read “*Streng Vertraulich*”), making German, in this context, the language of international dealing. On occasion they would actually be written in German, which usually led to a flurry in London Branch offices as an employee capable of translating was located, and again constructs German

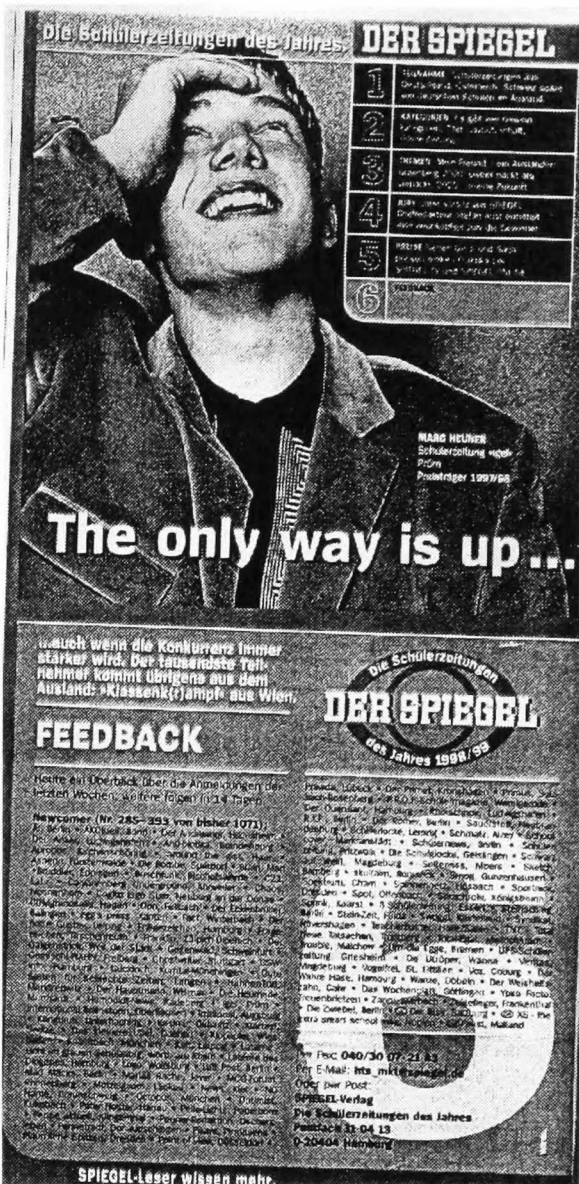


Figure 3. *Der Spiegel* advert (1998). “Feedback” is actually a loanword.

as the global, and English the local, language. The bank's newsletter, produced in Frankfurt and distributed throughout the group, was printed in German; recently it had added an English supplement sent—significantly—to all the international branches, but the greatest prominence was given to German. A number of Head Office employees who were less than fluent in English would gratefully lapse into German if the opportunity presented itself, despite making valiant efforts to communicate in the other language. In Head Office, then, whether English is the more cosmopolitan and German the more parochial language, and which dominates the other, depends on the context.

Scenario B: London Branch

In London Branch, I was able to observe the interactions which went on in offices. Again, the set-up of the branch in general, and the informal groupings within it, have been described in Chapter 5; I will therefore confine myself to outlining the environment in which social interaction took place. As noted before, the offices in the branch were open-plan, with desks scattered about them in small clusters; people with similar responsibilities were usually grouped close together. Most of the interaction in the office took the form of two or three people pausing in their work to discuss some (usually, though not always, work-related) point or other, or gossiping at the coffee machine. In the former cases, contact would be initiated by one of the people in the room raising their head and, in a slightly louder tone than usual, addressing either another person or the room in general; persons willing to talk would then respond, or, if not, give a terse reply and keep their heads lowered. Alternatively, a person coming into an office, upon concluding their business—or upon finding the person they have come to see absent—will often go over to the desk of a friend in the same office and initiate

conversation. As in Head Office, the choice of language in these interactions reveals much about power relations in the workplace.

In London Branch, English appeared to be the dominant language in these interactions, and German was treated as a language which was esoteric and restricted to one particular country. Most people around the office were curious as to how I had learned German, and when they learned that I had German relatives, assumed that this was the reason. One locally-hired German manager, who was in fact in a relationship with a non-German, stated to me that he could not see anyone being interested in studying German if they did not have German family by “blood” or marriage. Even though the branch had several English-language employees who were fluent in German, this was still seen as unusual (even, interestingly, by the Germanophile employees). English would thus appear to have higher status than German in London Branch as well as in the Head Office.

Language use, furthermore, seemed to play into the unspoken divisions between cohorts in the office. Multilingualism was a strong symbol of the cosmopolitanism of the branch for the expatriates, all of whom cited wanting to improve their English as a key reason for volunteering to come to London. However, one distinguishing mark of the expatriates was the fact that they spoke German more often than any of the other groups. Local hires distinguished themselves from expatriates by refusing to speak German, or doing so only in specific contexts, such as with recently arrived trainees. Most English Germanophiles seemed to be less open about their linguistic abilities than were bilinguals from other countries, suggesting that their skill was a distinguishing marker which placed them in a liminal position with regard to the Germans and the English. Language is also used to mark off the Anglophiles. While some took advantage of the bank’s international restructuring to learn German, this was said to be a

commitment “above and beyond the call of duty.” While most spoke about language courses in positive terms, they also said that such skills were less important than the “practical” aspects of business. There were often hints, in such conversations, of linguistic xenophobia, the English seemingly using the discourse of cosmopolitanism to excuse an isolationist reluctance to learn another language on the grounds that it is “local.” The German language is another symbol of the bank for all cohorts, but where the expatriates and Germanophiles express this by speaking German, local hires do so by avoiding speaking it (or by asking to “practice their English”), and Anglophiles by either learning or refusing to learn it. Whether it is seen as a symbol expressing “cosmopolitanism” as well also varies from cohort to cohort.

This was also the case with the use of language in groups. As German was generally acknowledged to be restrictive and exclusive of people who do not speak it, it was mainly used in cases in which the group was German or mixed German and Germanophile, and most often by trainees and recently-arrived expatriates. This also held true for the spontaneous office conversations described above: while these were conducted in either English or German in all-German or German/Germanophile offices, they were conducted in English in all other cases. Significantly, German was only spoken in the workplace when German-speakers (of whatever nationality) were working together, and would cease if an English-speaker joined them. German employees, particularly expatriates, usually seemed more relaxed when working with English-speakers whom they knew to speak German than with monolingual coworkers, even if they communicated with these people mainly or only in English. German thus seemed to define a boundary between groups, if not an actual site of unspoken conflict.

This proposition is, however, challenged by the official uses of German within the branch. The branch management formally encouraged employees to take language

lessons; most of the top rank of UK-native managers consequently had at least passable German, although they never, to the best of my knowledge, admitted to this outside of formal interview settings. Despite the assertion of many English employees that they need not learn German as “they (i.e. the Germans) all speak English,” many were conversant with popular works on “Business German” (for instance Hartley and Robins [1996], Nicholson and Hill [1992])—that is to say, works teaching the user useful phrases of German for English-speakers, to use on the telephone, in letters and so forth, either as a courtesy or in case one should find oneself speaking with someone whose English is not very good. Although this was never said directly, learning German did have prestige value for some of the English, as it marked the learner off as someone committed to the company or with cosmopolitan leanings. One Anglophile spoke with irony of the fact that in the restructuring initiative, English was declared the official language of the bank, but that the end result had been that more people went out and learned German in order to communicate better with colleagues at Head Office. In London Branch, there is a lot of unspoken pressure for the use of German in top management policy, suggesting that German may be the dominant language in this context. German can, therefore, sometimes be the more global and cosmopolitan language.

In addition, English could also symbolise a person’s local connections rather than their cosmopolitan leanings. Most UK-born English speakers took their monolinguality as a marker of ethnic affiliation rather than of cosmopolitanism, proudly announcing that as English people, they spoke no other languages (other English speakers had fewer issues with this: Canadians and South Africans are used to state-sponsored bilingualism, and most of the Antipodeans and Americans whom I encountered working for German banks were similarly at home in multilingual

environments). In more relaxed contexts, such as the canteen, Germans frequently fell into a playful “German English,” using English verbs according to German rules (two young German local hires, debating whether or not to order an apple crumble for dessert: “Are you crumbling?” “Yes, I’m crumbling”); this was done mainly by fully-bilingual individuals—local hires or longtime expatriates—who were aware of the proper English grammatical rules and were deliberately breaking them in play to suggest a parochial Germanness (see Rampton 1995 for similar uses among Asian schoolchildren in England). The use of English thus could be a symbol of local connections for both English and German-speakers, calling into question the global-local identification of English and German at the same time as it affirms it on another level.

One must also consider the numerous cases of Anglo-German linguistic “crossing” in the branch (Rampton 1995). At meetings with Head Office personnel, London Anglophile employees tried to learn phrases of German off their counterparts as a conversational gambit at the breaks. In the branch’s offices, the use of German courtesy phrases such as “*Damen ersten*” (Ladies first) and “*Tchüss*” (Goodbye) had acquired common currency among the (exclusively Anglophile and generally working-class) support staff, mainly as greetings and interjections. As noted, the only people to actually conduct all-German conversations were trainees or expatriates new to London. In phone conversations, bilingual speakers of all national origins would alternate between English and German depending on who the phone call was from and what it was about. The use of German by English employees thus was framed either as a courtesy to international visitors or a cosmopolitan interest in and knowledge of other cultures, making German the more cosmopolitan language in these contexts.

This linguistic crossing suggests that language use has less to do with intergroup conflict and more to do with strategic self-presentation. For one thing, the Anglo-German divide is not a simple one: the inclusion of non-native speakers of German in the speech community suggests a continuum rather than a boundary. There were also occasions on which one German would address another in English in telephone conversations, usually on matters pertaining to an English client. When the Anglophiles used German, it mainly took the form of short greeting phrases, and thus seemed mainly to indicate identification with their corporation or subunit; furthermore, these phrases seemed to be mainly used by older English men, who distinguished themselves within the branch by a form of gentle teasing of employees in other groups. Even with each other, German employees generally spoke a mix of German and English, or “*deutschlish*”; none of my interviews were conducted strictly in one or the other language, even when the decision was taken at the outset to speak only one. The bank had developed a project which its German designers gave an English name (along the lines of “SPIRE System”) but even the English employees pronounced its name, without a trace of irony, in the German way. Linguistic mixing was thus more common in London than the use of one language as a lingua-franca, and was not so much a way of indicating a boundary as a means of expressing different social allegiances in different contexts.

The choice of language also appeared to be more a matter of strategic self-presentation than of excluding others. Several German interviewees, mainly local hires, expressed no preference for one or the other language when asked at the beginning of interviews; while many did choose English as a “default language,” they would also switch to German when, as one put it, “things get technical.” Also, the “monolingual” English often knew several stock German phrases for telephone conversations, even if

the conversation was conducted in English after the initial formalities were concluded; on at least one occasion an Anglophile (of the abovementioned older male cohort) jokingly treated a Germanophile in the same way, employing stock German phrases before getting down to business. One relatively young German female staff member (who had been in the UK for about ten years), when I first spoke German to her, did not register this until five minutes into the conversation. When I expressed surprise at this, she assured me that after a while in the office, one did not notice switches in language. After two months, I discovered that I did stop registering such changes consciously. Language thus seemed mainly to be a means of continually defining and redefining the nature and composition of social groups, rather than only as a site of contestation between two such entities.

It is also worth considering the after-work context. German was more often used in private contexts, and therefore also to mark these; at the pub after work, German-speakers were more inclined to speak German, and much less concerned about excluding English-speakers from the conversation. One interviewee, furthermore, was impersonal and businesslike when dealing with me until he encountered me speaking German to another colleague at the pub, at which point he became effusively friendly. German's "local" status could thus be used in some contexts to indicate a private conversation, rather than to dominate other groups.

German could also be used in "public" contexts, such as the canteen, to delineate a private subject. Mad Cow Disease, for instance, was never referred to by its English name by Germans in such areas; as German indicates a private context, this places the phrase firmly in the "inside-joke" sphere, and also ensures that Anglophone colleagues are unlikely to realise that a delicate subject is being discussed. Once, during a conversation between myself, a local hire from the former East Germany and a

Germanophile colleague from another department, the conversation was conducted in English apart from when discussing the fall of the Berlin Wall, at which point the East German suddenly began speaking German, and then reverted to English when the subject changed. Similarly, Germans discussing business matters in the canteen would speak in German, partly in order to communicate better, but also partly to indicate a wish to be left alone. On some occasions German was used to actively conceal the topic of discussion from an Anglophone (a strategy which occasionally backfired on the users). German is thus again used in ways which suggest different sorts of strategies within the office, not simply always as a form of domination and/or resistance.

Analysis

The use of language is not so much a tool of domination and resistance in the organisation as it is a way of performing multiple functions on different levels. It is, for instance, possible to argue that the mixing of language is paradoxically “German”: Wiesand’s *Kunst Ohne Grenzen* has a three-quarter page quotation entirely in English, with no translation given (1987: 133). This, however, suggests that symbols of “Germanness,” i.e. language, are bound up with those of cosmopolitanism, i.e. the use of English, and rules against the abovementioned paradigm of the pure German language as a symbol of Germanness (see Engelmann 1991: 58). A *Der Spiegel* article (1998a) also suggests that the ungrammatical English used in advertisements may be leading to a new, standard form of “*deutschlish*.” Language was thus not so much a means of defining one social group against another, as a means of negotiating a series of interconnected social groups.

Furthermore, the multivalency of linguistic symbols also meant that language could be used to elide distinctions between groups, both on a conceptual level in the

Head Office and on a personal level in London. The grammatical play of the “crumbling” incident metamorphosed into a reinterpretation of what it means to work in banking, as the linguistic joking gave way to mock-negotiations of the price of dessert complete with bidding and taxation. On one occasion, I heard the phrase “it doesn’t matter, they all speak English,” normally used by English people to explain why they had not learned German, from a young German local hire taking a new job with a Dutch bank in reference to why he was not going to learn Dutch. This not only altered the group boundary from English/German to German/non-German, but defines all English-speakers, regardless of mother tongue, as part of the same group. Language schools teach a particular sort of English, suggesting that it is not English *per se* which is the global language, but English with a business focus. In one interview with a London manager, I remarked that I was surprised at the lack of English skills at Head Office, as English was said to be the international language of business. The response was “not in Germany it isn’t.... International business is a very different thing,” making it ambiguous whether German is international or local, or indeed whether there exist different ways of being “international.” Language does not therefore relate, as Engelmann suggests, directly to Germanness, but is a means of redefining Germanness as the expression of belonging to a particular social formation not incompatible with, and even capable of combining with, other groups (1991: 58).

Leaving aside its role as a means of communication, then, language is not simply a symbol of ethnic identification or a site of dominant-subaltern conflict, but a means of self-presentation whose complexity allows for the negotiation of various positions along a continuum between global and local. Rather than being a simple boundary site as it first appears, then, language use reflects a diversity of ways of being a transnational businessperson through the multivalency of both languages themselves

and their uses, suggesting not so much a case of global and local groups in conflict as of diverse sorts of conflict and consensus in a situation incorporating varying degrees and kinds of global and local engagement.

The Language of Business: Jargon and Meetings

Another seeming site of power relations is the use of jargon. Certain buzzwords and phrases seem to be universal throughout the business world; terms like “Joint Venture” “Human Resource Management,” “Success driven” and so forth are peppered throughout the conversations of businesspeople of all nationalities. These have become pervasive to the point which “Business German” and “Business English” are taught almost as separate dialects of their respective languages. One might thus almost see business jargon as more of a “global language of business” than English. Here, we will consider the use of jargon in meetings and in ordinary office interaction, with regard to how it reflects power relations between groups in London Branch.

Scenario A: The Meeting

Meetings are protracted, even ritualised, communicative acts which normally follow a specific pattern which varies little from corporation to corporation, or country to country (Boden 1994: 80ff). There would be a brief period in which the participants assembled, accompanied by joking and conversation; people generally sat in groups, frequently with others from their department, although senior managers tended to sit closer to the front, and trainees to form their own group towards the back. This was followed by two to five presentations, either by senior managers, managers assigned to lead a particular project, specialists within the bank and/or the occasional external

expert. While the length and content vary according to the topic and group, most formal meetings included PowerPoint slides, illustrated with cartoons drawn from the PowerPoint software, which were almost inevitably followed by a joke about the cartoons' incomprehensibility. The tone of each meeting was generally as positive as possible, even if the purpose of the meeting was to discuss or deliver bad news. Question periods inevitably followed; these also had a pattern, with the general rule being the more formal the meeting, the more senior the questioners and the more serious the questions asked. In most cases, the senior managers (both German and non-German) tended to ask the first questions and to be the most outspoken. Meetings thus form a cross-cultural secular ritual in the transnational business world.

In these meetings, business "jargon," buzzwords and phrases are often used as a form of restricted code. In the personnel managers' meeting mentioned above, people of all nationalities continually came up with the same catchphrases: flat structure, high integrity, success driven, performance criteria. Throughout the meeting it was assumed that everybody would know and understand these; on one occasion, when I asked the meaning of a particular phrase, the person to whom I was speaking was quite taken aback. Jargon, more than English alone, is the "global language" of business.

The ritualised nature of this vocabulary, furthermore, has the effect of controlling the discourse. Jargon resembles Bernstein (1971)'s concept of restricted code, that is to say, high-context, jargon-heavy language, which draws a barrier between the users and the outside world, limiting the discourse to a particular group of people. It also recalls Bloch's monograph on the way in which ritualised, symbol-heavy speech restricts the listeners' possible responses to the speaker's words, thus quelling potential dissent before it begins (1974: 58-71). In the case of meetings, the use of language

would thus suggest the reinforcement of a hegemonic, hierarchical ideology throughout the business world.

Despite this, much is made in popular works aimed at transnational businesspeople of alleged differences in the way in which people from different ethnic groups hold meetings (e.g. Hickson and Pugh 1997, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1996). British people are said to insist on personal chatter before the meeting and Germans to begin straight away and conduct proceedings in an impersonal style (Scheuermann 1997: 20). It seemed to be expected that my report would cover the differences in meeting styles of different nationalities (see Appendix II). Some of these differences seemed to be more perceived than real; I was on more than one occasion the recipient of discourses on English rudeness (contrary to the stereotype of them as overpolite) or German disorganisation, from members of the opposite group. Some of these “cultural differences” in fact appear to be self-fulfilling prophecies. One recent expatriate made an almost fanatical point of engaging in small talk for two or three minutes at the onset of any meeting held in English, which this person did not do in German, suggesting that this trait owed more to having read books on English “meeting style” than anything else. Nonetheless, by asserting the existence, and acceptability, of alternative discourses, they provide a counter-discourse to the restricted code. Consequently, the meeting can be an activity which incorporates multiple positions of varying degrees of connection with global and local social groups.

Meetings are thus simultaneously seen as universal and controlling in form, and yet on another level as encompassing diverse styles and bringing different groups together. While it is debatable to what extent these “styles” actually do exist, the fact that my interviewees actively believed in them means that they serve the purpose of defining a particular image of Germanness or Englishness. Due to the multivalency of

the symbols involved, whether the meeting is a global or a local act, or indeed whether it is a point of unity or of division among businesspeople, depends largely on the context. Once again, the language used in meetings is a force for dominance on one level, but this is only one of a variety of strategic uses, some of which also referred to other discourses than those of power and ethnicity.

Scenario B: The Office

In an open-plan office, brief and frequent informal work-related interactions take place at desks, for instance two people sitting together to work on a project, or brief consultation. They may be joined by more, but the population never gets above four (see McFeat 1974: Chapter 1, esp. pp. 31-32). These frequently moved from area to area, leading me to dub them “peripatetic meetings” in my first period of fieldwork. Much of the daily work of business is therefore done in small, mobile meetings which form and dissolve spontaneously, depending on the task. As in more formal meetings, business jargon frequently made its way into these conferences; it remains to be seen whether it plays the same role.

In peripatetic meetings, the restrictive nature of jargon is evident, vindicating Bloch’s theory. Employees incorporate phrases of jargon into their daily speech totally without irony or apparent realisation that these are anything other than normal language, thereby unconsciously restricting their own discourses. This is not to say that there are no forms of resistance; a common style of joking in banks is to repeat some phrase in an ironic tone or the wrong context. For instance, upon my remarking that my computer was having problems to an older male English acquaintance in the canteen, he remarked “Oh no—your computer is *facing challenges*,” the last drawled broadly with a grin and a wink, and alluding to the fact that, in business jargon, problems are referred to by

euphemistic phrases. However, this form of resistance also affirms the use of restricted discourse as a necessary part of business, and setting off businesspeople from other actors. Jargon would thus seem to be a site setting off the transnational from the local aspects of business, and restricting local discourses.

The language in which the jargon is spoken confirms this hypothesis. This code is generally English, even in cross-cultural settings: much of the jargon in “business German” is in English. When I asked a Germanophile for the German equivalent of the phrase “corporate culture,” she responded that there was none, and that Germans used the English phrase; looking in a dictionary, she found that there was a German word, *Wirtschaftskultur*, but added that even in Frankfurt, the English term was used, albeit with German plurals and verb structures. For that matter, when running a keyword search for books on corporate culture at the Deutsche Bibliothek in Frankfurt, the search term “*Wirtschaftskultur*” produced only half as many results as the search terms “Corporate Culture.” Most of the books whose titles included the phrase “Corporate Culture” were, in fact, written in German (e.g. Lippert (ed.) 1997). The fact that English is, symbolically at least, the “global language” of business, and that much of the international business jargon is in English regardless of the native language of the speaker, suggests that jargon fits in with the discourse of English as global language, acting to exclude and dominate local languages.

The same jargon, however, also incorporates local expressions. German is frequently used in cases where there is no English equivalent (as when discussing *Heimat*, or on one occasion when a formal interview degenerated into a discussion of the exact semantic difference between cosmopolitanism and *Weltoffenheit*), or when a German does not know a particular English word. German technical terms and section designations are also frequently used by all cohorts, due to the fact that the branch’s

structure was developed by Head Office in response to German market forces.

Anglophiles on the German language course would also use German expressions in order to practice them. English also had its regional expressions which have global currency, as it were, thrust upon them: the nickname “Footsie” for the *Financial Times* Stock Exchange Index, for instance, started as a piece of City slang, but has become universal as the FTSE index is quoted all over the world (see also *Londra Sera* 1984). Local terms are thus not always in opposition to global terms, but show a variety of local and global language uses.

Furthermore, knowledge of UK or German jargon words can be taken as much as a marker of cosmopolitanism as of local orientation. For a UK person to know the meaning of a German technical term, for instance, marks them as someone with inside knowledge of Germany, in the same way as the speaking of German does. The learning of such technical terms from colleagues also provides a bridge between groups at the same time as it marks them off as separate. As the knowledge of English of most Germans in the bank includes a lot of technical phrases, jargon again provides a shared connection with the English; many Germans also picked up a certain amount of London jargon and used it to show a cosmopolitan understanding of local systems. It is thus difficult to say whether the use of English and German jargon is a challenge, a reinterpretation or a site of continual redefinition.

Analysis

On the face of it, the use of jargon appears to support the image of a global elite dominating local subalterns. German technical terms could become common throughout the bank if their adoption is encouraged by Head Office; there was one department which was always referred to by a German name even in the UK, as the impetus for its

establishment, and therefore its name, came from Germany. However, who is dominating whom is hard to ascertain: the continued use of English as a global lingua-franca means that phrases which would otherwise be local jargon are adopted into other languages. Acronyms and jargon used in one branch could speedily become general throughout the whole group, and the power of Head Office similarly ensured the spread of what would normally be fairly obscure German terms. Jargon, as much as linguistic crossing, appears to be a way of negotiating between different ways of belonging to different social groups.

The use of jargon also reflects the importance of self-presentation in business. The reason for the prevalence of jargon is often not so much its utility, as the fact that it is expected of the user. The currency of jargon thus stems from social conventions of self-presentation in the business world; however, its explicit use as a form of self-presentation rather than of “meaningful” communication (as defined by my interviewees) puts it in the category of symbols, and thus as something which can be used to link, rather than to divide, groups in the global financescape and the localities with which it connects.

In short, then, the use of jargon in the German bank in question at first seems to define a transnational group with German roots dominating a local English workforce. However, when one considers the self-presentational aspects of using particular terms, and that these words and phrases can be used like any other sort of symbol to link into other multivalent symbolic complexes, it seems that the use of language in fact links German transnational businesspeople with other groups. Language use by and around German transnational businesspeople thus both separates them from, and connects them with, diverse groups and localities, in different contexts and on different levels.

Jokes Sans Frontières: Humour And The Concept Of The Local

Humour is another site of communication in which complex manoeuvring is hidden under a simple exterior. The jokes which will be considered here are those which took place in the London Branch office, during the “peripatetic meetings”; gossip and joking between participants, ranging from mild to salacious or taboo humour depending on how well the participants knew each other, often seemed to be as essential as was the actual work. Jokes, albeit of a somewhat milder sort, were also used in more formal meetings in order to break the ice; here, however, their use was restricted to the presenter (although occasionally mild to biting sarcasm would be used by the more senior questioners). Humorous images of Germanness and cosmopolitanism would thus be expressed in the same forum as the more serious, “official” ones, and also in a milieu in which power relations are also expressed. Significantly, much of the joking revolved around the supposed “character traits” of English and German “business cultures”; others revolved around transportation and communications equipment, transnational issues such as the Euro conversion, and about relations between branch and Head Office. We shall thus consider two of the main genres of jokes, both of which link into power relations in the office: work-related and Anglo-German humour.

Category A: Work-related Humour

In the office, transportation and communications equipment formed a continuous topic of discussion, and additionally a source of humour. Jokes of this sort often occurred as a result of the failure of one such piece of equipment. As a transnational corporation cannot operate without these, joking about them both relieved tension resulting from the accident and asserted the importance of such items of technology as symbols of the office’s culture and of “business culture” in general (Goffman 1961: 122-124); no

business magazine goes for long without running a piece on the vagaries of such equipment (see Naughton 1999). Consequently, joking about office equipment was a way of indirectly affirming power relations in the organisation, as it reinforces the importance of transnational communications and transportation. They also confirmed the place of the Germans as a transnational elite, as the German expatriates are the employees most closely linked with such items of equipment through their role as bridging the gap between Head Office and London Branch. Jokes about office equipment thus reinforce power relations in the office.

However, such jokes also provided means of blending diverse groups with each other. For instance, symbols regarding transportation could be used to denote Germanness, as punctuality is regarded by many, Germans and non-Germans, as a German obsession (Lawrence 1980: 147). Alternatively, joking about the Euro, which evokes associations of banking and international finance, also connected with German discourses of the currency as a symbol of Germanness and of Europeanness. Joking about office life, then, was not so much a means of expressing or defusing power relations between global and local as it was of forming connections between them.

Most jokes, therefore, performed multiple roles at the same time and/or sequentially. Staff from the dealing room, for instance, came in for a lot of joking related to their reputation as “cowboys,” rich and risk-taking but none too intelligent; this did not, however, simply reflect the tension regarding the prestige afforded the dealing room at the expense of other departments, but also reflected the fact that the dealers are the source of much of the humour in the branch, and are considered to be “good sports” willing to laugh at a joke on themselves. Similarly, an English maintenance man, asked how he had gotten rid of a mouse spotted in one of the kitchens, joked “I raised its rent”; this does not only express ambivalence about the high

rents in the City, but also sends up the euphemistic nature of business jargon and portrays the organisation itself (through the image of the mouse) as helpless in the face of the fluctuating City real estate market. Joking thus seems to be more complex than simply reflecting tensions or defining intergroup relations.

This multivalent quality is also reflected in the two most popular cartoons in the City, *Dilbert* and *Alex*, both of which revolve around white-collar individuals employed by an information technology firm and a bank respectively, and which frequently appear on slides shown in meetings, office doors and the sides of computers. *Dilbert*, on the face of it, is a site of elite-subaltern protest, as it derives its humour from playfully exposing inefficient management practice and incomprehensible workplace jargon (Fig. 4); it is a common half-joking aphorism in business that the level of employee dissatisfaction in an office can be measured by the number of *Dilbert* cartoons in the leisure areas. However, much of its popularity stems from the way in which the cartoon's creator, a businessman in his own right, taps into the concerns of people on all levels of the transnational corporation: his parodies of business literature (e.g. *The Joy of Work* [1998]; *The Dilbert Principle* [1996]) are marketed by a press which specialises in actual management-development works, again blending antiestablishment humour with an establishment presentational form. *Dilbert* cartoons are also as likely to crop up in a manager's PowerPoint presentation as on a staff member's cubicle.

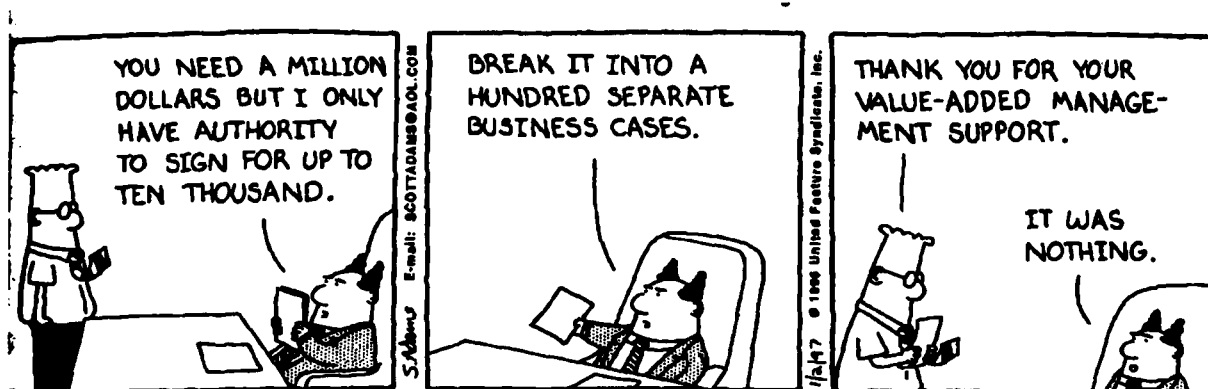


Figure 4. *Dilbert* (Adams 1996)



Figure 4. *Alex* (Peattie and Taylor 1991)

Dilbert thus blends protestation against and affirmation of the social mores of business in diverse ways.

Alex is equally complex, but in the opposite way. On the face of it, the cartoon is very much a reflection and vindication of the City establishment, revolving around a successful London businessman scoring points off the uncomprehending world around him. However, the cartoon is at the same time a sendup of money- and self-presentation-focused City attitudes (a typical cartoon depicts Alex, having recently been rehired after a period of redundancy, giving a generous amount to a beggar not out of sympathy but in order to demonstrate to onlookers that he himself is not unemployed [Fig. 5]). Furthermore, it is enjoyed by different groups on different levels: non-City people treat it as a send-up of City mores, City people treat it as an inside joke, line staff treat it as an example of the difference between managers and staff. Both cartoons are therefore used not only to defuse tensions and define images of particular groups, but to reinterpret, connect and define relationships between groups in a playful way.

Category B: Anglo-German Humour

Ethnicity-related humour largely seemed to revolve around the tensions of a multicultural workplace in which one ethnic group appears to dominate. One common joke, for instance, involved someone responding to a question in a foreign accent or

using a foreign idiom, as when one German local hire announced in a loud voice that she was going down the street for a *sarnie* (English slang for sandwich). One might also say something similar about the following casual exchange between two older male Anglophiles, upon hearing a nearby group speaking German:

A: There's too many Germans in the bank.

B: If it isn't Germans, it's people talking German.

Both of these appear to express Anglo-German conflict within the workplace, or possibly to be exposing a site of tension in a "safe" way through joking (see Strecker 1988: 110; Goffman 1961: 122-124). However, while both examples seem to express negative power relations between English and German, they also call into question the whole notion of Germanness. In the first instance, the *sarnie* joke was subsequently taken up by an American, redefining the putative boundary from German/English to non-English/English. The second instance, also, redefines the Other not as Germans, but as people speaking German, which would include at least some native English-speakers. Furthermore, the joke is made with the unspoken knowledge that the speaking of German has a different symbolic meaning for other groups. Ethnic jokes are thus also a form of combination and boundary-crossing as much as they are a form of conflict and renegotiation, suggesting not so much divided groups as of different ways of being "local" and "global."

There is also, however, the case of "wartime" jokes. This is a type of UK humour which relates either to Nazism and WWII, or to the Anglo-American "wartime" genre of films, television programmes and popular novels, which present fictionalised

accounts of WWII, often with stereotypically-rendered German villains (Davies 2000, Beevor 1999, *Spiegel* 1998e; see Cornell et al. 1996 for examples). In the joking sessions in offices, in which employees make fun of each others' personal traits, portrayals of German managers and staff members can draw on "wartime" film clichés and images, albeit seldom in the presence of the subject of the joke. Again, the most obvious explanation is that joking is a form of resistance by English employees, or a form of contestation over power in the workplace.

In the bank branches with which I worked, Nazi images were seldom used in even humorous interactions between English and Germans, but people were not unaware of them, nor necessarily adverse to using these images. To cite one of the less offensive examples, when a client turned out to have the same name as a character in a popular "wartime" comedy, catchphrases from it were bandied about, and imitations of "wartime" stock film characters periodically surfaced during joking sessions. The sports-focused nature of the City also meant that whenever there was a Europe-wide football championship, chants and songs relating to the 1966 England victory over Germany (which often referred to WWII as well; see Punch 1997) could be heard in the offices. Such images also crop up in "respectable" City newspapers, albeit often in a jocular way (*The Economist* 1998c, d; Hughes 1994; *The Metro* 2000). Even in bank branches in which there is a good relationship between English and German employees, then, jokes relating to WWII and Nazis can be heard, confirming the above hypothesis.

While the Germans with whom I spoke did not openly discuss these jokes, it was plain that these impinged upon their experience. When I asked Germans at the first bank whether they had encountered any preconceived notions about Germans, most took me to mean prejudices (*Vorurteile*), even though I used the more neutral phrase "preconceptions" (*vorgefaßte Meinungen*). All but two spoke of seeing these in the

wider culture, although all added that they personally had never encountered any. One of the two who said that they had never encountered such stereotypes later said that she had misinterpreted the question. At the second bank, furthermore, all Germans who had been in the UK for more than a year admitted, in private, to having encountered stereotyping of this sort, albeit normally outside the workplace. Even in non-hostile situations, then, people are aware of negative, anti-German humour.

Significantly, though, this humour was only used in particular contexts. Jokes about WWII only occurred in mixed or English-only groups, never in one-on-one Anglo-German interactions. Furthermore, the people who initiated this sort of joking were usually young English men, and therefore the humour has connections to British “lad culture,” which incorporates frequent stylised displays of xenophobia which do not necessarily denote feelings of prejudice on the part of the speaker. The jokes were also used in different ways in each context; in mixed groups, they were never explicitly linked to Germanness or used in reference to German colleagues. In English-only contexts, with the rules being slightly more relaxed, such jokes were often made and linked to colleagues, with the thrill of addressing a taboo subject. When I unthinkingly made a facetious reference to Nazis in the presence of a Germanophile English employee while setting up for an interview, he coldly said “We don’t say things like that around here”; at the same bank, however, I would hear open discussions of “wartime” films in less formal English-only contexts, even some involving Germanophiles. The German-as-Nazi image thus crops up in City humour in a conflict-based way; however, its use in restricted areas suggests that there is strategy involved in its use, and it is not just simply a question of conflict and consensus.

One can even go further and say that humour actually crosses and effaces the distinctions between groups. For instance, while much humour revolved around

stereotypes of Germans as efficient and work-obsessed, and a few, on the subject of whether a German could “become English,” arguably related to *Blut*, none revolved around German foods, *Boden*, or other symbols of Germanness which my German interviewees cited as important, other than those that also tied into images of Europe and of the corporation in question. Even the arguably *Blut*-related jokes focused around issues of belonging in the office and in Europe, via the ongoing debate on citizenship criteria (see Janoski and Glennie 1995; Darnstädt et al. 1999). Also, such jokes seemed to build group solidarity as bank employees as much they seemed to define separate conceptions of Germanness and Englishness, as they could also be taken to reduce cultural differences to the level of eccentric traits. The Nazi-joke genre is more problematic; however, the fact that such jokes were avoided in mixed contexts but deployed in English-only ones suggest that they are used to build solidarity on different levels. A businessperson can build solidarity with German colleagues by not making the jokes in their presence, but with UK colleagues by making them in private contexts. Ethnic jokes can thus build solidarity at the same time as they divide groups.

Joking thus allowed for considerable flexibility in defining and redefining groups, much as Czarniawska’s civil-service interviewees were able to redefine their image of their recently-privatized governmental institution through jokes and stories (1997: 108ff.). Because jokes connect groups and link together distinct symbols of belonging, then, humour thus provided a means of self-definition, not as simple opposed groups, but as a series of different ways of operating within globalisation.

Analysis

On the face of it, humour in the office seemed mainly to be a means of breaking tension in a high-stress job, in a manner that recalled Goffman’s observations on surgeons

(1961: 50, 122-124) and Law's on commercial researchers (1994: 120). This was borne out by the observation that dealing rooms, where people are constantly making split-second decisions, had a more raucous atmosphere than other bank divisions. Most of this humour revolved around points of conflict between groups in the office. Joking thus could be seen as a way of expressing and dealing with intergroup tensions in an office with an ethnic and transnational hierarchy.

Joking could, however, as Czarniawska notes, also be seen as a means of negotiating power relations within the organisation (1997: 137). The fact that many jokes focused on Head Office suggests that this is the case here; the joking about Germans also could equally be seen as negotiating staff-manager relations, as they were mainly made by English staff members about German managers. Some jokes worked to bring Head Office into the domestic sphere, for instance when one locally-hired German department manager jokingly "spoke" for Head Office using the "Royal We," traditionally a UK monarchical form of speech. Joking thus can be a site of negotiating intergroup relations, not only—or even primarily—of dealing with workplace tensions. In the cases of joking, therefore, language and linguistic symbols are not used so much to define groups as to relate in different ways to the global and the local, causing the global to be locally interpreted and the local to become global.

Furthermore, the multivalency of symbols was also used as an escape mechanism to change the subject smoothly when the humour was approaching dangerous areas. A series of jokes about a "wartime" film could thus segue into a series about the reputed business efficiency of Germans, into the other personal traits of the individual who was the butt of the joke, or into the setup of the company. One rather clever sequence involved switching, through the metaphor of "takeover as war," from joking about "wartime" images to joking about the merger of two banks, one German,

which had recently been in the business news (see Burrus 1997: 210 on warfare metaphors in business). Frequently, when the jokes began to approach too-sensitive areas, it was a common occurrence for participants to change the subject of the joke to a less sensitive topic, or to turn the laugh onto the joker by accusing him/her in jest of having something to hide him/herself. Furthermore, the joking sessions which referred to Nazis did not refer to real WWII history so much as to images drawn from “wartime” films or television programmes; other groups, most notably Americans, were also made fun of in ways which referred to “wartime” film images of their ethnic group. Within the banks, then, the metaphorical coherence of symbols was used in personal life to turn the image of Germans from a negative into a positive one.

In the case of Germans in business, then, it seems that positive and negative images blend into each other, through the multivalency of symbols, in deliberate and nonconscious ways. For instance, Warner and Campbell’s jocular description of German business style as “*Technik über Alles*” may evoke English fears of German “takeovers” (1993: 101). However, the same quality is used in the workplace to avoid, and even to actively pre-empt, the image of the German as Nazi from emerging in jokes, by deliberately placing the image of German-as-Nazi in a fictional context. Due to the multivalency of symbols, the positive and negative images blend into each other, so that the underlying meanings of a given discourse can change with startling rapidity.

The case of jokes in the workplace thus again gives us a pattern of a seemingly simple discourse with more complex operations going on underneath its surface. Joking appears to be a way of alleviating tensions, defining groups within the workplace and conveying messages about business practices to one’s superiors or inferiors. However, which of these functions dominated depended on the context, and the multivalent nature of the symbols used in joking meant that they could also be used to blend roles with

each other, and even to switch between topics and categories of discussion. This could be used in strategic ways, to actively control discourses within the office; however, who controlled the discourse depended on the situation. Like jargon and language crossing, then, humour defines a multiply-linked, multilayered series of interactions rather than defining a solidary group.

Joking in the office, therefore, does not so much form a site of conflict between groups as a complex site of renegotiation and affirmation on different levels. This, once again, can form the basis for strategising, both playful and more serious, in the financial sphere. This in turn suggests that relations in the business world are not so much a case of global versus local as of multiple forms of globalisation and localisation, linked through diverse forms of symbolic expression.

What Colour is Your Mobile? Communication and Information Technology

Excerpt from my fieldnotes from the summer of 2000:

Rick [my flatmate, an IT specialist for a non-German transnational bank] gets a call at 10 PM— something's wrong with the network at [his bank]. Even though he has [a friend] visiting for the evening, he proceeds to spend the next few hours, as far as I can tell, ringing up the rest of the staff, people who might be affected (Treasury mainly), etc., to tell them. He's going in early tomorrow to answer phones. Says a whole lot of equipment's down and they can't see how.

This incident illustrates, more than anything else, the importance of information technology to the modern transnational corporation. As with other means of communication, information technology appears to support the dominance of a

transnational capitalist class, but in fact may be the medium of more complex social processes.

The significance of information technology, which began to rise following the “Big Bang” of 1986, has increased almost exponentially of recent years (Castells 1996): in the first year of my study, Information Technology departments tended to be out-of-the-way and limited for the most part to assistance and maintenance functions, and employees had the use only of a basic Intranet (internal computer network); in the second year, the IT department of the London branch of the bank I was with expanded over the course of six months from a single office to two offices and a training room, and the employees not only had limited web and Internet access (the degree appeared to vary with rank and function within the company), but the canteen was supplied with computers for personal use on the lunch hour. In any given office, it was physically impossible for an employee not to be near one or more pieces of telecommunications equipment at any given time: one of the first lessons a new employee learns is how to operate the phone system, making technology as much a symbol as a tool of the profession. Within the past few years, mobile phones have gone from being a scarce, expensive resource, the privilege of the jet-setting transnational manager, to being relatively cheap and common. Communications technology is thus, as the incident with Rick indicates, an essential part of the banking world.

Secondly, however, the above anecdote indicates the uses of IT as a source of power and conflict in the workplace. The fact that communications technology allows a bank to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, means that Rick had to interrupt a social engagement to cater to his employers’ needs; he habitually kept quite irregular hours, and frequently went into work on weekends, something only rarely done in other areas of the banks with which I worked. Banks are now not tied to any particular place

or time, but locate and hire wherever they feel is most cost-effective; all City banks have employees who effectively operate on New York or Tokyo time. Through communications technology, banks increasingly have a presence in employees' "leisure" hours.

This is also the case with the banks' clients. According to an article in *The Economist*, one German bank has closed its New York office physically, but retained a section of employees who live in Frankfurt but operate on New York time; as they have arranged for calls to their New York number to be routed to Frankfurt, many of their customers are not even aware of the switch (1998a: 6). Most banks had websites which they used as platforms for self-presentation; in addition, most were, as noted in Chapter 4, setting up "internet banking" wings, which would allow clients to make transactions at any time, from anywhere in the world (Gordon 2000). Communications technology thus appears to be a site through which the bank can obtain increased control over its clients' lives as well as its employees'.

Furthermore, communications technology does appear to play into the ethnic hierarchical divisions in the workplace. The meeting rooms of the London branch of the first bank which I studied were each labelled with the name of a major German city, and the presence of videoconferencing equipment suggests that these rooms could "become Germany" on occasion, thereby symbolically locating the branch in another country to that in which it physically existed. In both banks, "Internal Only" memos were circulated from the Frankfurt to the London office, suggesting that London was "internal" to Frankfurt and symbolically locating the branch in Germany. Communications technology in the office thus seemed to play into the ethnic divisions already discussed.

This also held true for the banks' online activities. When discussing with one Anglophile senior manager his bank's plans to develop an Internet wing, I asked him if it would still be a German bank in that case. He replied yes. "How can a bank be German and online?" I asked. "Have the website in German," he replied. I countered that most German banks also have their websites in English. "Yes," he replied, "but not a lot, you notice." Despite the much-repeated claim that the Internet is beyond nationality, the use of suffixes indicating a German origin (.de) is common among German transnational banks. The most notable exception is Deutsche Bank (www.db.com), which has recently been repositioning itself as a global bank with American, German and British components, and which uses the universalising .com suffix instead. Through Rick, I learned that to purchase a domain name ending in .com is normally about one-third again as expensive as buying one ending in .co.uk or .de. Again, it seems that the way in which the allegedly globalising, division-erasing Internet is used by German banks continues to give the German part of the workforce the upper hand.

There is also the case of the Vodafone-Mannesman takeover of late 1999. Both were mobile phone companies which were competing for international, rather than local markets; theoretically, the nationality of the companies should make little difference to the conduct of, and observers' reactions to, the venture. In fact, however, the takeover was described in the presses of both nations as a "war" between two companies, one "English" and one "German"; Germans often referred to it facetiously as the "*Handykrieg*," or "mobile phone war" (see P.T. Larsen et al. 2000; Dohmen and Kerbusk 1999; *Spiegel* 1999). Again, business between international companies was formatted in terms of ethnic conflict over communication.

However, once again, the question of who is dominating, and who is resisting, whom is more complex than it seems. It is telling that “global” suffixes, such as .com, .org and .net, carry greater prestige than “geographical” ones; by using the .de suffix, the banks may assert German domination over the group, but at the expense of the cosmopolitan cachet of .com. Furthermore, English is still the most common language of the Internet, and most German banks have an English version of their website as well—significantly, English is prioritised over the native languages of other countries with large media-literate populations and an interest in transnational finance. The Internet may be a site of conflict between a dominant and a subaltern group, but which one is which depends on the context.

In the office, also, communications technology was used in a way which indicated national divisions, but not always in a way which implied conflict. Initially, I noticed that when I called individuals at the London branch of one bank, where English speakers generally answered the phone with “Good morning, [bank or person’s name],” Germans would respond either with their own names or with the bank’s name, which sounded more or less the same in English and German. When thus addressed, I felt obliged to respond in German, even if the conversation subsequently switched to English; persons unfamiliar with German practice, however, undoubtedly did not feel so obliged. The presence or absence of the initial greeting was thus a means by which those who recognised the style could indicate familiarity with it--and which, significantly, left them the option *not* to do so--but did not exclude those who did not recognise it (see Strecker 1988: 110; Schegloff 1972). This also suggests that the strategic expression of symbols does not just operate on the level of rational choice, but can also form a more general “cultural competence” for operating in a particular

environment (Vertovec, forthcoming; Ahrens 1996b: 15-16). The use of English and German thus defined a flexible strategy rather than a rigid dividing line.

The result of this is that new communications technologies are neither a force for conflict or of homogenisation, but above and beyond both of these. It is, on the one hand, indisputable that such technology is on some level a globalising force, as it does enable simultaneous communication across the globe in real time (Castells 1996: 461). However, the suffixes of websites suggest that the Internet is not such a globalising force as is often claimed, but in fact is a complicated mix of globalising and localising tendencies. Recent studies of the much-vaunted First/Third World divide with regard to access to and use of Internet technology also indicate that it is much more of a grey area than first thought (Dudley 1997; Lubeck 1999; Miller and Slater 2000). While some critics rightly warn that information technology is not as “globalising” as it appears, it seems that we can undoubtedly refer to it as a globalising force, even if not entirely as expected.

Communications technology is thus neither a globalising nor a localising force. Many business expatriates, according to a recent article, keep in touch with “home” through the Internet; while only some of my interviewees used the Internet for this purpose, all used some form of information technology to keep up-to-date with events in Germany, for instance satellite television (Peraino 1998). However, the context in which they used these resources was that of the UK, and all used non-German Internet service providers. Most of my interviewees noted that telecommunications do not replace face-to-face communication, but supplement it (see Boden 1994: 209). The overwhelming majority of IT staff in the London branches under study were young and English-speaking, but either non-English and/or non-white, again suggesting social division on one level and mixing on another. Rick came from a Northern English

working-class background, a type of person not often seen rising to prominence in the City outside of IT, and reported that his department contained a number of openly gay men, who are also seldom found in the “laddish” culture of banking. Communications technology, like language itself, thus operates on multiple levels simultaneously, being at once a site of conflict and of collaboration.

In short, then, electronic communications media are neither a site of global homogenising nor of elite-subaltern conflict, but instead generate multiple, connected examples of each. Global communications activities could not function without local users and telecommunications managers; however, each actor in this field employs them in a different way. Communications technology thus does not, as some claim, divide groups and is neither global nor local, producing instead a set of linked globalities and localities, meaning that the groups which use them are also multiply linked.

Analysis: Talking Business

It thus seems evident that to consider language and communications media as sites of global-local, elite-subaltern conflict—as, for instance, do Willis (1977), Roberts et. al. (1992) and Czarniawska (1997)—is to oversimplify the situation of the transnational workplace and of the German transnational businesspeople. The examples which we have seen so far—language choice, jargon, humour and information technology—all suggest that language is a site of negotiation and flexible adaptation rather than of straightforward confrontation.

The received view in both the bank branches with which I worked was that communications activities draw straightforward if flexible boundary lines: German v. English, local v. global and so forth. However, on another level it is harder to say which has the more power and which is the more “global.” English may be viewed as the

global language of business, but this image is challenged in various ways even as it is accepted. I have been in situations in which the number of native English-speakers at a lunch table outnumbered the number of native German-speakers, and yet German is the language of choice; several Germanophiles became so, paradoxically, through teaching English in Germany. Furthermore, the very fact that it is the Germans, not the English, in the bank branches with which I worked who are the transnational elite calls the theory into question; not only is the allegedly “dominant” language in fact that of the subaltern group in this case, but both languages are relentlessly mixed within the workplace. The use of language in the office therefore linked the local with the global, calling into question the concepts of local and global. Language is thus not so much a site of challenge as a site in which challenges, along with many other forms of strategising behaviour, take place.

Furthermore, the use of language suggested not so much bounded groups as a series of continually shifting positions along a continuum between the global financescape, other global landscapes, and various other locations. English and German interviewees felt that the English used more courtesy phrases, such as “sorry” or “may I help you?” and indirect phrasing, such as “we suggest...” where Germans were more direct (K. Mann 1993: 7; see also Aitken 1973: 66-67; Ahrens 1996a). An interviewee at the London branch of the first bank told me that its German managers should be addressed as “*Herr*” and with the formal “*Sie*,” which is more of a German trait, English managers preferring the use of first names (Ahrens 1996b: 25). However, there was, in practice, no sharp dividing line as to how each “style” was used: all employees below a certain rank called the general managers by title and surname (although I was, significantly, informed that this was also typical of Germans at all levels), but all, whatever their status or nationality, used courtesy phrases; anyone not doing so,

whatever their nationality, was often accused of being “German.” Also, most of my German interviewees—particularly expatriates—said that they preferred the less formal “English” style of speech. Both of these suggest, firstly, that the “German style” does not set off Germans from the rest of the workforce, and secondly, that the designation “English” can relate to a business or corporate, as well as an ethnic, social group. Thus, supposedly “ethnic” images, instead of defining opposing groups, in fact refer to a series of ways of belonging to groups which vary from actor to actor and situation to situation.

Language thus becomes not only a site of power and struggle, but also (and perhaps more importantly) a means of playing with such concepts as Germanness and cosmopolitanism, challenging them on one level while linking and reinterpreting them on others. The fact that German and English can each be used to express slightly different concepts—as in the existence of formal and informal terms for “you” in German but not in English—further complicates their use; the relationship between colleagues and department heads could be constructed in several different ways, depending on the language being spoken (Brown and Gilman 1972). The uses of languages are thus complex, referencing multiple positions within globalisation at the same time. The German transnational businesspeople, by extension, cannot therefore be defined as a single class, but as occupying a series of positions within the wider concepts of Germanness and cosmopolitanism.

Outside the banks, the situation is similar. Organisations set up to promote German business abroad also use English as their default language, and yet are considered no less “German” for that; indeed, the use of English could be seen as symbolising the “German” trait of adaptability to one’s clients’ wishes. English itself is not necessarily symbolic of England—or even America—in a business context; at least

one language school gives lessons in “Foreigner friendly English” to native English-speakers, instructing them on how to be understood when dealing with people whose first language is different to theirs. One relocation specialist (a professional who helps expatriates to settle in the UK), said in an interview on the structure and function of her company, “Our consultants are all multilingual but you rarely find any [client] who doesn’t speak good English,” a sentence which operates on multiple levels, simultaneously suggesting the dominance of English, underlining the importance of local knowledge, and expressing the symbolic value both of bilingualism and of having “good English” in a business context. All of these are more important for what they symbolise than what they actually are. The use of language in the institutions which support German transnational businesspeople are thus not so much a site of conflict as of strategic negotiation of one’s place in a constantly-changing environment.

Similar complexities are visible in the concept, not merely the use, of language and communication in the City. Much as Leach (1976: 10) notes that modes of communication can be nonverbal as well as verbal, the means of communication itself becomes a way of communicating at the same time: in the case of mobiles, computers and so forth, not only is the medium the message, but, as these devices in and of themselves convey information about their user’s origins, role and social status, it is both medium and message at once. Scholtz’s (1987) observations on the symbolic value of computerised information, and how the choice and use of a computer system is a symbolic action in and of itself, are particularly relevant here. In German transnational business circles, then, language and the media through which it is communicated are thus much more complex than a simple site of conflict or boundary-building, suggesting that its users are less a clearly-defined class than occupiers of a series of different and

intersecting relationships which change over time: global-local, elite-subaltern, English-German and so forth.

This complexity means that language can also be used as a site of strategic self-presentation. While the English, as noted above, take pride in monolingualism, many do take language courses, and express no sense that there is a contradiction between this and their assertion that to be English is to be monolingual. Contrary to what one might expect, the learners included as many members of subaltern groups (maintenance staff, for instance) as elites. Their stated reasons for learning German were varied; the learning of German was a symbol, but exactly of what was variable; it could be a career-furthering move, or an attempt to increase employability prospects, or a statement of personal interest; sometimes people professed to being motivated by the incentive of taking an hour off work a week. However, individuals' motivations often combined and/or linked with each other, and the image which they presented by learning German was consequently variable. Language thus, rather than defining and dividing groups, in fact refers to different ways of operating within globalisation, and allows these to be shifted over the course of a conversation, again suggesting not so much a transnational capitalist class as different positions within a transnational and local framework.

Communication is thus a key site of strategic self-presentation in a transnational business environment, enabling actors to construct and reconstruct the positions which they occupy within the global financescape. Goffman speaks of the uses of language as forms of strategic self-presentation, as in the abovementioned case of joking to defuse conflict (1961: 124) or the use of different forms of language in public and private situations (1970: 95). An article by Denison (1971) describes how in a multilingual Swiss village, different social contexts are signalled by the language of the speaker; Willis (1977) describes the multiple uses of restricted codes, both as a practical

shorthand within the workplace and a form of self-definition; Mars (1982: 178) describes the use of language and humour by staff members trying to get around restrictive management. Boden (1994), similarly, describes “talk” as a medium for negotiating the structure of the organisation; here too, however, one might note that it also negotiates other sorts of relationships at the same time. The complexity of language as symbol thus enables its use for strategic interaction.

Consequently, in the case of linguistics, one cannot conceive of the situation in German overseas bank branches as being a case of a German transnational capitalist class versus local or noncapitalist classes, but of diverse actors of varying degrees of transnationalism jockeying for position through linguistic signifiers which both express symbols and are symbols themselves. In transnational business settings, the situation is not so much like that described by Mars (1982) or Roberts et. al. (1992), in which language is a site of intergroup conflict, but more like Gerd Baumann’s concept of language as a means of developing ‘trans-community’ orientation (1996: 3); of continually defining and interpreting culture and community—and the relations between communities—on multiple levels. Baumann’s “Southallis” are neither resisting, nor are they a single unified community; Baumann describes how the different groups of Southall residents, white, Asian, black and of various religions, sometimes act as a unit, sometimes as several units, and sometimes both at once. Here as in the banks, then, language seems to be less a means of affirming or resisting power relations than of negotiating and redefining them.

Much as, in the multilingual environment of a German bank branch in the City, one learns to switch linguistic codes without registering it, people switch discourses through the multivalency of symbols, expressing Germanness and cosmopolitanism in different ways through the same symbols as the context changes. The fact that language

can both be and express symbolic discourses makes for even more complex avenues through which strategies of self-presentation can be expressed, and through which multiple globalisations, and multiple forms of being a transnational businessperson, can be constructed according to diverse strategies.

Conclusion

The varied uses of communications technology, language, and linguistic symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism, and the ways in which these are used to negotiate between groups of varying degrees of global engagement, therefore rules against a simple scenario of an elite TCC versus subaltern local and/or noncapitalist groups. Rather, it suggests that language in transnational settings enables the strategic construction of symbolic environments which contain multiple modes of existence which are sometimes in concert, and sometimes in conflict, with each other. In the workplace, at least, the actors who make use of it thus come across not so much a unified class as diverse actors operating within a general framework over time.

VII. Outside the Office: **Cultural And Business Institutions**

At some point in their stay in the UK, most if not all German transnational businesspeople have contact with at least one German business or social institution. The way in which German businesspeople in London make use of these institutions could once again be taken as defining an exclusive, elite transnational class. However, these same uses also suggest, on a deeper level, a more complex way of mediating between global and local engagements through symbolic self-presentation.

In this chapter, I will look at German transnational businesspeople in contexts which are further removed from the global financescape than those discussed in previous chapters, to see if the conclusions drawn thus far also apply to such individuals outside of a business context. A comprehensive discussion of all German-focused institutions in London is impossible, for reasons of space, logistics, access and relevance. Furthermore, by focusing on a few pertinent examples, we can throw the behaviour of German transnational businesspeople in this area into sharper relief. I will therefore aim to present a sample of German institutions rather than a complete overview. Through focusing on specific cases, then, I shall give a general impression of German transnational businesspeople's relations outside of the workplace.

Germany Abroad: German Cultural Institutions

London boasts a number of cultural institutions which are in some way related to Germany and Germanness. I will here be concentrating on three of these: the Goethe Institut, the Anglo-German Foundation and the Embassy. Other institutions, such as the German Historical Institute London (GHIL), will not be discussed except in passing, as

these are either focused on academia and high culture and thus do not, to the best of my knowledge, have much, if any, relevance to businesspeople, or else cater to a specific group which does not as a general rule have much to do with transnational capitalism. The German Lutheran Church will also not be dealt with here in detail; although its core attendees do include some businesspeople, its role in promoting Germanness in the UK is far too complex to be dealt with properly here (Anonymous 2002). I will note in passing, however, that it is a good example of how the German “non-community” is constructed, as, although consistent attendance is low, most Germans are aware of its existence, and make use of it (rather than the indigenous churches) during Church holidays. We will thus focus only on those German cultural institutions which are of immediate potential relevance to German transnational businesspeople, and examine whether their use suggests a TCC or a more complex transnational social formation.

Case A: The Goethe Institut

The German cultural institution which is most visible to non-Germans is probably the Goethe Institut London, part of a worldwide network of German cultural institutes. My means of investigation consisted partly of attending a conference hosted by it, partly of interviews with two staff members (one a teacher, one an administrator), partly of interviews with businesspeople, and especially of visiting it repeatedly on random afternoons from June through December 2000 and observing attendees in the cafe, art gallery and library. As such, I was able to gain both an outsider’s and an insider’s perspective on the organisation.

The Goethe Institut, as an organisation, was founded in the 1950s by the German government, largely as a postwar public-relations exercise. By emphasising the German language and high culture (through promotion of classic German literature, classical and

avant-garde music, and art film), the government hoped to provide an alternative image of Germany to counteract that constructed during the Nazi period. The Institut has a staff of 43; all but three are German, and most are locally hired. The exceptions are a small group of administrators who are rotated back to Germany every four to six years; they originate largely from the Foreign Service, and are said to be focused mainly on a diplomatic career. The Goethe Institut thus looks heavily to the German Embassy for its origins and structure.

The Institut's London branch is currently located in Kensington, a well-kept central London area containing a large number of museums and cultural institutions, near Imperial College London and Hyde Park. During the time of my fieldwork, it boasted an art gallery, a cafe, an auditorium, a library and a teaching section; in mid-2000, the art gallery was closed and the rest of the building extensively refurbished. The building which houses it is furnished in a sparse, 1970s-modern style; the walls are stark white, with posters on the walls advertising past exhibitions and display cases on the landing housing books and pictures of relevance. Upon entry, the visitor is confronted with a rank of leaflets advertising cultural events in London, particularly those with a German connection (a Brecht festival, for instance, or a new German film at the National Film Theatre); the next immediate area is the cafe and art gallery, which are sparsely furnished and decorated, again in a spare, minimalist, black-and-white motif, with rubber tiling on the floor and metal-and-plastic chairs. Most new visitors are directed first to the library, which is the central focus of the Institut and the most welcoming area of it, decorated with wood panelling, carpets and comfortable chairs; off the central area (containing the reception desk, a bulletin board, lockers for visitors' bags and coats and more posters) are rooms devoted to newspapers and magazines, video and film, reference books and computers, and, largest of all, the main library, with

desks, high ceilings and balconies. In an alcove at the back of the room is the multimedia area, with a full-screen television (receiving German television on satellite) and video and audio equipment to allow visitors to play the Institut's collection of films, dramas and educational programmes.

The Goethe Institut London maintains visible connections to Germany. Many of the books on offer are in German; the Institut has two televisions which receive German channels on satellite, or else are available to watch its collection of German or German-oriented videos. The art gallery focuses on young German artists. The computers, similarly, have a German keyboard and German-language interfaces on most programmes; the bookmarks on the web browsers in September 2000 included guides to German television and radio and a German-language online comic based on the legend of the Nibelungen. Theoretically (if not always in practice), users are supposed to confine their searches to German-language websites, or those of relevance to German studies. All the cultural materials on offer are thus of German interest if not actually originating from Germany.

The people who use the Institut include many German transnationals. Leaving aside the staff, there are always a few German pensioners about, and the bulletin board in the foyer will, at any given time, contain several advertisements for exchange students or au-pair placements (mainly German expatriate families looking for German gap-year students). Most of the English people who take language lessons there appear to have a German connection: many are students hoping to go abroad, or are the English spouses or half-English children of Germans. The Institut thus has at least some connection with Germans in London.

However, of the Germans who use it, very few are actually from the business community. The proportion of recognisably German businesspeople (as ascertained by

virtue of their being in business dress, with relevant accoutrements, but speaking German or with a German accent) was small compared to that of other groups. Admittedly, some businesspeople may have come to the Institut dressed in casual clothing; however, it is equally likely that some of the patrons whom I saw in business suits may have had non-corporate jobs. These demographics may have resulted partly from the building's location; the Goethe Institut Toronto, situated at the time between the business and theatre districts, attracted a higher percentage of obvious businesspeople. It is significant that, while the Goethe Institut did host a conference on German business in 1998, most of the participants were in fact teachers, who, when asked, said that their reason for attending was to find out about job recruitment opportunities for their students. While the Institut does have contact with German transnational capitalism, it maintains a symbolic distance from it.

In addition, the Institut is openly focused more on non-Germans than Germans. While it does run joint cultural events with other institutions, for instance co-sponsoring film festivals with a German focus, the main activity which the Goethe Institut showcases is its language lessons. The greater part of Institut users seemed to be non-German university and secondary-school students, taking language or art courses with a German focus. The bulk of the Institut's resources thus are focused less on events of interest to Germans, and more on encouraging an interest in Germany in non-Germans.

This situation, however, is not inevitable. Unlike such purely high-cultural institutions as the GHIL, the Goethe Institut could have a lot to offer German businesspeople, for instance by hosting conferences, or by running programmes catering to homesick expatriates. However, it does none of these things. One Goethe-Institut freelance teacher described it as "untransnational" (by which she seemed to mean that it was German-focused, rather than that it was truly a non-transnational institution) and

focused around the social life of the German Embassy. She also noted that the Institut's reputation among businesspeople of her acquaintance is of being conservative and irrelevant to business. German transnational businesspeople thus ignore or reject the high-cultural image of the Goethe Institut.

Despite this, however, connections with the business world exist at other levels. One Goethe Institut teacher surprised me in an interview by saying that she did not see herself as having contact with the German community, as she had remarked only a moment before that most of her pupils are businesspeople who work for German companies. The children and partners of German transnational businesspeople do make use of it, as do the businesspeople themselves, by setting it up as an Other-figure; their avoidance of it thus, as in Chapter 4, symbolises their interest in business issues above cultural and educational ones. As the ethnographic evidence suggests, there exist links between the Institut and the business world; however, it seems mainly to take the form of businesspeople symbolising their place within the financescape by openly avoiding it.

The Goethe Institut's images of Germanness are thus very much focused, firstly, on language, and secondly, on the history and high culture of Germany. Furthermore, the Institut is largely intended to be a showcase for presenting German high culture to non-Germans. The Institut and the German businesspeople therefore maintain a symbolic distance from each other; however, there are undeniable connections on other levels between the two.

Case B: The Anglo-German Foundation

The Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society (AGF; the organisation dropped the suffix for the most part in the early 1990s) occupies a more upmarket physical location than the Goethe Institut, being housed in the fashionable

Bloomsbury district near the British Museum, above the GHIL. Despite this, it is less accessible to the public; its presence is not advertised beyond a plaque above the doorbell, and the Foundation itself is housed in a collection of crowded offices off a highly functional corridor, rather than the large libraries and open common spaces of the Goethe Institut. Consequently, investigation required a different methodology; I have visited it in person only once and conducted interviews only with the director, but have had contact on a broader level as a member of the AGF's mailing list, a frequent visitor to its website, and consumer of its publications. Appropriately enough for an institution focusing around a transnational group, and a potential marker of membership in a TCC, then, the AGF exists more as a virtual than a physical organisation.

The AGF was established in 1973, again through a German government initiative; most of its funding is still from this source, and the government has trustees on its board, although no direct say in its activities. Its legal seat is in London, and it is, in theory at any rate, run from the capitals of both countries. The AGF is thus another transnational cultural institution with an Anglo-German focus.

The AGF does not, despite its name, appear to have much to do on a practical level with corporations. Its activities are mainly academic, involving the funding and publication of studies of Anglo-German business; there seem to be few non-academic members or affiliates. However, it is not totally true to say that, as a member of one business organisation claimed, they have little to do with business. The AGF has some company managers on the Board of Trustees: it is a member of industrial organisations in both countries. There also exist connections between them and other, more business-focused German organisations, such as the GBF. Furthermore, the foundation could not exist without the cooperation of German businesses willing to allow academic access to

their activities. The AGF, like the Goethe Institut, thus appears to be at one remove from transnational business, and yet possesses undeniable links to it.

Furthermore, the images of Germanness which it presents have strong associations with German transnational capitalism. Its members' work is largely focused on differences in business style and practices between Germany and the UK (e.g. Binney 1993b; Goffin and Pfeiffer 1999; Burgel et al. 2001). They also have contact of various sorts with German businesspeople in the UK, some through mutual membership in other organisations with more direct connections to business, such as the German-British Forum, some through the Foundation's mailing list, others through the course of their studies, which frequently involve interviews with managers in German and UK corporations. Finally and most crucially, however, its members are among the people who formulate the symbols of business which the businesspeople adopt; while managers may not read the work of AGF members directly, they are often referenced in secondary sources, including the teaching programmes of interculturalists (e.g. Scheuermann 1998) and popular works on German "business culture." While they may seem to be at one remove from German transnational capitalism, there are hidden connections between the academic and the business-focused transnational groups.

The AGF thus, like the Goethe Institut, appears to distance itself from German transnational capitalism. On other levels, however, there are strong symbolic connections between the cultural institution and the business community. The AGF thus relates to German transnational businesspeople in many ways on different levels.

Case C: The Embassy

Finally, one must also consider the case of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany (usually referred to as the "German Embassy"), inasmuch as it has dealings

with all Germans in the United Kingdom culturally and bureaucratically. The Embassy is located in the central-London Knightsbridge district (within walking distance of the Goethe Institut), a pleasant and attractive area in which most embassies and consulates are located. It is of moderate size and distinguishes itself mainly by the presence of a large German flag over the main entrance. I was able to make three visits to the Embassy and speak with two official representatives; through the Deutsche Schule London, I was able to interview two other employees in a more private capacity. The Embassy's main function is in the political realm; however, it does engage with the general public with regard to the dispersal of information about Germany, immigration issues and so forth. The Embassy does therefore have contact with German businesspeople.

Despite this, interviewees at the banks described the Embassy as greatly detached from German transnational business. This impression was borne out by my reception at the Embassy; although employees were polite and friendly, I could find few willing to speak with me in their official capacity. One member of the bureaucratic staff said that Embassy employees are very segregated from the local area, with only those in the passport division having much to do with the British or with Germans in the UK. The Embassy thus appears to have little to do with German transnational businesspeople.

However, some sections of the Embassy do have undeniable contact with the corporate sector. Individuals requiring a passport or other immigration-related documentation do have to contact the Embassy; it is safe to say that none of the Germans in my sample had not had some contact of this sort (although this contact was also the subject of jokes and complaints among the businesspeople, allowing them to distance themselves from the Embassy even as they use it). In addition, the presence of

the Embassy makes the location of German corporations in the UK legally possible, and its promotion of investment in Germany to local entrepreneurs helps to maintain transnational links with the UK. There are thus more connections between the Embassy and the business community than either will admit.

As well having contact with businesspeople as through the passport office, the Embassy also houses the German Social Advice Office (*Deutsche Sozialberatungsstelle*). This was founded in 1952 at the initiative of the German ambassador. Its mandate is to offer support and advice to anyone of German origin. Significantly, it employs the folk-genetic definition of “German origin”; users do not need a passport to qualify for assistance, but must be able to prove that they have “German blood.” It focuses mainly on problems arising from the differences between the bureaucracy and the judicial system of the UK and that of Germany, which are of relevance to at least some German businesspeople. Finally, the *Sozialberatungsstelle*’s representatives also emphasised the generous charity support given to it by German businesses in the UK. One section of the Embassy thus has contact with German transnational capitalism in many ways which are seldom discussed.

As with the other cultural institutions, then, the Embassy is a site which is apparently avoided by German businesspeople, but is also made use of by them in other, less obvious ways. Furthermore, the Embassy employees’ role as a transnational Other makes them part of German transnational businesspeople’ self-definition, as we have seen before with other groups. Again, the Embassy thus relates to its business-focused co-nationals in more complex ways than it would first appear.

Analysis

Initially, I had assumed that the use of German cultural institutions would be a strong symbol of Germanness for transnational businesspeople, based on accounts of other ethnic groups and of the history of Germans in London, and on my knowledge of the German community in Toronto (see Jeffery 1976, Panayi 1995: 184). However, this proved not to be the case; my interviewees generally made as little use of such institutions as the Embassy or the Goethe Institut as possible, and most made this a point of pride. The AGF, similarly, despite its name, seems to have only tenuous connections with the actual world of transnational business. They also do not have much of a presence of any sort in the City. German transnational businesspeople thus seem to avoid cultural institutions.

However, the fact that such institutions are avoided means that they do on some level figure in an actor's self-presentation. The expatriate employees of one bank commented on the lack of a "*deutsche Klub*" in London: one, who had spent time in Japan, contrasted London with Tokyo, where one spent one's free time in the "German pub" with other business expatriates. All of them agreed that this lack was because England was "similar" enough to Germany that one did not feel the need for such institutions. Since this does not always follow--as the presence of businesspeople at the Goethe Institut Toronto suggests--the avoidance of such institutions may have enabled them to display an appreciation for the local culture; several interviewees said that to immerse oneself in German culture while in England was to show a lack of cosmopolitanism (see Vertovec, forthcoming). By avoiding institutions, the Germans thus present themselves symbolically as a cosmopolitan group with interests in other cultures, including the local one.

Furthermore, the nature of the groups which do use the abovementioned institutions allows their avoidance to fit in with the self-definition of German

transnational businesspeople. As discussed in Chapter 4, the Germans involved with business tend to define themselves against other transnational groups. The non-use of cultural institutions is part of this definition; the people who use the Goethe Institut, for instance, tend to be students, the elderly, and Germanophiles, all of whom are groups against which German transnational businesspeople define themselves. Embassy employees, who form a visible part of the Institut's hierarchy, also are one of these Other-groups. As seen in Chapter 4, then, the avoidance of these institutions allows German transnational businesspeople to define themselves against other groups; the German transnational businesspeople's existence, therefore, depends at least in part on the presence of other sorts of German transnationals.

The Embassy performs a similar function. A locally-hired German senior manager at a German bank which was outside my sample, whom I had asked for advice before starting my fieldwork, summed up the social division between expatriates and local hires at his bank by saying that the expatriates "spend all their time down at the Embassy." Businesspeople at my sampled banks tended to speak of the Embassy as a kind of Other, through jokes and stories which distance the Embassy symbolically from themselves. Again, the avoidance of the Embassy is used as a symbol, meaning that contact with it on some level is a required part of transnational business.

It is also worth noting that in some situations, it is acceptable for German transnational businesspeople to use the more overtly cultural institutions. It is, for instance, acceptable to have contact with the AGF or Goethe Institut if one is (or has recently been) a student, if one's company provides charitable support for their activities, or if one meets a representative of the institution at a business conference. The Deutsche Schule London, to which many executives send their children, makes frequent use of the Goethe Institut. As noted above, it is necessary to contact the

Embassy to acquire passports and so forth. German transnational businesspeople thus, whether they admit this openly or not, maintain connections to other German and transnational organisations.

The abovementioned lack of a “German club” in London is also telling. The fact that such a club reportedly exists in Hong Kong and Japan, but not in London, suggests that the expression of Germanness is contextual, and that the symbols used to express it are different in different contexts. It further suggests that the same symbols of Germanness take on different meanings in different contexts; it would be a different act to visit a German institution in Hong Kong than in London. Again, then, the businesspeople whom I interviewed may be German, transnational and capitalist-focused in all locations, but the way of defining this—and its significance—vary from context to context.

One might also consider the case of the Goethe Institut advertising pamphlet which was placed on a staff bulletin board of one bank branch which I studied. This might at first seem an odd place for it, since the employees of this branch did not appear to have much interest in cultural institutions. However, the presence of the pamphlet did have other uses. Most obviously, it could be taken as a symbol that the branch’s management wish employees to take an interest in German high culture. Additionally, as this bank was then encouraging its English employees to take German lessons, it may also have been placed there with this in mind. However, since both messages would be aimed at non-German rather than German employees, the use of the pamphlet can be seen as a way of defining the place of non-Germans and Germans vis-à-vis German institutions: non-Germans can participate in Germanness, but only in particular ways and contexts. In this case, a normally-rejected discourse of Germanness is embraced and

used to signify Germanness— but this Germanness is of a particular sort, and not one definitive of German transnational businesspeople.

The German transnational businesspeople did not, therefore, appear to use any institution which expresses Germanness alone, but only those, and in those ways, which allowed for connections with other groups. It is not so much that the Goethe Institut was not seen as a symbol of Germanness as that it was one which did not fit with my interviewees' self-presentation as bank employees and cosmopolitans. Inasmuch as institutions can be symbols of Germanness, then, their use defines not so much a boundary as several discourses combining with each other in ways which allow the expression of more than one affiliation through the same set of symbols.

In the case of cultural institutions, then, German businesspeople seem to define themselves as a transnational capitalist class by rejecting these. However, this process of rejection is complex and involves, on many levels, acceptance of the institutions' presence as transnational actors, the acknowledgement of, and association with, other groups of transnational Germans, and even, in some contexts, use of the rejected institutions. The other images of Germanness and cosmopolitanism expressed through the use, or non-use, of cultural institutions thus connect with and influence those of the German transnational businesspeople, suggesting diverse but linked German, transnational and/or business-focused groups rather than a set of elite and subaltern "classes."

Learning Cosmopolitanism: The Deutsche Schule London

The German School, or Deutsche Schule London (DSL), is a cultural institution which requires a full section of its own, due to its distinctive role in the lives of many German transnational businesspeople. As well as encapsulating a complex of symbols of

Germanness and cosmopolitanism which adults can use as a means of self-presentation, the DSL also serves as a means of socialising the next generation of future German transnational businesspeople, whether as a TCC or as more diffuse social formations.

The DSL, which is housed in a donated building named “Douglas House” in Richmond, was founded in 1971 for the children of German, Austrian and Swiss Embassy staff and of the occasional business expatriate. Since then, the numbers of children of transnational businesspeople has increased greatly; while the Embassies still have a presence, the bulk of pupils appear to be the children of executives doing a three to five year stint in the UK. In either case, however, most of the students at the DSL are there because of a temporary absence from Germany, such that their parents do not wish to take them out of the German school system for the duration. The data in this section is based on interviews with four parents (three of whom were associated with the school’s *Vorstand*, of which more later) and two teachers, one being the head teacher of the school, comments from other interviewees who had children, and participation in some of the school’s events; time, resources and the scope of the project have meant that a more in-depth study of the school was not feasible.

The DSL’s main source of funding is the German government, but recent cutbacks have meant that at the time of my fieldwork alternative forms of support were being sought. The staff are a mixed group; in 2000, fourteen of them had been sent by the government to serve a two to six year term. The others, some thirty-six or so, were *Ortskräfte*, locally hired teachers; in many cases these were the spouses of expatriates who had left their jobs to join their families in England, and were turning their hand to teaching as an alternative (Deutsche Schule London 1998). There are about 680 pupils, between 5 and 19 years of age. Of these, 80% are German, 11% are Swiss or Austrian, and the rest are children of other nationalities whose parents want their children

educated under the German system for one reason or another; the most usual reason is because one parent is German and wants the children to grow up bilingual and/or bicultural. The children are thus for the most part members of a transnational elite who are encouraged to maintain connections with the “homeland” through their schooling.

One interesting aspect of the DSL, however, is the degree to which parental social life is organised around the school. As well as the abovementioned *Ortskräfte*, the school’s governing body, or *Vorstand*, is also staffed mainly by the spouses of expatriates who have given up their jobs to come to London; as the *Vorstand* are unpaid, one member dryly commented that they have the best qualified parental volunteers of any school in the district. The *Vorstand* is a managerial committee which effectively runs the school, arranging its finances, sorting out the allocation of resources, approving personnel selection and the curriculum (to which the German government gives final approval, but this is largely a formality). German transnational businesspeople thus have a lot of influence on the running of the school, if only through their spouses.

The school has a number of events every year which are, again, largely organised by parents, including such familiar German festivals as *Oktoberfest* (a harvest festival involving traditional songs and dances as well as the consumption of much beer, bread and sausage) and *Osterbrünnen* (an Easter party in which wells, or facsimiles of wells, are decorated with flowers). Adult sports clubs and social activities are also organised around the school; there are groups to help welcome and orient new expatriates and their spouses, and the Parents’ Association produces the only formal guide to life in the UK for German expatriates which I have seen (Friends of Douglas House 1993). The DSL thus not only educates the children, but also provides both a focus for social activity and a means of expressing of Germanness for their parents.

This was visible at the two events which I attended at the school: a *Frühshoppen* (a traditional spring event in which crafts and secondhand goods are sold by children) and a Christmas fair (*Weihnachtsmarkt*). These were held on the ground floor of the school, in the corridors and a few commandeered classrooms; it was also possible to go upstairs to the upper floor, to view displays of art by the older students. Participation of all members of the family was evident: the merchandise on sale—handpainted silk scarves, Christmas ornaments, clothing and accessories, and so forth—at the Christmas fair was all made by parents, and most of it was of startlingly high quality. Children and teenagers sold crafts and toys, ran games of skill (one group at the Christmas fair organising a version of “Who Wants to be a Millionaire/*Wer Wird Millionär*,” a quiz show popular in both England and Germany) and, under supervision, cooked and sold food. Members of the family who were not directly involved with the staffing of booths or administration of the event could also be seen talking with friends, playing games on the lawn or otherwise enjoying themselves. The Germanness of the institution was also made plain on several levels: while one or two of the booths at the Christmas fair (such as a “Swiss restaurant” serving traditional Swiss foods, decorated with student-made maps and posters of Switzerland) emphasised the school’s origins openly, others did so in a more subtle way, by offering for sale German foods and toys (which were emphasised by my interviewees at all levels to be the items which most reminded them of Germany and their own Germanness). Most of the manufactured goods being raffled off at the Christmas fair had been donated by German companies. At the *Frühshoppen*, a Bavarian-style oompah band was present to play a mix of traditional German music and contemporary hits; at the Christmas fair, the school band performed the same function. School events thus present the Germanness of the

institution and its members both through obvious and traditional means and through more subtle, domestic-focused symbols.

The DSL also encouraged a less formal sort of German cultural organisation. Parents at the events would pass on information to each other regarding German bakeries, delis and bookshops; such businesses frequently advertise in the DSL's publications as well as visibly donating goods and services to its events, ensuring that parents are aware of their presence. The DSL's networking function also extends to Germans with no obvious connection to the school, as parents spread the word about these cultural resources to single or childless colleagues. The DSL thus facilitates the informal networking between Germans in the UK which centres around access to such cultural symbols as food and books.

All of the people with whom I spoke, both at the DSL and in the banks, agreed that German social life in London is closely linked with the school, suggesting again a solidary German transnational social formation which is in opposition to local groups. It was when the school was discussed that bank employees abandoned their usual stance that no German community existed in London. One *Vorstand* member, when I was introduced to her as someone here "to study the German community," rather than, as I expected, responding with the usual facetious comment about the lack of one in London, said "you have come to the right place for your study, there is quite a German community here!" Significantly, however, she then added, "that is, if you have children, it is a German community." It is worth noting that one of my business-expatriate interviewees, a middle-aged woman who did not "see herself as part of the German community," sent her children to a UK "public" (i.e. not state-run) school. It is not insignificant that it is a school which plays this role; people with children are interested in instilling and reproducing culture in their children, and consequently give a good deal

of thought as to how this culture is transmitted to their offspring (see Pelissier 1991: 82) The DSL was thus a strong symbol of German solidarity for transnational German businesspeople, or at any rate for those with children.

The presence of the DSL also encouraged the perception of Richmond as “German space.” One senior-management interviewee, a man whose children were at the DSL, remarked that there was a concentration of German skilled labour migrants in the surrounding area and that the supermarket in the district sold German food. My own visits to the district, however, suggested that this was not necessarily the case; the German presence was not visible unless one knew what to look for (see Chapter 4, this volume), and there were no more German foods at the local supermarket than at ones in other upmarket areas of London. Furthermore, Richmond is in fact inhabited by elite businesspeople in general; the concentration of German migrants, in fact, apparently predates the founding of the school. However, it is significant that interviewees still described it as an area where German food and culture can be found; this suggests that it was a *symbol* of group affiliation for the Germans. The presence of the DSL thus encourages a sense of Germanness, and imbues the Richmond area with a German-focused image.

This building of a German transnational community was also present in the day-to-day administration of the DSL. The school’s educational philosophy emphasises and prioritises the teaching of the German language, literature and history (although I was unable to attend any lessons, my personal experience of the German school system suggests that the approach would lend itself to an emphasis on the achievements of the Enlightenment and nineteenth century, with the Nazi period cited as the nadir of German history), and which operates on the assumption that the pupils will be going back to Germany later, although an unknown percentage do go on to UK universities.

At DSL events German is spoken more or less exclusively; people spoke English to me because I was an outsider, and a few people visibly identifiable as local spouses (English-speaking adults with a German-speaking child or two in tow) could also be seen speaking English to each other. The DSL thus defines itself as a German institution through the use of language, curriculum and educational style; given that it is operating in the UK, it also defines itself as cosmopolitan, as it encourages its pupils to look beyond the local. The DSL thus seems to define a German transnational capitalist class.

The DSL is also strongly engaged with the German state school system. The German government officially endorses its curriculum, and consequently has at least a theoretical influence over what the pupils learn. Although some of the *Vorstand* spoke of making a break with the state, the school was started partly on a government initiative, and the Embassy presence is visible. The DSL is also part of a government-run network of overseas German schools; one parent, a member of the Embassy staff, spoke of how her son had lived in four separate countries without a noticeable falling-behind in his studies, as he could simply “plug into the Deutsche Schule” of the city to which the family had moved. Additionally, parents and teachers to whom I spoke described the school as “German, because [it is] in the German [school] system.” Significantly, however, these explanations ignore or pass quickly over the strong differences in style and curriculum which exist between German states, much as the DSL’s definition of “German” touches only lightly on the differences between German regions and, indeed, German-speaking countries. The DSL is thus engaged with the German state school and social systems; however, it also erases the regional differences in these, thus defining a pan-German enclave in London.

The DSL also appears to distance itself from local schools and practices. One teacher spoke of English schools as isolationist, in that they do not emphasise the

learning of a second language; due to the requirements of ERASMUS and other European exchange programmes for a second language, she said, the English become culturally isolated, and do not learn about any place other than England. The DSL thus defines itself as German and cosmopolitan in opposition to English local schools.

The parents also describe the relationship between the DSL and local schools in a similar way, as witness these responses to the question of whether or not they had considered sending their children to an English school by two Embassy staff members:

1. The British school system isn't bad, but it is different. If you want the kids to continue in the German system, you put them in the German school. We have one daughter who is seventeen and one who is fourteen, and so it would not be good for them to be taken out of the system at this time. From a learning point of view we would have preferred an English school, but the systems were not compatible. (male, diplomatic staff, late forties)
2. Parent (female, bureaucratic staff, mid-forties): I could send [my children] to British school, but then they wouldn't be able to come in to the German system. Socially, we would rather send them to British school.

Interviewer: Why not?

Parent: Because I really want them to learn at a German school where the primary language is German... but at a German school you don't have the contact with the British. It all depends on the contact with the British how much you use German and how well you interact cross-culturally.

The reasons both individuals had for sending their children to the DSL were thus focused both on maintaining symbolic ties to Germany, through language use and through remaining in the “German school system.” It is interesting that both, as well as the woman who sent her children to a UK public school, felt that sending children to a local school would encourage them to integrate into the British system. The use of the DSL thus seems to involve the maintenance of a solidary German transnational capitalist class.

However, the above extracts also show a positive valuation of cosmopolitanism. The parents interviewed *did* want their children to have contact with the other educational system, whether it is British or German. The mother who sent her children to public school said that by speaking German to them at home, she ensured that they became more cosmopolitan. Other parents, both those with children at the DSL and those with children at other schools, said that the main reason why they would send their children to a UK school would be for them to speak English properly, which, as well as suggesting the development of connections with English culture, implies a desire for them to learn the “global language of business.” All parents want their children to have the symbolic repertoires to be able to present themselves as German and cosmopolitan, and to have connections with diverse groups both local and transnational.

The DSL also defines itself as an elite institution as much as it does a German one. The teachers described it as resembling a *Gymnasium* (academic-focused secondary school), albeit with a few *Realschule* (vocational-training-focused secondary school) courses. One teacher said that the teaching involves more self-directed learning (*selbstbildung*) than most local German schools. The opportunities for work experience

at the DSL, and the connections offered, are stunning; the fact that the top executives of many German TNCs have children at the DSL mean that pupils do their work experience at the offices of major global corporations. Other symbols of elite cosmopolitanism were evident: the children whom I met at school events were keen to speak English with me, possibly out of rebellion against parents and teachers, but more likely to show off their skill in the high-prestige global language. The DSL thus seems sometimes to be more of an elite and cosmopolitan than a German institution.

The DSL does also have connections with the local public schools. Sports and other intramural activities are coordinated with the public schools in the district, rather than the state ones. Contact exists between the DSL and local schools, albeit sometimes in negative fashions: the DSL recently experienced a case of racist bullying which was reported on both the BBC and on Köln Radio 2, in which pupils from other local schools had beaten up some DSL pupils, calling them “Nazis” (there was a similar case around this time in which a German exchange student in Cornwall was attacked by local teenagers; see Irwin [2000]). More positively, there were also exchange programmes with other public schools elsewhere in London. The DSL also had a member of the local council on the *Vorstand* at the time of my fieldwork, although I was given to understand that this was not always the case. There are thus connections between the DSL and local schools.

In addition, the DSL has in some ways come to resemble a British public school. For one thing, the DSL had a networking role, both in terms of the child’s future career and its parents’ personal career development: although I do not have direct confirmation of this, a certain amount of personnel movement between German corporations appeared to take place partly due to conversations at DSL events. Furthermore, the rationales of most interviewees for sending their children to the DSL tended to resemble

those of their English colleagues for sending their children to high-prestige public schools: getting them a “good start,” teaching the importance of networking, and introducing them to the mores of their social group. It is worth noting that the parents with whom I spoke who had not sent their children to the DSL had all chosen to send them to public schools, and that the DSL’s booklet aimed at parents in Germany recommended public over state schools (Friends of Douglas House 1993: 20-23). The possibility of officially turning the DSL into a UK public school was actually being discussed by the *Vorstand* as an option in the case of its governmental funding being entirely withdrawn. The DSL thus associates itself with the symbols through which the local business elite defines itself.

Consequently, German transnational businesspeople do seem to be defining themselves as an elite German cosmopolitan class through the DSL. However, they are defining themselves through local UK symbols of elite status and cosmopolitanism, for instance through adopting an elite-school discourse to describe themselves. The school’s “cosmopolitan” reputation largely depends on the fact that the school’s linguistic and geographical focus is seen as “foreign” by local standards; in Germany, its curriculum would not be seen as quite so cosmopolitan. To put this phenomenon in terms of the Bloch hypothesis discussed earlier (1974), they are effectively limiting the possible discourses of elitism in this instance to those of the local, non-German, area (Bloch 1974). German transnational businesspeople thus were expressing an elite cosmopolitan image, but through local symbols.

In addition, the DSL is a forum for teaching children how to present themselves strategically as German transnational cosmopolitans. Firstly, it gives them a repertoire of symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism for use in later life; secondly, however, the fact that the community is focused on transnational business means that they are

learning the particular interpretations of the German business community. “Germany” and “German education” are treated largely as a unit; the focus of the social events and networking is on such symbols of Germany abroad emphasised in my interviews with businesspeople as food and traditional music. In addition, the social networks of the children at the school consist primarily if not entirely of the offspring of people fitting Sklair’s definition of the transnational capitalist class. The DSL thus teaches the habitus of transnational business; its multiple links and student diversity are thus significant.

The DSL’s pupils thus in some ways resemble the Japanese “International Youth” described by Roger Goodman, these being the children of Japanese expatriates who spend part of their childhood abroad, are encouraged to attend special schools, and who frequently grow up to become transnational businesspeople themselves (1993). Much as Goodman’s students appear to be learning, through their international experiences and subsequent special education, how to use the positive associations of being both “Japanese and international” to their own social and business advantage, the DSL students learn how to use their experience to define themselves strategically (Ibid.). Like Goodman’s youths, and like the bi- and multi-cultural individuals featured in Zachary’s *The Global Me*, the German children learn ways of existing in two or more cultures, and balancing between them (Zachary 2000; Goodman 1993, esp. p. 137). The teachers quoted me a range of between 10 and 50% of pupils remaining in England every year after they do the *Abitur* (university qualification exams). Asked about the effect of having to move every couple of years on the students, the teachers acknowledged that it had a negative impact on lasting friendships, but added that the children are “very sophisticated,” and often very skilled in making new friends, as a result of the frequent moves. The teachers describe the students as very *Weltoffen* as a consequence of their experiences. One teacher called them “*multis*” (recalling Vertovec

[1996b]'s interviewees' use of the term *multikulti*): "they are global and are German; they do not choose between them" (*die sind globales und sind deutscher; keine Entscheidung*). The students are also, according to their teachers, adept at making use of the opportunities afforded them by their education, often going to elite universities and taking jobs with top firms. Like Goodman's Japanese youths, the German students are expected to have difficulties as a result of their frequent moves, but in fact benefit actively from these experiences (1993: 159-169).

Unlike Goodman's youths, however, there is generally not much fuss, positive or negative, made about these pupils; their experiences are seen as being good for them, but there is no real sense that they are particularly different to locally-focused Germans of the same social status (contrast Goodman 1993: 1-8, 154, 229). The acquisition of cosmopolitan skills is openly encouraged by parents and teachers as a means of getting on; one parent, asked why she was eager for her children to learn English, said "English is very important today; very, very important for international success." However, there was no sense that these students were necessarily privileged above those who had learned English in school without leaving Germany, and there seemed to be no fear of them becoming "less German" as a result of their education (contrast Goodman 1993: 66). Like the international university students discussed by Butcher (2001), the pupils and parents use the cosmopolitan cachet of an overseas education as part of their self-presentation. However, by parents and teachers at least, it is treated simply as that— a strategic symbolic resource, rather than as the construction of a new global elite.

It is worth observing, however, that the uses and interpretations of this resource again varied from actor to actor. The Embassy bureaucratic staff member described her three children's adaptation to England: while all had experienced difficulties at first, the middle child now uses English as a default language, even with German friends.

However, the eldest and the youngest prefer German. One teacher noted that the pupils pick up English more from neighbour children, television and pop music than from formal lessons. The pupils thus acquire the same symbol sets from their experience in England but, like their parents, they use them in different ways.

The uses of the DSL thus define and transmit a particular, transnational-business-focused version of Germanness and cosmopolitanism, through the curriculum and through the possibilities for networking on the part of parents and children. The DSL serves as a symbol of elite business and Embassy people; of a globe-trotting, cosmopolitan lifestyle at the same time as a strong sense of belonging to a German overseas community. By focusing on symbols of elite culture, and specifically the cosmopolitan ones, it seems to define people very like Pico Iyer's "Global Souls," constructing their public selves selectively with reference to what they see as "the good bits" of the multiple cultures to which they can claim allegiance (2000). Furthermore, like Iyer and his interviewees, they also enable themselves to claim a kind of "neutral status" as people travelling between cultures, or who emphasise different allegiances depending on the context in which they find themselves. German transnational businesspeople thus, through the education of their children, define themselves as a detached global elite "class."

However, in doing this, the DSL has to engage with local groups. In order to define itself as a German school, it must forge symbolic links with the local system; the school cannot operate in a vacuum. At the same time, also, it has to have links to the German state; the assumption of the teachers, however justified, is that their pupils will return to Germany at some point. Even were it to become an English public school, it would be impossible for it to free itself of its German links, if only because the pupils in their final year would have to write the *Abitur*, which is set by the German Ministry of

Education. Similarly, the elite in question may emphasise its cosmopolitanism, but it is also a German elite; it is only here, in a setting more symbolic of cosmopolitanism than most, that the Germans will acknowledge the existence of a German “community” in London. At the same time as its uses of the DSL define them as a global elite, German transnational businesspeople are also connected with diverse localities.

Furthermore, this suggests that there are diverse ways of being global and local within German transnational capitalism. Some German businesspeople do *not* in fact send their children to the DSL, for reasons which are equally indicative of Germanness and cosmopolitanism to those cited by their colleagues who made the opposite choice. Furthermore, Germans without children do not participate directly in the complex of symbols surrounding the DSL. Also, the DSL caters to many diverse, overlapping groups: Embassy staff, businesspeople from the financial and manufacturing sectors, academics, people in mixed marriages, and others. In all cases, the symbols involved are the same, but they are interpreted, received and used differently: for Embassy staff, sending your children to the DSL can mean seeking cultural continuity for a child who moves every two years, for a German in a mixed marriage, it could be a way of encouraging the child to learn about its heritage. For the children, also, it presumably evokes a number of other associations which are relevant to them. The same symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism are used by all groups, but which are most important depends on the group and the context (compare Iyer 2000: Chapter 1).

The DSL thus projects a particular image of Germanness and cosmopolitanism, but one which is engaged with local English perceptions of these, and which allows the mediation between social allegiances through the multivalency of symbols. While the DSL may be a German elite institution, it does not define a German elite class, but links different sorts of self-defined Germans together through engaging with Germany and

with local institutions. The DSL thus does not so much define a transnational capitalist class, but a social formation which contains many different elements within itself, and which has links to other social formations rather than simply catering to one body of elite business expatriates.

It's Who You Know: German Business Institutions

Finally, similar complexes of self-presentation can be seen in the case of business and professional associations with a German focus. The main role of these institutions, according to their members, is as means of building social networks among corporate managers. As in Section 1, I will focus on three which are particularly relevant to and associated with German business: the German-British Forum, the German-British Chamber of Commerce, and the Foreign Banks and Securities Houses Association, in particular because all three do so in quite different ways. I will leave to the side other institutions which are less directly associated with transnational capitalism, such as the British-German Jurists' Association, local organisations which have German members but lack an international focus such as the British Bankers' Association, and educational and training institutions, as they are outside the remit of this study. It is thus worth examining selected business institutions in light of their role as a means for German transnational businesspeople to present themselves to outsiders, and what form this self-presentation takes.

Case A: The German-British Forum

The German-British Forum (GBF), probably the most German-focused of these institutions, was founded around 1995 by a group which included two consultants, a well-known German studies professor, and an economist. In the course of my

investigations, I interviewed two of these, along with several members of the organisation, attended one of the GBF's conferences and kept up with its online activities, of which more below. The initiative to launch the organisation was sparked by the infamous "Chequers Report" of the early 1990s, in which a media leak revealed that Prime Minister Thatcher and some of her aides, in a private conference, had described Germany as a crypto-Nazi entity with designs on the rest of Europe (A. Watson 1995: 290). The initial object of the GBF was thus to counteract what they saw as a predominantly negative perception of Germans in the UK. Its representatives say that there has been a substantial improvement, but still cite the maintenance of the perception of a good relationship between the two countries, particularly as regards business, as their main role. The organisation today exists mainly in the form of mailing lists and websites, with the committee being the only conventionally organised part of the institution. One committee member described it in a formal interview as having "no members, no [membership] list, no office even— we're a 'virtual organisation.'" As such, then, the GBF is a symbolically defined organisation with a direct focus on transnational German business.

The main activity of the GBF is the holding of conferences, the function of which is ostensibly the promotion of good Anglo-German relations, with talks on relevant topics, and awards being given to individuals and groups who have promoted Anglo-German relations, including a "wooden spoon" for the actor who has done the worst job at fulfilling this requirement for the past year (the first recipient having been Mrs Thatcher). Speakers come from the Anglo-German global elite, including Gerhardt Schröder, Tony Blair, and Edward Heath. The GBF thus focuses on people from, and issues relating to, German elites with transnational (if only as it relates to Anglo-

German transnationalism) connections, and thus apparently caters to a transnational capitalist class.

The conference which I attended in the autumn of 2000 was also a very elite-focused affair, with the lowest-priced ticket costing around £150; this allowed the participant to attend the conference and the pre-conference reception, but not the post-conference drinks or the dinner, which was reportedly the highlight of the occasion and at which the awards were given, and which cost about £75 more per person. It was held in one of the most prestigious hotels in London; representatives of at least the major German multinationals were present, as were many German diplomats, and members of academia and the media with a German connection. As the theme of the conference was “Europe and the Internet,” most of the speakers were members of IT companies or writers on the subject; however, several were UK or German politicians or retired politicians, who were given the most prominent spots on the programme. The focus of the conference thus appeared to be on elite German transnational business.

The main function of the conferences, however, seemed to be the construction and maintenance of participants’ social networks, rather than the expression of Germanness. All in all, the conference was fairly brief (lasting from late afternoon into the late evening); the speeches were largely political ones, with little actual information imparted or problems raised. Most of the time allotted was taken up not with the speeches or panels, but with the receptions and dinner. Attendees, significantly, include many without an obvious Anglo-German connection; at the conference which I attended, I spoke with Poles, Indians, Koreans and Americans as well as Germans. Most of these said in conversation that they were present for the opportunity to network with businesspeople. The conferences are thus largely networking events, and as such are

focused on self-presentation; they therefore reveal links between German transnational businesspeople and other groups.

The GBF also employs symbols of Germanness in ways which suggest connections with diverse groups of varying degrees of Germanness and transnationalism. Its conferences are on general themes such as the Internet (2000), Europe (1999), and transatlantic connections (2001), which can be interpreted as having a German or a more general focus, depending on how one wants to define the topic. The use of “celebrity” guests suggests a focus on local affairs as well as global. Their publicity materials are attractively produced, resembling those of large corporations. The self-presentation of the GBF thus reveals, again, that the organisation cannot define itself as German without engaging with other groups.

The case of the GBF is thus in some ways the mirror image of that of the cultural institutions discussed above. In this case, the institution in question is actively embraced by German transnational businesspeople, particularly for its German connections. However, rather than defining an exclusive class, it is also characterised by diverse sorts of links to other groups on many, sometimes unspoken, levels. Once again, the German transnational businesspeople use a German organisation to connect symbolically with other groups, German and otherwise.

Case B: The German-British Chamber of Commerce

The German-British Chamber of Commerce, by contrast, is very much a German-focused institution. The Chambers of Commerce (*Handelskammer*) are very powerful in Germany; I was often informed that if one needs to do anything business-related in Germany, one has to go through the Chambers of Commerce at some point. The London branch was founded in 1971, and has 850 members at present, 620 of whom are British.

Its stated focus is to promote bilingual social and business relations between the UK and Germany, and thus apparently to further the overseas interests of a German transnational capitalist class. However, their focus is more on UK business than it is on Germans, who are apparently less reluctant to invest in Britain than the other way around. It is housed in a Georgian town house not far from Buckingham Palace but well away from the City, Richmond and the German cultural institutions; staff numbers are small, but I was able to interview two members of the organisation's top management. The GBCOC is thus focused on business Germanness; however, this focus is aimed at UK local, not German transnational, businesspeople.

One of my interviewees, however, was affiliated with a semi-independent subsection of the GBCOC, however, which does in fact focus exclusively on German companies: the Federation of German Industry, which is the UK wing of the *Bundesverband deutscher Industrie*. It was founded shortly after the GBCOC; however, this was not in fact done to increase the German focus of the organisation, but due to a belief that manufacturers needed special representation within it. Although its membership is exclusively German, also, the focus is only on the UK wings of these businesses. The FGI, like its parent organisation, is thus one which apparently focuses on Germany, but in fact has other connections.

The three main functions of the Chamber of Commerce are similarly ambivalent. These are, firstly, Membership Services, which encourages the development of networking among members; secondly, Information Services, which provides information for businesses looking to set up in Britain or Germany; and thirdly, the Service Area, which gives "value added" advice with regard to laws, taxes and so forth to member companies regarding the two countries, although in practice mainly to British firms interested in investing in Germany. They also run seminars and

conferences on topics of interest. The Chamber of Commerce is thus symbolic of Germanness and business, but is UK-focused rather than catering to transnational Germans.

The images of Germanness presented by the GBCOC in its publicity material and formal interviews with representatives, focus on business and on manufacturing. A GBCOC representative explained to me in one interview that the German focus on manufacturing is due to a “cultural emphasis” on procedure, order (*Ordnung*) and structure. He further emphasised the *Mittelstand* manufacturers as the key to understanding German business, evoking the familiar discourse of Germanness as associated with the *Mittelstand* (*The Economist* 1995). The FGI representative, for his part, informed me that the German manufacturing corporations were “the big players” of the German transnational business world. The image of Germanness around the Chamber of Commerce is thus one which links into images of specific corporate sectors; furthermore, these images are of business as located and international, rather than as driven by a global elite class.

Some ambiguity, however, was revealed through the responses of the organisation’s representatives to one question asked during their interviews. Referring to the recent decision by Siemens to replace their trademark “Made in Germany” with one reading “Made by Siemens” in an attempt to seem “more global,” I put to the GBCOC and FGI representatives (in two separate interviews) the question of whether new trademark made the company more “global” and/or less “German” (Wolff Olins Identity Research 1995). The GBCOC representative was dismissive of this notion, saying that people still “see” Siemens as German. The FGI representative, however, placed the question in historical context, talking about how thirty years ago there had been a strong buy-British movement, but that today, British people are more

comfortable with the idea of buying German products, and consequently, that there was less strategic need to de-emphasise the company's Germanness. The fact that the name "Siemens" also connotes Germanness as well as the image of a transnational manufacturing concern suggests that the company can thus symbolically "be" German when it is advantageous, and, when it is not, can present itself as a "rootless" TNC, without altering the symbols used (see Head 1992: 23; A. Watson 1995: 164). Again, an apparent discourse of Germanness reveals other potential discourses which can come into being when necessary.

The case of the Chamber of Commerce and FGI thus indicates not only that a supposedly German, transnational and capitalist organisation can on some levels be focused on specific, even non-German, localities, but that the presentation of Germanness links into other discourses. The uses and interpretations of Germanness at the GBCOC and FGI thus further reinforce the notion that German transnational capitalism cannot exist without local links, and that transnational discourses can be local ones in some contexts.

Case C: The FBSA

The FBSA is slightly different to the other organisations discussed in this section in that it is by its mandate not specifically a German institution, but a professional association which represents all foreign banks with City branches. It is housed in a converted Georgian house in the City, with a total staff of three, one director and two administrators. The data which follows is based on interviews with the director, attending an FBSA conference and reading their literature. The membership consists of approximately 175 banks of all (non-UK) national origins. The FBSA is thus a more

general organisation than the other two, although it does have a sizeable German contingent in its membership list.

The FBSA's stated role is to give support and advice to non-local financial corporations in the City. They have in the past advised overseas, including German, companies, about the UK market, and have had a strong influence on policy as a result (Morgan and Quack 2000: 150). They also lobby on behalf of members directly to the Department of Trade and Industry, and hold seminars, conferences and so forth on themes of interest to transnational banks. It has more links to local and professional organisations, such as the British Bankers' Association, the Bank of England, and various thinktanks, than to overseas or international ones; it also has some connections to academia. The FBSA is thus globally focused, but on other levels more locally oriented, suggesting that in order to function as transnational operators, organisations do need local connections.

As with the GBF, the highlight of the FBSA calendar is their annual conference. This one is also high-profile, if less celebrity-focused than that of the GBF; all the German banks in the City were represented at the one which I attended in November 2000, mainly by one or more top-ranked managers, and the main guest speaker was a representative of the U.S. Federal Reserve. More time was left for informal networking than at the GBF conference, and the general tone was more relaxed. The conference did not focus on any particular national interest, although European concerns tended to predominate. Here, then, networking is prominent, and is again an activity which links different sorts of local groups and deals with issues of general interest to foreign businesses in London.

Although the organisation is not specifically German-focused, particular images of Germanness did come up in interviews and at the conference. These tended to follow

the “German business culture” discourse familiar from the banks. The degree of “Germanness” of a member organisation seemed to be determined by the degree of its focus on the German market, again suggesting the presence of a transnational capitalist class. However, under all this the UK was given a subtle prominence; the definition of FBSA members as “foreign” banks involves defining themselves according to a local standard. The FBSA thus is a cosmopolitan organisation which is theoretically focused on no single locality, but in practice, particular interests and discourses creep in.

Unlike the exclusively German-focused organisations, then, the FBSA attempts to project a cosmopolitan, transnational image. Like them, however, it suggests, in doing so, that its clientele are less a transnational capitalist class as they are diverse groups with diverse associations. The FBSA acts not so much to build a transnational capitalist class as it does to connect transnational businesspeople with a variety of local groups and issues.

Analysis

In the case of German-focused business organisations, we see a reversal of the trend shown with regard to the cultural institutions discussed in the first section. Where the cultural institutions were outwardly ignored and made use of on other levels, here German transnational businesspeople make active use of the business organisations, but seldom according to their stated purpose. Conferences are attended less for the lectures than for the networking opportunities. The images of Germanness which these organisations project are those which, under the surface, link into other groups. The organisations are thus outwardly used to define a group of transnational German businesspeople, but in many cases this focus is less significant for members than the possibility of using them to obtain contact with other groups.

It is worth noting, also, that the membership of the “German” organisations also includes non-German employees of German corporations. By using “German” institutions, Germanophiles, and even Anglophiles, can symbolise a connection with Germany: an employee can be English, and yet have “Deutsche Bank” on his/her name tag. S/he can also indicate a German connection by taking up a post or position within these organisations; most were run, if not founded, by Germanophiles as well as Germans. Furthermore, these same positions can be used to accumulate social capital within the City. The organisations are thus also used by non-Germans, suggesting again that boundaries between German transnational business and other groups are difficult to discern.

By contrast, German expatriates, despite having a more direct connection to Germany, seldom attended events organised by German business institutions; I never saw an expatriate from the studied banks at one of these conferences, although I frequently ran into acquaintances from other cohorts. As expatriates will not be staying in the City for long, however, it is more useful to them to cultivate contacts within the foreign branches of their institution than to engage in external networking. Again, the outside organisations do not have equal significance for everybody who falls under the general remit of “German transnational businessperson,” suggesting that this definition does not cover a single class so much as diverse interest groups.

These different interest groups can even be embodied in a single actor. The General Manager of the UK branch of a German industrial TNC, whom I interviewed, is not only a German transnational businessperson and a member of his company, he is also a keen supporter of charity initiatives, an active member of the committee of several German business organisations, and through these has Embassy connections. The same individual, through the organisations, can be seen as belonging to several

diverse sorts of German, transnational and business-focused groups at once. These organisations also affect other people in the City: bank employees who do not make use of these organisations are usually aware of them on some level, and a good part of their discourse about “business styles” and what they constitute originates from lectures and discussions at the organisations’ conferences (e.g. Hagen 1998; R. Berger 2000). Again, rather than defining a single class, these organisations are used in a variety of ways by different actors.

This suggests that not only are there diverse sub-groups within German transnational capitalism, but that these are mutually engaged through their uses of German-focused business institutions. The top management, rank and file, Germanophiles and expatriates connect with these organisations in different ways, suggesting that the use of such institutions is a multivalent symbolic act. A junior staff member brought along to a GBF conference by a senior manager will have different aims in attending it than does the senior manager, and possibly will be allowed to attend different portions of the event (as a junior staff member might be considered out of place at the gala dinner). The organisations also include people who have German and transnational connections, but are not German transnational businesspeople. Again, there are not only diverse groups within German transnational capitalism, but these groups link into other organisations.

The role of the German and/or foreign bankers’ business organisations is thus not only to emphasise a particular image of Germanness, but to develop local connections and create symbolic links with different localities, and diverse forms of global engagement. The organisations thus promote German solidarity at one level and encourage outside links at another, suggesting that German transnational businesspeople actively prefer outside connections than defining themselves as a solidary class.

Consequently, like the cultural institutions, they do not define a transnational capitalist class so much as they do an amorphous set of allegiances, some more German and business-focused than others.

Analysis: Joining the Club

The ways in which German transnational institutions are used, or not used, by Germans with regard to expressing Germanness and cosmopolitanism in London appears once again to define a German transnational capitalist class. As in other areas of the lives of German transnational businesspeople, however, the use of these organisations suggests a much more complex, diffuse social formation, a fact which is reflected in the way in which the nature of transnational life is defined in and around the institutions in question.

From what we have seen, the ways in which the institutions are used suggests a group of German transnational businesspeople defining themselves against other sorts of Germans by the pattern of which institutions they patronise or do not patronise. Through the networking function of the business organisations, the German transnational businesspeople make contact with international clients; the social networks described in Chapter 4 are built and maintained through attending conferences and other events. Similar networking activities take place at the DSL. My interviewees' choice of institutions thus seemingly defines a German transnational capitalist class.

However, as was the case in Chapter 4, this impression is something of an oversimplification. The relationship of businesspeople to cultural institutions is not just a simple matter of using or not using the organisations in question, but involves using and rejecting them simultaneously on multiple levels. There are links between the Goethe Institut and German business through charity initiatives, English employees

taking German lessons and retired German businesspeople taking teaching jobs.

Similarly, many German transnational businesspeople do not make use of the business institutions. Again, we have here not so much the definition of a single group as a complex pattern of acceptance and rejection of cultural and business institutions, with different uses conveying different messages and furthering different strategies on multiple levels.

One might also consider the case of the Embassy. Embassy staff are German, transnational and, arguably, capitalists; Sklair's definition of a transnational capitalist class includes civil servants (2001: 17), and Embassy staff spoke of their transnational activities as "part of the job" much as the business expatriates did. They share certain symbolic markers of Germanness with businesspeople, including the use of the DSL as a school for their children and a social centre for themselves. However, at the same time their position on German transnational business is not that which is experienced in the City; the Embassy's main focus is on business as it relates to government. It is also not focused on one specific company or sector, but on all German business in the UK, and then only as they relate to the bureaucratic procedures of their locating and remaining where they are. Embassy staff are, therefore, for transnational businesspeople, *like* them but *not* them. As the Embassy staff are undeniably German, transnational and (to some extent) business-focused, and yet are equally undeniably distinct from German transnational businesspeople, then, so different German transnational groups may define themselves as distinct from each other at the same time as they symbolically construct themselves using exactly the same symbols.

This carries over to the other social groups. Each of the organisations considered here is in and of itself a transnational social formation, which more or less directly relates to transnational business; they connect with other German transnational groups

with varying degrees of connection to business, such as students or Embassy staff, in diverse ways. The organisations are thus part of German transnational capitalism in some ways, auxiliary to it in others, and linked in with a variety of other groups at the same time. The German transnational businesspeople and the organisations discussed here thus all form part, not of a definite class, but of a wider social group, in which there are diverse but overlapping ways of defining Germanness and cosmopolitanism.

Furthermore, one must also consider the fact that the most important German social institution in the UK appears not to be a formal one, but rather the informal information network which spreads through peripheral contact between conationals. As noted above, Germans in the UK compare notes and trade information as to where to obtain the best German food, books, toys and so forth. Additionally, small-scale, ad-hoc trading networks existed in both the businesses with which I was involved; people going to Germany would take orders from friends and workmates for foodstuffs, sweets or videotapes which were unavailable in London. The most important social institution through which German transnational businesspeople express both Germanness and cosmopolitanism may thus, appropriately, be a non-institution; a flexible, informal and seldom-acknowledged social network, connecting most if not all members of the community.

This multiplicity and flexibility also comes across in my interviewees' images of globalisation. As an example, in a discussion with the GBCOC representative on whether a firm can be global and German, he brought up the case of Coca-Cola, saying that it is said to be a truly global company and product, but that it is also seen as truly American. He then turned the question back on me, asking whether there really is a global market, or just one in which American culture is now so universal that it *appears* global. While this sentiment echoes a debate which has been raging in both the

popular and academic presses for a long time (Krauthammer 1999; Hirst and Thompson 1996; Tomlinson 1999b), it also suggests how globalisation is experienced by transnational businesspeople. By raising this question, my interviewee evoked images of global and local elements blending into each other so that it is somewhat difficult to tell which is which; Coca-Cola can be American, it can be global, and it can also be a particular product or corporation. It also raises the question of where the relationship between local and global begins and ends. Globalisation and being global are thus constructed in the business environment as a process which includes a variety of linked local and global components, and a variety of ways of relating to these.

Interviewees in business also define what it is to be a “global individual” in a similar way. Over and over in interviews on the subject of cultural institutions, German businesspeople said that they thought cosmopolitanism meant being global, but retaining and recognising your own culture. Their image of the ideal global person comes across as one with multiple links of varying degrees of importance; they define themselves not only as Germans in the UK, but as Germans who have also been to Hong Kong, Germans from particular regions, and many other ways of presenting themselves as German and transnational. People thus recognise different connections between local and global and between different localities; they then express these as part of their symbolic constructions of Germanness and cosmopolitanism. Significantly, in these constructions, the two are not mutually exclusive, as they appear to be for Forsythe’s German interviewees (1989), or for Mrs Thatcher (A. Watson 1995: 290), suggesting that the accommodation of multiple allegiances is possible within their self-presentation. German transnational businesspeople thus construct their existence as a state of multiple allegiance, rather than of being *either* global *or* local.

It is thus possible to claim that there is a German transnational capitalist class in London, discernable through Germans' uses of particular institutions. However, to see it as a unique, bounded entity is to overlook the multiple ties, and diversity of subgroups, which are visible in my interviewees' self-definitions. We thus have here a case of diverse groups within a single, broadly defined transnational social formation, rather than a unique, solidary German transnational capitalist class. These groups possess many engagements with outside groups, both transnational and local; it is not so much a case of "us and them," as of varying degrees of us and them. One should thus not speak so much in terms of a single powerful German transnational capitalist class so much as of a loosely-connected set of diverse groups with diverse links.

Even when out of the office and dealing with outside institutions, then, German transnational businesspeople still give the impression of being not so much a solidary group as a diffuse array of actors, with diverse agendas and outside connections. Furthermore, it seems that they construct both localising and globalising concepts in similarly diffuse, context-dependent ways. The idea of conceiving of them as a solidary German transnational capitalist class is thus one which needs to be rethought to fit the actual situation.

Conclusion

The case of the German business, cultural and educational organisations considered here thus supports the hypothesis that there is no single German transnational capitalist class, but a variety of groups, each with different ways of expressing Germanness and cosmopolitanism, under a single, transnational-capitalist aegis. Furthermore, it suggests that German transnational businesspeople do not exist in a social vacuum, but have symbolic links to a number of other groups of varying degrees of global and local

engagement. In the wider world as in the workplace, then, German transnational businesspeople link into other groups and incorporate diverse interests through the multivalency of symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism.

VIII. The Transnational Capitalist Society: Rethinking the Situation of German Transnational Businesspeople

The case of German transnational businesspeople in and around the City of London suggests that, while Sklair's formulation of the transnational capitalist class can be applied to such a group in the broadest sense, it cannot capture the complexity of their experiences. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that such businesspeople do not so much constitute an isolated transnational "class," as they do a part, or several parts, of an inclusive "Transnational Capitalist Society." I propose, therefore, that the evidence regarding the strategic self-presentation of individuals in German overseas bank branches can be used to formulate, not only a more inclusive way of describing transnational social formations, but an explanation of the way in which the global and the local are related.

In this chapter, I will first re-examine Sklair's formulation of the TCC in order to ascertain how well it fits the evidence presented earlier. I will then propose an alternative scenario: that these German transnational businesspeople are in fact part of a wider Transnational Capitalist Society, involving many groups of different degrees of transnationalism, which are linked in various ways. Finally, using this theory, I will investigate how the strategic use of multivalent symbols in such a context can form the basis for actors to negotiate between the global and the local.

The Transnational Capitalist Complex: Sklair Revisited

As was discussed at the beginning of this thesis, the most comprehensive description of the social organisation of transnational businesspeople to date is the "transnational capitalist class" model, originally developed by Sklair (1995, 1998a, b, 2001). While

Sklair's description can be broadly said to fit the cases described here, it can also be found wanting in certain significant aspects. In this section, we shall discuss the ways in which the German transnational businesspeople described over the past four chapters do in fact fit Sklair's model, and in which ways it must be modified in light of the evidence.

Considered in general terms, the German businesspeople described here do seem to fit Sklair's definition of a TCC. Sklair identifies the transnational capitalist class as consisting of four groups (2001: 17): 1) TNC executives; 2) globalising state bureaucrats; 3) globalising professionals and 4) merchants and media. In this thesis, we can identify groups which broadly fit these descriptions: the German expatriates, local hires, Germanophiles and Anglophiles of the transnational bank described in Chapter 5; the Embassy and business institution staff; the various financial and IT specialists; and, finally, the advertisers and service providers of the City of London. According to Sklair's basic definition, then, the people whom I have considered over the past four chapters are in fact a German transnational capitalist class.

The Germans also appear to fit the social profile listed by Sklair for the transnational capitalist class. According to Sklair, a TCC is defined by, firstly, the fact that the economic interests of its members are increasingly globally linked; secondly, that it seeks to exert economic control over the workplace; thirdly, that its members take an outward-focused global, rather than an inward-focused local, perspective; and fourthly, that they share similar lifestyles (2001: 17). In his earlier book, *The Sociology of the Global System*, Sklair also defines the TCC as "[t]hose people who see their interests... and/or the interests of their countries of citizenship, as best served by an identification with the interests of the capitalist global system, in particular the interests of the transnational corporations." (Sklair 1995, p. 8). Again, these traits do broadly fit

the people with whom I worked. My interviewees showed solidarity with individuals elsewhere in the globe in similar professions to theirs; the day after the World Trade Centre bombings, people in the City held a minute of silence in memory of colleagues in New York. The Germans' economic interests were linked with global finance both in their day-to-day work and through the restructuring of the bank from a locally-focused pyramid into, in theory at least, a global network; they also tended to value outward-focused cosmopolitanism and regarded world travel a sign of social prestige; and they tended to live in the same areas as well as having similar consumption patterns and life-cycles. Sklair's criteria do therefore fit the German and non-German transnational bankers with whom I worked.

If we consider the specific activities of the Germans, however, Sklair's definition appears to be less appropriate. While the interests of the group's members are indeed globally linked, for instance, this connection takes different forms depending on the individual and their subgroup or cohort; the relationship to the global, for instance, of a German man married to an Englishwoman and having lived in England for ten years is quite different to that of a young German woman doing a six-month trainee stint in the hope of doing another in New York next year. While it is also broadly true to say that they "identify" with the global system, it does not seem to be a conscious identification, or even a total one, but more a sort of *habitus* into which they drift as a result of their transnational activities. It is also debatable how deep this sense of identification actually goes; it appears to be more accurate to say that they identify with and oppose it depending on what they feel is best for them under the circumstances. Sklair's own remarks on philanthropy strongly suggest that people can work for TNCs and yet still oppose TNC-caused phenomena such as environmental degradation (2001:

Chapters 6 and 7). Although Sklair's thesis is generally applicable to all my interviewees, then it is less useful with regard to specific cases.

This is also true of Sklair's point regarding similar lifestyles. There were notable variations among bank employees in terms of how they lived, depending on age, marital status, gender, nationality, expatriate status and stage in the employee life cycle.

Although Sklair acknowledges variation in the TCC (as it consists, according to him, of executives, media people and bureaucrats), he appears to assume that these groups think more or less alike. As noted in Chapter 7 of this volume, the different sections of the TCC in this case vary considerably in terms of their outlook on the world; while they may all live in Richmond and send their children to the DSL, the Embassy staff ("globalising state bureaucrats") have different attitudes, goals and experiences of England to the businesspeople ("TNC executives/globalising professionals"). Sklair's model, however, classifies the likes of Rupert Murdoch in the same category as a German-speaking junior manager who visits Frankfurt once a month, or a maintenance man who does not deal with international finance, but has been around the world several times during his holidays. It is also not entirely true to say that transnational businesspeople take an outward-focused rather than an inward-focused perspective, as the people with whom I spoke tended to take both, sometimes even at the same time. It is thus debatable how similar the lifestyles and attitudes of the TCC are.

Finally, there is the question of whether or not the TCC exert economic control over the workplace. While it may be possible to argue that this is true in some cases, most people did not seem to have much in the way of control over their own daily work activities, let alone the global market. All of the people with whom I spoke were subject to economic controls at one level or other: they may be an elite in financial and social terms, but how much control they have over the marketplace as a whole is debatable.

Finally, Sklair's list of traits could equally describe other sorts of transnational groups, including such low-level entrepreneurs as Portes' Dominicans or even Bauman and Gillespie's Southallis (1998; 1996; 1998). Sklair's definition thus appears to attribute too much agency to the German transnational businesspeople, and is painted in terms too broad to capture the diversity of transnational business activity.

It might also be worth looking at Sklair's most recent propositions regarding the ideals and aims of the TCC (2001: 5-6). The first is that "A transnational capitalist class based on the transnational corporation is emerging that is more or less in control of the processes of globalisation." In fact, as with the question of control over the marketplace, it is worth debating how much agency my interviewees actually had with regard to the processes of globalisation; most if not all of them seemed rather to be acting on behalf of their superiors and Head Offices. It is also, for that matter, debatable how much control their superiors and Head Offices had over these processes; even at the top level, my interviewees seemed more influenced by the processes of globalisation than in control of them. Rather than being directed by a particular class, globalising activities appear to be the result of many actions and reactions by other actors, not all of them elite. The processes of globalisation do not seem to be in the control of any single group, but to be constructed through the activities of many.

Sklair's second and third propositions, that "the TCC is beginning to act as a transnational dominant class in some spheres," and that "the globalisation of the capitalist system reproduces itself through the profit-driven culture-ideology of consumerism" are also only applicable in the broadest sense (2001: 5-6). The areas in which the TCC acted as a dominant class seemed to be largely context-dependent: within the companies which I studied, it would be difficult to say that an expatriate "dominated" a local employee, as the local employee might well outrank, and certainly

has more local knowledge than, the expatriate. Similarly, the transnational businesspeople did not reproduce their culture *only* through consumerist means; there were other ways of transmitting the culture across generations and cultures, as witness their use of the DSL. While Sklair does not provide an inaccurate image of the position and reproduction of transnational capitalist class, he does not consider the sheer range of activities which these terms cover.

Sklair's final point, that "the transnational capitalist class is working consciously to resolve... The simultaneous creation of increasing poverty and increasing wealth within and between communities... and... the unsustainability of the system (the ecological crisis)," is very debatable at the moment. While transnational businesspeople do engage in philanthropic activities (Sklair 2001: Chapter 6), the ecological crisis has been off most corporations' agendas since the end of the Clinton administration; most, also, seem to be more concerned about sustaining than resolving the simultaneous creation of increasing poverty and wealth. Interestingly, however, there existed a good deal more interest in the environment and in corporate philanthropy five years earlier (Renton 1998); this suggests that the traits defining the "transnational capitalist class" are in fact not static, but change and develop over time. Courtney and Thompson's oral history of the City of London suggests that the degree and nature of transnational engagement, capitalist focus and so forth of a given interviewee depends on the time period, the individual's experiences and many other factors (1996). Similarly, Augar (2000) and Lewis' (1989) respective personal accounts show that the degree and nature of their engagement with globalisation changed over their careers. Sklair's definition thus does not cover the dynamic nature of the transnational business world.

The reason for this apparent unity at one level, but differentiation at another, has to do with the presentation of self through multivalent symbols. We have already

discussed, in Chapter 2, the fact that businesspeople use symbols both to define membership in groups and to present themselves to what they perceive as the best advantage according to the strategy which they are employing (Cohen 1985; Goffman 1956). Following Lakoff and Johnson, furthermore, one can say that the multivalent properties of symbols allow actors to change from one discourse to another, using the metaphorical coherence between the symbols to express many allegiances (1980: 102-3). It is therefore possible for these individuals to define multiple group memberships and present multiple selves, as it were, simultaneously and consecutively. As we have seen, transnational businesspeople actively make use of the fact that symbolic discourses converge upon the same symbols to retain links to multiple groups, to express unity at one level and division at another, or to reinterpret potentially damaging information in a more positive light. We appear to have here a series of positive-feedback systems, with symbols being deployed, interpreted and employed by many actors in communication with each other (see Burns 1992: 272). If symbols are used by transnational businesspeople to define themselves, then, the multivalency of these enables the actors to have complex links both within and outside the group, while at the same time appearing at another level to be a cohesive unit (see Sperber 1974: Chapter 4).

While one should not totally dismiss Sklair's theory, then, it seems that, in order to properly consider the situation faced by global businesspeople, one must abandon the notion of a unified, solidary transnational capitalist class existing in opposition to other, non-transnational and non-capitalist groups. However, one cannot abandon the concept of a set of people who are transnational and engaged with capitalism, nor the fact that many such people are closely associated with TNCs. We must therefore find some way of expanding Sklair's theory to take this level of diversity into account.

Flexible Capitalism: The Transnational Capitalist Society Defined

One way of addressing this issue might be to consider German transnational businesspeople not as a simple transnational capitalist class on their own but as part, or even several parts, of a transnational capitalist society (TCS). This formulation would allow us to acknowledge the viable aspects of Sklair's theory while at the same time taking into account the more complex picture which we have built up over the past few chapters. We shall thus here define a transnational capitalist society and argue, with examples from earlier in this thesis, that this model fits the situation described here better than the TCC concept does.

The notion of a transnational capitalist society is one which develops from three previously-discussed theories: Sklair's TCC model, Castells' Network Society (1996) and Appadurai's concept of the unevenly-engaged global financescape (1990). The transnational capitalist society is a globe-wide social unit which comprises all forms of transnational capitalism, from tourism to migrant labour to transnational business, and the capitalist aspects of other types of transnational activity, such as Internet use and refugee networks. It also includes the links between different transnational capitalist social formations. It is therefore acknowledged that, as Sklair argues, there are distinct transnational business groups, which are integral to the modern economy. However, it is also, following Appadurai, acknowledged that there are many forms of transnational business activities, and that these are linked to each other and to other transnational social formations (1990). This formulation thus takes into account the people linked into other sorts of global landscapes, such as diasporas (Cohen 1997), displaced groups

(van Hear 1998), and small-scale transnational businesspeople (Portes 1998). The TCS is thus a globe-spanning social formation which includes, not only the businesspeople whom we have encountered, but many other sorts of transnational business groups and activities as well.

The TCS also differs from the TCC in that it, following Castells' concept of the Network Society, involves local components. These are included only inasmuch as they are linked to each other and to global entities, following on from Tomlinson's argument that globalisation is a form of "complex connectivity" between local sites and global entities (1999a: 149, 195). All transnational business activities include local components which therefore participate on some level in the TCS; Castells, for instance, in a 2000 lecture, talks about the irony of the fact that with increased globalisation, more people are moving into cities, when one would expect that the communications revolution would mean that more people would move into the country and work from home. This, he proposes, is because of the concentration of skills: as social networking becomes more important, so companies realise that face-to-face contacts increasingly carry more weight than those made electronically. While the focus of the TCS is transnational, it also includes connections to particular locations in so far as they relate to global activities.

The TCS formulation consequently allows us to take into account the sheer variety of forms of transnational capitalism. As mentioned above, it is worth noting the similarities as well as the differences between Sklair's TCC and Portes' (1998) Mexican and Dominican entrepreneurs: the small-scale actors are transnational businesspeople, most of them are elites in their home contexts, and, while they do not inhabit exactly the same social space as the German transnational businesspeople, they do take the same aeroplanes, work in the same "global cities," work for the same TNCs and so forth.

Quack and Morgan (2000a) also speak of “national capitalisms,” in the plural, indicating that capitalism, like transnationalism, takes different forms from group to group. The TCS also fits Quack and Morgan’s description of markets as a social system “consisting of social structures which emerge from recurrent exchange between different economic actors,” and which are shaped by power struggles, external events and so forth (2000b: 44). To consider all of these actors as part of a transnational capitalist society is to include and take into account all of these distinctions.

The TCS, furthermore, is based upon the use of global communications (see Morgan 1997: 78). Information technology, as we have noted, connects the different segments of the TCS, allowing the groups which compose it to forge and alter allegiances across national boundaries. Through communications technology, a London office can actually “become” Germany, or at any rate sit at one end of a real-time “tunnel” to Germany, during teleconferences. It is through the day-to-day interaction of people in offices, and through social acts such as meetings, conferences and so forth, that the TCS is constructed; all of these activities are based on communications and information technology. The fact that communications technology plays into the ethnic and hierarchical distinctions in offices might be seen as supporting the TCC theory; however, the hierarchies which they foster are not necessarily those of transnational dominant versus local subaltern classes. The reliance on communications technology in business activity is the primary reason why the TCS can exist, and maintain itself as a global social entity.

It is not, however, communications technology in and of itself which allows the construction of a TCS, but its use as a means of expressing symbols across borders. The multivalency of symbols is what makes the negotiation between local and global possible, as the same symbol can be used to unify and divide at the same time. We have

seen, in this thesis, how transnational businesspeople use symbols to define themselves as belonging to different groups at different levels, to express connections to local and transnational activities, and to negotiate between all of these different allegiances according to personal strategies for success. The fact that symbols are used both to express group allegiances and in strategic self-presentation means that, together, the expression of symbols constitutes the navigation of the social landscape, in this case the social landscape as it relates to transnational business activity.

The merits of a TCS versus a TCC model can be seen in the case of the German businesspeople discussed earlier in this thesis, and the institutions which surround them. Initially, our consideration of the City of London revealed that, while it may seem to be a solid, globally engaged entity, it is also a symbolically constructed social group linked to many different localities and containing many sorts of activities. The City appears—and is often said—to be a transnational business enclave which is separate from the rest of the UK, and which is engaged with other transnational business enclaves around the world, in keeping with Sklair's formulation (2001: 17-31). However, for all the City's external links, it has undeniable connections to the UK in that its local employees are drawn from it; the impact of the "Big Bang," interestingly, is mainly described in terms of its effect on the local system of social classes (Augar 2000: Introduction; Courtney and Thompson 1996: 167). Furthermore, the City's connections to the USA and Europe are not uncontested, and form the source of a continually changing discourse among City think-tanks (Lascelles 2000). Finally, there are many different sorts of transnational businesspeople in the City, including not only expatriate businesspeople and information-technology specialists, but also such diverse groups as immigrant restaurant-owners, ex-military security guards, and tourists. The City, rather than an enclave for elite transnationalists, is a slice of a transnational capitalist society which

contains numerous different groups and maintains links with other local and transnational social formations.

Furthermore, the City achieves this engagement through the use of symbols. The objects and images used to define it are deployed in ways which permit the expression of connections to diverse groups; the emphasis on the City's "multiculturalism," for instance, in many of its popular histories and descriptions (e.g. Merriman and Visram 1993), fits with the transnational businesspeople's valuation of cosmopolitanism, and allows connections with non-UK cities (Corporation of London 2000b). However, at the same time this "multiculturalism" is defined in local terms. The displays at the Museum of London, for instance, focus on visible minorities in Elizabethan, medieval and Victorian times, whereas the prominent German community of all three periods is not mentioned, in keeping with present-day English folk definitions of "multiculturalism" as primarily involving skin colour. Furthermore, there seems to be a continual reinterpretation of the symbols of cosmopolitanism and business used to define the City, with the Old City focusing on their connections with the past, and the New City focusing on their multicultural and international aspects. The City is based on a continually shifting ethos and an imperative requirement to keep up with trends; this makes the ability to shift allegiances essential, and favours actors who are able to present themselves in terms of multiple attachments. As put forward in the TCS theory, then, the City is not only multiply engaged and constantly changing, but achieves this through the use of multivalent symbols.

In the case of the historical German community in the City, the TCS model is also more useful than that of the TCC. If we consider them as a TCC, for instance, both the Germans of the 19th century and those of the present-day appear to be members of the same group, and it further seems as if both are part of an unbroken line of German

transnational communities in the UK which has lasted since the eleventh century. However, there have been a number of historical changes which break up the alleged “community” (Borer 1977: 89-90; Wraight 1991:42; K. Mann 1993: 110-111). Panayi’s descriptions of Victorian Germans suggest a quite different lifestyle and social position to those in London today (1993, 1995). There is also the fact that a number of City companies which were originally either German or begun by Germans (such as Reuters, Barings and Schroeders) and are today thought of as “domestic” by UK people, suggesting again a continual reinterpretation of symbols according to internal and external social influences (Read 1999; Panayi 1995: 17-18, 72, 140). The historical German community thus supports the idea of a connected, continually changing and symbolically active TCS rather than an isolated, static and symbolically bounded TCC.

This can also be seen in the case of the modern German business community. The people whom I interviewed are engaged with Germany, the UK host culture and other German (and non-German) transnationals. In their turn, the Germans also affect these groups in and of themselves; the presence of German businesspeople abroad is important to the domestic German self-image, for instance (Hughes 1994: 36-37), and the maintenance of the discourse of cosmopolitanism-as-Germanness among elites. Also, the presence of Germans contributes to the City’s self-image as globally engaged, and reinforces its connections with Europe, itself an entity with complex global and local connections (Castells 1997: 267). In Richmond, it is difficult to differentiate absolutely between Germans and non-Germans, as many of the symbols used to express Germanness also could be taken as expressing elite social status. It is equally possible to be linked to more than one group at the same time: one of my interviewees was a former City person now working for a German social institution who was married to an Anglo-Asian. Furthermore, the symbols defining Germanness are not uncontested, as witness

the case of *Weltoffenheit* in Chapter 3. We therefore see a group whose focus is neither exclusively, or even mostly, global or local, but whose members show a variety of different degrees and types of connection to both positions, sometimes even simultaneously, and which change over time (Skelton and Allen 1999; see also Tomlinson 1999a, Castells 1997). As Martin notes, international labour migration today involves the forging of one's own mode of living out of available options, rather than adhering to a formal framework (1999: 180). The example of Germans in the City of London thus suggests a transnational capitalist society which includes engagements to local and non-capitalist global activities, rather than an isolated class.

The same can be said of the TNCs discussed here. Again, each appears to form a reasonably self-contained transnational community of the sort to which Sklair's description is most applicable (2001: Chapter 3). Even here, however, a TNC is not so much a transnational social entity in and of itself as much as it is a part of a wider transnational social formation through its symbolic engagements, much as Birkinshaw argues that a subsidiary should be seen as an actor competing in both the internal and external spheres of its company and its domestic market, rather than as an integral product of both (2001). Companies change, as the restructuring described in Chapter 5 demonstrates; during this process, the interpretations of the symbols used to define it change as employees assume new roles and the relationships between branches and Head Office are reexamined. Furthermore, it is interesting that the symbols used to define the restructuring were also used to define the branch, and could be used as both a means of resisting and of accepting the changes at the same time. Furthermore, companies also make use of symbols to navigate between different social groups, transnational and local: Siemens, for instance, can be a global company, and/or a German company, and/or a symbol of German national affiliation—and for its UK

employees and the surrounding town, their construction of group allegiance—and also, particularly in the case of *Mittelstand* firms, discourses of affiliation pertaining to the German hometown. The TNC is not a self-contained transnational entity, but one which is engaged with others and changes with the circumstances.

Furthermore, the evidence above suggests that this flexibility is symbolically determined and continually changing, as in a dynamic TCS rather than a static TCC. The fact, as we have noted, that the bank employees in Chapter 5 described relationships within the company very much in terms of German versus English is largely down to the environment in which they found themselves (to say nothing of what they had been told about my purpose for being there). A competitor bank, whose director was also interviewed in connection with this project, presents itself as a global organisation with German components rather than as a German firm with a UK branch. The structure and self-image of the bank was thus an artefact of the symbols and strategies used. This flexibility also stems from the mobile nature of life in a City office, with its short-termist ethos and its employees continually shifting location while using their desks as symbolic bases. The fact that most corporations apparently go through restructurings, mergers or other changes regularly every few years also reflects the dynamic nature of the environment. In addition, the dependence on symbolism owes much to the information-focused nature of the City, in which companies and individuals communicate their self-images in strategic attempts to establish or re-establish themselves (Jackall 1988: 163-170). Not only is the City a symbolically driven environment, focused around the constant changing of strategies and the possession of multiple allegiances, but the corporations which make it up are also reliant upon symbolism.

The corporation described in Chapter 5 also includes diverse ways in which to be transnational, rather than simply being an elite enclave. The bank contains a variety of different groups: there are long-term expatriates, short-term expatriates, non-German Germanophiles, Head Office employees whose remit includes all international branches even though they themselves seldom leave Frankfurt, trainees, spouses and children. The same organisation has more and less global sections, all of which relate to the global in a number of different ways. In fact, it was often difficult to pick out who were the transnational businesspeople: the German expatriate who had never been to any country other than Germany and England, his wife, taking a leave of absence from her job to join him in the UK, the German manager with an English spouse, or the English contract employee with family connections all over the world and a job record which takes in stints in Hong Kong, South Africa and the Middle East. A number of other works on transnational businesspeople suggest that this is not atypical; both Sakai (2000: Chapter 2) and Kelly (2001) note distinctions between Japanese managers who are locally hired and those who are simply taking a job overseas for a couple of years. Comparing the work of both these researchers to Hamada's 1992 study of Japanese overseas managers, we can also see a change in the nature of the group as a whole over the intervening years, due to the increased emphasis on internationalisation in Japan and the shock of the 1996 financial crisis (Hook 1989). In some ways, the bank studied here can be considered a unified entity; in others, a divided one; in still others, a subunit of a wider entity, be it German business, the global financescape, or whatever it may be. All of these groups have very different relations to the local, the global, and capitalism, rather than simply being part of a TCC, or part of a hierarchical system opposing elite TCC members to subaltern local hires.

This internal diversity, furthermore, is often overlooked by researchers studying TNCs. While many articles and books exist considering the fact that a transnational corporation is made up of different branches (Mueller 1994; Ghoshal and Nohria 1989), little consideration (beyond some side remarks by Hofstede [1980: 105]) has been given to the fact that corporations also contain within themselves a variety of non-national groups with different relations to Head Office, the home country and each other. Using the TCS hypothesis, one can take into account these divisions, and the ways in which they shift as the company changes; according to this theory, any organisation is the intersection of different groups, and itself intersects with other organisations. By looking at TNCs as part of a TCS, divided and multiply engaged, we get a quite different picture than when we consider them as self-contained transnational entities, and are therefore able to take the corporation's internal as well as external engagements into account.

The TCS model also provides a more useful means of analysing of the respective influence of the home and host cultures on a corporation's culture than the more traditional, static models. Most research done under the business studies aegis, while it acknowledges that the relationships of the subsidiary and the headquarters are not only different in different circumstances (as in Ghoshal and Nohria 1989), frequently does not recognise that these relationships are actually dynamic, as are the degrees of influence of home and host cultures on any part of the organisation. More recently, critiques of this approach have developed, which, significantly, are focused on strategy and change; Kristensen and Zeitlin discuss how a company's strategy is dependent on its context and history, and affects the outcomes of its dealings (2001). Birkinshaw (2001) also discusses how the corporation's strategy depends on its internal and external environment. In the case discussed here, prior to the restructuring of the

bank, the influence of the home country was evidently seen as something largely confined to particular areas of the bank. Subsequently, however, as the changes began to take hold, employees felt a greater sense of engagement with the home country. Similarly, prior to the restructuring the existence of London Branch was of little concern to most people at Head Office, who were afterwards forced into greater contact with it. Head office and branch, also, had both developed different interpretations of the same symbols while at the same time remaining parts of the same organisation. The relationship between branch and head office is thus difficult to define in terms of a single TCC, but less so in terms of a transnational capitalist society.

The use of symbols, furthermore, does not in this case define a transnational elite and local underclass within the corporation as much as it does a continuously negotiated dynamic between global and local connections. While the relationship between groups in the office could be viewed in terms of dominant/subaltern, transnational/local conflict, in keeping with the TCC theory, in fact what took place seemed to be more of a complex negotiation between different groups in the office and the company of varying degrees of global engagement. Furthermore, not all of these were defined by ethnicity or control of resources. The use of language, for instance, or differences in meeting styles, involves other discourses than ethnicity, including section rivalry, age, cosmopolitanism, the difference between private and public space, and many others. There are significant differences between the global engagement symbolised by speaking English, and the global engagement symbolised by speaking German, and yet people can express both discourses, even simultaneously in the case of, say, English-speakers who also know German. Again, what we have is not a case of bounded groups in a dominant/subaltern relationship, but of actors linked in different ways, interacting in a changing, symbolically defined environment.

This can also be seen in the case of communications both within the office and with outside groups. In the case of “wartime” humour, a joke can be at once or sequentially offensive and inoffensive, depending on the context, the intention, the interpretations of the listeners and so forth. The use of information technology, also, did not so much define a bounded transnational social formation as it did a variety of groups using technology in different ways to engage with global and local actors. The nature of communication in the office is thus an interaction of many groups, individuals and organisations in a system which is global, local and many things in between, simultaneously and at different times. Communications technology thus does not define an isolated TCC, but a multiply engaged TCS, reproducing itself by means of strategically deployed information.

Finally, the interactions of the Germans in the study with outside institutions also shows them to be part of a TCS rather than a TCC. The cultural institutions, the DSL, and the various business organisations are all linked to the German transnational businesspeople working in the banks; furthermore, they appear to unite diverse elements under a transnational business remit. While there may be divisions between Embassy staff, short-term expatriates and long-term emigrants, for instance, all of them have children at the DSL; the DSL itself is talked of in terms of belonging to the “German” school system, with the differences between regional educational systems in Germany itself being glossed over. However, there are differences in the ways in which members of each group experience transnational capitalism. The adaptation of children, while they may all be attending the same school, varies from actor to actor, and from case to case, and differs from that of their parents. Similarly, different people going to conferences, using institutions and so forth gain different things from them and deploy them symbolically in different ways, as witness the behaviour of the diverse attendees

of the GBF conference. Furthermore, all of the institutions discussed here may be transnational and capitalist, but they are transnational and capitalist in different ways to each other. The businesspeople and institutions therefore are better described as elements of a TCS than fellow-members of a TCC.

Furthermore, one again sees complex patterns of relationships in the interactions between businesspeople and cultural and business institutions. Even people who do not participate in or make use of an institution are affected by its presence, and indeed the very act of not participating may constitute a symbolic use of it. By defining themselves in opposition to the Embassy staff, for instance, businesspeople are aware of and, on one level, are using the former's definition of themselves and of Germanness and cosmopolitanism as part of their own self-definition. Furthermore, there are always exceptions; philanthropic contact between businesspeople and charity organisations, for instance. The diverse origins and agendas of the people at both conferences described here suggest members of a global society with different ways of relating to Germanness and cosmopolitanism; owing to the multivalency of symbols, even non-German people can in some circumstances lay claim to Germanness. Indeed, as in the case of the Goethe Institut pamphlet placed on the bulletin board at the bank, symbols of Germanness can also be used to define non-Germans. The relationship of the different groups to each other is thus not one of people unified within (or excluded from) a TCC, but of different members of a TCS.

As well as providing a more flexible way of defining groups in transnational business, furthermore, the TCS theory also paints a picture of how members of such groups negotiate between the local and the global. The German businesspeople may form an elite transnational enclave in some ways, but they also mediate between two or more geographical localities, and in ways which change over time. For instance, one of

my friends from the bank was living in London and maintaining a flat in Frankfurt when I met him, but by the end of the study had moved back to Frankfurt and was in a job which involved daily communication with many locations around the globe, but no travelling. There were also, as noted, quite different groups around the bank, who related to the local and the global in different ways. All of this, furthermore, was achieved through symbolic self-presentation; by defining themselves symbolically, these individuals could maintain global and local contacts, but change the nature of these connections subtly as their circumstances change. The different groups in and around the bank mediate the global and the local in particular ways, through the fact that they draw on each other for their symbolic self-presentation and in turn contribute to that of others. The TCS theory thus demonstrates how the German businesspeople were able to mediate between the local and the global in their daily lives.

The sheer diversity of the ways in which this was achieved, finally, suggests that the relationship between global and local cannot be properly defined using the TCC theory. Rather than maintaining their own self-definition and imposing it upon local subordinates, the German transnational businesspeople would incorporate local UK symbols of cosmopolitanism and Germanness into their repertoires. What it is to be “German” is determined in this case as much by the English definition of Germanness as the German one. What it is to be “cosmopolitan” is, in the final analysis, at least partly determined by local standards as well. There is also the case of the Anglo-German Chamber of Commerce: the presence of a German Chamber of Commerce in London means that a German local institution—and with more German than English business significance—has been established in the UK for the purpose of helping UK companies set up in Germany. The sheer complexity of ways in which the global and the local relate in the case of Germans in the UK thus necessitates the use of a

symbolically engaged, broadly focused model such as the TCS theory rather than one predicated on dominant/subaltern relations.

While they can be seen in some circumstances as a solidary elite group, then, the examples given suggest that it is more useful to consider German businesspeople in the UK as part of a wider transnational capitalist society, internally divided and externally engaged, than as a transnational capitalist class. What seems, considered one way, as a closed-off, isolated elite can also be demonstrated, through an examination of its use of symbols, to contain a variety of subgroups and include external connections, transnational and local. The use of symbols does not only provide a continuously changing way of navigating the business environment through the use of telecommunications, but also allows actors to negotiate between local and more global social formations.

In sum, then, the examples discussed in the preceding chapters demonstrate that the German transnational businesspeople do not so much form a transnational capitalist class in and of themselves, but are a part of a wider transnational capitalist society. This is a theoretical construct which defines a sprawling, worldwide, multiply connected social network, which is globally engaged in many ways, but which also includes various links to different sorts of local entities.

Multiple Engagements: The TCS, the Global and the Local

The TCS model, however, is not simply a way of explaining how people in the global financial world interact amongst themselves and with other transnational groups. It can also go some way towards explaining the elusive and multifaceted relationship between the concepts of “global” and “local.” In this section we will consider the wider

implications of the concept, and how the symbolic construction of the transnational capitalist society can provide a model of how the local and the global are related.

The question of how to define the relationship between the local and the global has resulted in a number of diverse, even contradictory, answers. In the sceptical camp, Smith argues that there is no connection between the two, saying that global social formations, lacking signifiers of geography, history and so forth, cannot “support” identification in the same way that a region or a nation can (1995). Mintz, similarly, argues that globalisation is effectively just colonialism by any other name (1998: 120, 117, 125). The sceptical viewpoint, assuming that they acknowledge that the global exists, thus is that there is little or no connection between the global and the local, and that, if there are, the local always dominates.

Hyperglobalisers, similarly, argue for a sharp distinction between global and local. In this case, however, the global frequently dominates. Robertson speaks in terms of localisation as the reverse side of globalisation, but which goes on at the same time as a kind of reaction to its processes (1992: 146). Waters, similarly, describes how consumption is universalised and localised at once: Levis sold in Europe are made in the Philippines (1996: 58). Fardon remarks that the global is local and vice versa: “the terms work off one another through mutual provocation” (1995: 2). Hyperglobalisers thus tend to argue that the local is an adjunct to the global, or else is a part of it rather than a distinct entity in its own right, or alternatively that the global is the dominant aspect of the relationship.

Within the transformationalist camp, however, there are several different ways of constructing the relationship between global and local. One response has been to define the two as distinct but connected: Hannerz, for instance, describes a scenario in which some, mainly elite, individuals are globalised and everyone else is localised, a

formulation which agrees broadly with Sklair (1996; Sklair 2001). A second has been to suggest that the act of transnationalism is one of linking localities, as argued by Guarnizo and Smith, who propose the term “translocal” to define the act of building symbolic bridges between diverse areas (1998: 13). This would include the practice by nations which stop short of statehood, as Castells diplomatically puts it, of making use of the international media and global communications technology to support and further their cause (1997: 52, 80, 84). This definition can also include many different sorts of relationships, however; Yeung cites three such “region states,” Wales, Italy and Silicon Valley, all of which relate to the global in different ways and are quite different in and of themselves (1998: 294). Researchers working in the same area and within the same theoretical remit have thus come up with quite different explanations of the relationships between the local and the global.

Castells, furthermore, puts forward an explanation of the relationship which is not simply a matter of global and local, but of an opposition between the Net and the Self, which includes global and local components (1996: 3). He points out commonalities between national groups, regional groups, and groups such as the green and gay rights movements, in that they have local aspects but also construct themselves over space and time through symbols, using a variety of media (1997: 123, 215). In this formulation—again, considering the same phenomena as the other researchers mentioned here—Castells comes up with a model suggesting that we think in terms of multiply engaged social networks with local and global connections.

In business studies, the question of the relationship between global and local is also much debated through studies of home versus host country effect, and with similar results. Some writers tend to argue that the one dominates the other (Hickson and Pugh 1995; Bergsten et al. 1978). Others suggest that there are different kinds of firms

incorporating different relationships to home and host countries, as in Ghoshal and Nohria's typology of global/local scenarios (1989: 325). Still others debate the merits of ways of structuring a firm in particular conditions (Morgan 1997). As in anthropology, therefore, most researchers in business studies have come up with a variety of different, even opposed, ways of relating the global to the local.

It thus seems that there are a number of ways of describing the relationship between global and local social formations, all of which seem to hold true under their particular circumstances. Held et al., summing up their discussion of the impact of globalisation on local entities, conclude that "contemporary globalisation is not reducible to a single causal process but involves a complex configuration of causal logics" (1999: 436). They note that globalisation is uneven and inconsistent (442), and say that the impact of globalisation on state power is the "confluence of globalising tendencies" (437). They also note the difficulty of drawing the boundaries of a political community in a global/regional world order (446). Tomlinson, similarly, argues that globalisation should be considered in terms of "complex connectivity" (1999a: 2), that is, that the global and the local are connected in a variety of ways, not just through a simple all-defining process. While it seems to be generally agreed that there are many ways of explaining the relationship between the global and the local, it is less easy to explain how this is done, and how this multiplicity of relationships is in fact possible.

If we consider the connections between local and global in terms of symbolic self-presentation, however, things become clearer. As we have noted, symbols can hold different meanings at once due to their multivalent properties, which allow one to express local connections—such as working for a German firm—and also global connections—such as the firm's UK subsidiaries, or its global reach—at the same time. We have also discussed how the multivalent properties of symbols mean that what

seems like the same sort of relationship—say, between German and UK employees in a bank branch—can differ quite strongly from each other at the ground level in terms of meaning and interpretation. It thus seems that, in transnational capitalism, the “complex connectivity” which Tomlinson describes is achieved through the use of symbols.

This model of complex connectivity through symbolic self-presentation is supported by the examples in this thesis. We have seen how the use of symbols allows German businesspeople to be part of definite groups in some cases but not in others, to acknowledge more than one allegiance at the same time, and to develop complex webs of connection and division within a single organisation. Each of the four groups in the studied bank had quite different connections with Germany, the UK and the firm, even though these were expressed through the same discourses. A comparison of Head Office and London Branch also reveals very different ways of constructing the relationship between the local and the global, but in fact the symbols used to define these are common to both of them, and there is also much communication and exchange of symbols between the two groups through interbranch meetings, exchanges and so forth. In the case of *Heimat*, furthermore, the flexible symbolic discourses associated with term can be used not simply to link the local with the global (by providing, say, an Argentinean German with an “imagined” homeland as a means of identification [see Goltz 1998: 6, 69]), but to link various sorts of global with various sorts of local entities (linking any combination of town, state, and country with any combination of firm, financescape, mediascape, cosmopolitan group and so forth). In the case of business, the way in which the relationship between home and host country, or branch and head office, is defined is symbolic, and therefore subject to change as the strategy in question changes. Through the use of symbols, the Germans connect, mediate between and

negotiate not only “the global” and “the local,” but different ways of being global and local at different times and in different places.

The global and the local are thus related not simply in terms of elite-subaltern relationships or direct contact between particular entities, but through the strategic self-presentation of particular actors in a complex, multiply engaged transnational capitalist society. The essential nature of communications technology to the existence the TCS, and the fact that this can be used in a variety of ways, provides the medium of self-presentation. However, the actors in this sphere can be more or less global in different contexts, and have diverse connections to the local and the global through their own activities and through their links to outside institutions. Through these activities and the symbols they express during them, actors are continually constructing themselves and their environment, and are in turn being constructed by others. Consequently, the relationship between global and local is continually redefined to fit the situation through the self-presentation of individual and collective actors; furthermore, the concepts of the local and the global are symbolic constructs themselves, residing more in the collective definition and redefinition of people using the ideas. The multiply engaged, globalising nature of the TCS means that it is predicated on, and influenced by, the use of symbols, and consequently that actors within this society are able to link global and local activities through symbolic discourses.

At one point during my fieldwork, I asked the director of an Anglo-German business organisation to define globalisation. His response was to say that “Globalisation simultaneously forges bonds and allows for the actions of culture.” Globalisation, at least in the context of transnational business, is something which allows for local connections, but also for the action of diverse sorts of culture, corporate, national and otherwise, of varying degrees of transnationalism. The

transnational capitalist class described by Sklair thus might be better seen as one way of perceiving a particular subsection of a transnational capitalist society; it is not so much solidary and detached as it is fragmented, changing and engaged with the transnational, the local and the financescape in diverse ways, and which is constructed and expressed through symbolic self-presentation. The nature of the transnational capitalist society thus not only means that we have to consider transnational groups as networks of relationships rather than bounded entities, but also that, in order to understand the relationship between local and global, we must look to the ways in which these relationships are expressed.

It therefore seems that the Transnational Capitalist Society theory does not simply provide a means of defining the webs of relationships which are inherent in global financial activities. Rather, the fact that the concept is predicated on the use of symbolic discourses means that it can explain the complexity and diversity of ways in which global and local social entities and activities are related.

Conclusion

In the case of German transnational businesspeople, then, the images of Germanness and cosmopolitanism can be used to define an elite TCC. However, the act of self-definition on their part requires an acknowledgement of, and engagement with, diverse modes of being German, transnational and capitalist. Furthermore, to look only at the one definition of this group is to fail to consider the place of German transnational businesspeople in the wider TCS, and to avoid the question, raised by their presence, of how to define the complex and diverse ways in which these actors navigate between “the global” and “the local.”

The fact that the presentation of self through images of national and transnational allegiance takes place in different ways in different contexts and on multiple levels suggests, therefore, that the transnational capitalist class is best considered, not in isolation, but as part of a wider Transnational Capitalist Society. More importantly, however, it seems that the TCS's symbolic structure is the key to understanding the relationships between different sorts of global and local social formations.

Conclusion

Over the past eight chapters, we have examined a variety of ways in which symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism can be used by German transnational businesspeople in the City of London. The results of this limited overview suggest that, while the “transnational capitalist class” theory is not the most ideal one for considering the lifestyles of transnational businesspeople in detail, it can form the basis for more comprehensive theoretical models. More significantly, however, the case of the German transnational businesspeople also has implications in a number of theoretical and epistemological areas in both anthropology and business studies.

The Transnational Capitalist Class and the Transnational Capitalist Society

Sklair’s “transnational capitalist class” theory, as discussed above, proposes that a global elite is emerging which consists of transnationally-operating businesspeople, bureaucrats and media professionals, who maintain a detached, “outward-focused global” rather than “inward-focused local” perspective, who value cosmopolitanism, share similar lifestyles, exert control over the workplace and whose economic interests are globally linked (2001: 18-22). As we have seen, this theory, while it does fit the case of the German transnational businesspeople, does so only at a superficial level. While they may be globally engaged, connected with each other through social networks and maintain a cosmopolitan attitude which is arguably out of step with that of their fellow-citizens, an examination of their self-presentation and social interactions suggests that they are collectively not as detached from the local as the above theory suggests.

Furthermore, as individuals they can be seen to be “transnational” and “globally-focused” in quite different ways, without a single categorical way of relating to global and local entities.

The conclusion of this study is therefore that, while the TCC theory can be used to describe the Germans in broad terms, it fails to take into account the complex, ongoing and flexible ways in which they use symbols to present themselves according to particular strategies.

In order to retain the advantages for study of Sklair's model, but to take this increased level of diversity into account, I would propose to build upon it by adding material from Castells' three-volume study of social organisation in the "Information Age," and Appadurai's "global landscapes" model. The resultant formulation, which I tentatively refer to as the "transnational capitalist society" model, considers the Germans, not as part of a global, detached "class," but as included within a globe-wide theoretical construct which comprises all actors who are engaging in business activity across borders at any given time. The TCS also includes the links between different transnational business social formations, and particular local entities inasmuch as they engage in transnational capitalism. As we have seen, this theory fits the case of the German transnational businesspeople described here much better than the TCC model, as the former theory is able to take into account the different forms and degrees of transnational engagement of people in this group, and to allow for their links to various sorts of local social formations. By complementing and augmenting Sklair's theory with other, more anthropological ones, we can then build up a more detailed, comprehensive picture of life among transnational economic elites.

The TCS theory also provides an explanation for the wide discrepancies found in studies of transnational communities. For example, one might take the reports of the researchers conducting projects under the auspices of the ESRC Transnational Communities Programme. While some participants described very communal groups in their reports (Kavechi and Lane 2001; Acton 1998), others argued that their investigations had revealed something rather more along the lines of a transnational network (Bridget Anderson 2001a) or a group whose transnational connections fade over time (Layton-Henry 2002). Some argued, on the basis of their findings, that "transnational communities" was something of a misnomer (Ballard 2002). The TCS theory, however, explains this discrepancy by suggesting that transnational activity takes different forms under different conditions (and that these forms may change over time),

and also that a single sphere of interest—ethnic, capitalist, media-related, and so forth—may accommodate many different sorts of transnational activity.

As we have seen, the TCS theory also casts some light on the relationship between the local and the global. The fact that there are so many different ways of describing this relationship does not speak so much of different perspectives on the same activity, or of different ways of describing it, as different forms of social connections falling under the same broad remit. The relationship is not so much one-to-one as it is complex and symbolically mediated, accommodating many ways of acting. Ultimately, the concepts of “the local” and “the global” are problematised; it seems as if there are many globals and locals, without a categorical distinction between them.

The case of the German transnational businesspeople also suggests that the reason for the diversity of relationships between global and local, and of the different sorts of transnational connections, lies in the importance of symbols to cross-border activity. We have seen how symbols of Germanness and cosmopolitanism can be used to express different degrees of transnational engagement, different sorts of group allegiance, and different associations with localities, in ways which subtly change as the interpretations of the symbols used are changed and negotiated by the actors involved. Symbols appear to draw at least some of their power, in this context, from the importance of communications technology to globalisation; as was discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the global financial world’s dependence on such technology means that it is effectively a symbolically constructed entity. Consequently, as Castells notes in his volume *The Power of Identity*, symbolic self-presentation and the ability to express belonging becomes even more powerful and significant (1997: 2). The complex, multivalent nature of symbolism, furthermore, makes it an ideal means for negotiating and navigating between group affiliations and positions. The fact that symbols are used both for self-presentation and for defining social groups (see Goffman 1956, Cohen 1985) means that actors

define social groups while presenting themselves, and the act of defining social groups affects self-presentation. Symbols are thus essential to social interaction in transnational situations.

The symbolic nature of the relationship between global and local means that actors can use symbols to negotiate between different sorts of local and global spaces. The individuals whom we have seen in this study possess links to local groups and to transnational ones—in this case, most notably, Germany and transnational businesses. However, the act of negotiating between groups links the groups themselves, making for complex webs of communication between Germany, the UK and the transnational financial sphere, and taking in a number of variations along the way. Transnational capitalism is neither detached from the local, nor simply a case of “trans-local” activity, as there are components of it which do not take place in any one national setting, but which form the basis for a wide, diverse transnational society. The TCS theory thus not only provides a model of social organisation in transnational settings, but suggests ways in which symbols are used to negotiate between global and local social spaces.

The TCS theory is not, however, without its limits. One might, for instance, argue that it takes things too far in the opposite direction, being too general where Sklair’s theory was too specific. While Sklair’s definition of the TCC does not take into account the diversity of connections of transnational businesspeople, it might also seem that the TCS theory incorporates too much diversity, including so many forms of organisation that it might simply best be called “the global financescape” or simply “the global.” While this is a good point, the words “transnational” and “capitalist” do provide definition to the social formation in question; the concept refers to social activity in the financial/capitalist and transnational spheres. Furthermore, referring to them as part of the TCS does not make the groups within it any more or less discrete; rather, it provides a theoretical model for exploring the ways in which these groups interact. It must also be said that one of the aims of this exploration is to further expose the artificiality of the exercise of drawing boundaries between groups, a finding which may apply to non-transnational groups as well (see R. Jenkins 1996: 98). That having been said,

however, one thing which is evident is that the TCS model is simply a starting point, a theory formulated on the basis of a single case; more research will be required in order to refine it into something more workable.

The case of the German transnational businesspeople thus calls into question the concept of global versus local, to say nothing of German versus Other, and suggests ways of modifying and reformulating these in light of the Transnational Capitalist Society theory. Future development of this hypothesis may thus allow researchers to develop more viable models of transnational social activity.

Future Development

By suggesting different ways of looking at transnational social organisation in the financescape, then, the TCS theory opens up possibilities for future research. It would, for instance, be useful to expand upon the current study with comparative work in the global financescape, to test how far the model applies. One might expand the study to include Germans in other global financial centres, such as New York and Hong Kong, or consider transnational bank employees of other nationalities in the City of London. One might also, given that the TCS theory suggests that groups change over time, revisit the sites of this study at a later date for a comparative analysis. Another possibility is to conduct research in other areas of transnational activity which are not capitalist-focused, to explore whether the TCS model can be extended to these areas or whether it should be restricted simply to the economic sphere. Finally, one might problematise the whole concept of elite/subaltern relations in transnational settings, not simply in areas relating to capitalism. A comparative approach thus might prove useful for later testing of this hypothesis with regard to its implications for other transnational social formations, capitalist and otherwise.

It might also, in light of this, be worth reconsidering earlier studies of transnational subaltern economic groups. Portes' Dominicans, for instance, are said to be engaging in a form

of resistance to domination by a transnational capitalist elite; however, the case of the German transnational businesspeople suggests that there are inextricable connections between elites and subalterns, which further implies that the Dominicans' resistance activities might be more problematic than it seems at first (1998). Bridget Anderson's study of migrant domestic workers, also, describing as it does a group whose members originate in many diverse localities, form more or less focused and/or ethnically based social groups in other areas, and have links to the political and ambassadorial global elite, suggests another group which might be worth considering less in terms of community and network, than in terms of actors possessing multiple links and engagements united under a single collective designation (2001b). Similarly, the many studies which are done of a single ethnic or business group—"Asian Youth," for instance, or "Turks in Germany"—might be worth reconsidering in terms, not of unified categories, but of groups with their own subdivisions, agendas and social interactions. We can see this to some extent in Miller and Slater's study of Internet use among Trinidadians, as they employ a global medium to encourage local connections, but not necessarily those in Trinidad (2000: Chapter 3). It is also apparent in Bauman's study of "Southallis," in which what people say and what they do are frequently two different things (1996). It might thus be worth examining, or even reexamining, other transnational groups not as units, but as divided parts of wider social groups with global and local connections.

It might even be worthwhile, in light of this study, reconsidering the concept of "transnationalism" and "the transnational." The German case suggests that there is no blanket set of criteria through which people either "are" or "are not" transnational, but of different types, degrees and kinds of transnational activity. One can, for instance, ask whether a German who is more or less permanently settled in England and conducts most interactions in the UK, but still reads German newspapers online and asks colleagues to bring back consignments of *Weisswurst* for him when on business trips to Frankfurt, is more or less transnational than someone who commutes between London and Frankfurt on a weekly basis. The difference, my

findings suggest, is one of degree and type rather than one of categorically being or not being transnational. It might thus be worth doing further work which problematises, not only the concept of a transnational elite, but that of transnationalism in general.

These findings also have methodological implications for the study of business. Although it is a common business-studies critique of qualitative research that non-numerical, descriptive data are a sort of “noise” distracting from the main aim of the exercise (e.g. Hofstede 1980: 314, 339), this case suggests that it is much more significant than that. As we have seen, the German transnational businesspeople’s connections to other groups of varying degrees of transnationalism and status are what allows them to carry out their strategies in the global financescape. By having local links and connections to other sorts of transnational groups, they are able to mobilise resources on many levels; by ignoring these connections, then, we miss out on one of the key aspects of organisation in transnational corporations (see Andersson et al. 2000). As Chapman argues, the use of extensive, broad-ranging data makes for a superficial treatment of the material even as it makes for greater possibilities of generalisation (1997: 11). There is, therefore, support for d’Iribane, Chapman and others’ claim that an ethnographic study yields insights which a nonethnographic one does not, which are nonetheless valuable to business (1997; 1997). In this case it is only by looking at the qualitative data that one sees the connections and interactions which actually cause the phenomena measured by the more broad-level studies.

Furthermore, by ignoring the information imparted by the qualitative data, issues which could be significant to managers in day-to-day business are ignored. For instance, to treat London Branch as a unit with regard to the restructuring described in Chapter 5 would be to ignore the different perspectives on, and issues relating to, the programme which the different cohorts possessed. This could result, as we have seen, in an unnecessary amount of friction between Head Office and employees who feel that their needs are not being met. Hofstede defended his use of quantitative methodologies to study culture in organisations by saying that

he was attempting to develop a broad overview of cultural difference; however, he has been criticised for missing out on important details due to his statistical approach (1980: 314; d'Iribane 1997: 36). While Harris' argument that ethnographic and nonethnographic methods should be combined to give a holistic picture of the organisation is well taken (2001), it is difficult to say what a statistical approach would have contributed to determining the issues and concerns of the employees of the banks in question. By not examining the cultural richness of the material relating to businesspeople, managers as well as researchers miss out on crucial issues.

This study also contributes to theoretical development in business studies, in that it suggests that symbols may deserve more attention than they have hitherto been given. Although B. Turner (1992) and Morgan (1997) discuss the use of symbols in group formation to some extent, and countless books exist encouraging businesspeople to improve their powers of self-presentation (Lurie 1981: 26), this seems to be the extent of the discussion. Furthermore, the latter works are less concerned with the actual use of symbols than how they should ideally be used, and the former focus on group formation at the expense of other uses of symbols—and, also, seldom discuss cases in which the use of symbols does not have the desired effect. This is surprising when one considers the increasing importance of symbols in business, with the processes of globalisation encouraging the rise of advertising, public relations and personal presentation (see Jackall 1988: 163-170). As the business world becomes increasingly communication-focused, so the use of symbolism becomes ever more important, and consequently more attention must be paid to the use of symbols in business.

In the case of anthropology, certain theoretical issues are also highlighted. This study suggests chiefly that more attention needs to be given, not only to elite groups, but to the relationship between so-called “elites” and “subalterns.” The tendency for anthropologists to fall into the trap of assuming that all subalterns are heroically resisting oppression has already been noted by Guarnizo and Smith (1998: 24), but it should also be apparent that the divide

between elite and subaltern can be complex. Jews in the 19th-century City of London, for instance, were very much a financial elite, but were also an excluded group, subject to attack and rejection (see Panayi 1995: 140, 84, 256-257); today, non-white people face a similar (if less oppressive) combination of financial acceptance but social exclusion (Courtney and Thompson 1996: 169). Although this thesis can only go a little way towards problematising this issue, it suggests that anthropologists need to pay less attention to particular groups, and more to the connections and transactions between them.

Finally, this project also suggests modifications to the ways in which transnational social formations are studied. Increasingly, the divided and multiply engaged nature of transnational social formations is coming to be recognised, and several anthropologists are suggesting that changes in research methodology and descriptive writing may be necessary (Appadurai 1997: 115). This bears a striking parallel to developments in the study of identity. Early work on the subject considered it as a solid, possessible thing, but subsequently it was found to be more diffuse and subject to negotiation than had at first seemed (Banks 1996). Here too, the groups which were portrayed as solid units in earlier studies now appear as diffuse entities, multiply linked and internally divided. It might thus be worth taking another look at the way in which anthropology considers group formation in the transnational arena.

Although much more needs to be done in this area, then, the study of German transnational businesspeople suggests that group formation, in the transnational sphere at least, may be less a matter of solid, definite entities than of diffuse collections of links. Furthermore, it raises a number of issues relating to theory and epistemology in both business studies and anthropology.

Conclusion

In sum, then, the key result of this investigation has been that transnational businesspeople use symbols to present themselves in ways too complex, shifting and subtle to define them simply

as a transnational capitalist class. Rather, they should be considered as a part, or several parts, of a wider social construct along the lines of a transnational capitalist society. This conclusion, however, raises interesting questions which could impact on the way in which symbols are viewed in business studies, the way in which anthropologists consider group formation in transnational environments, and the uses of methodology in both disciplines.

Appendix I

Population Statistics on Germans in the City of London

While neither the German Embassy nor the German-British Chamber of Commerce release current statistics on the actual number of Germans in England, a 1991 survey by the Census of Population Special Workplace Statistics, based on a 10% sample, estimates about 1,340 German-born workers, out of a total number of 246,920 workers, in the City of London. Approximately 1,080 of these were in the financial and business industries. This sample, however, may well include at least some non-Germans born in Germany, for instance the children of English servicemen or -women (Peter Large, Corporation of the City of London, personal communication).

According to a 1993 survey by the German-British Chamber of Commerce, there were 976 branches or subsidiaries of German companies in the U.K. at the time (the initial survey, in 1974, reported 359 such institutions), 20 of these being financial or insurance companies, 17 of which were banks. All twenty were located within the City of London, and the Greater London Area had the highest concentration of German companies in the service, financial and real estate industries of all the UK regions surveyed (Braun 1993).

Appendix II:

Excerpts From My Report on The Second Bank

The following consists of two excerpts from my report to the general and personnel management of the second bank: the first being general recommendations for improvement, illustrating some of the key issues in the restructuring of the bank, the second being an outline of the difference, as employees perceived it, between English and German “business culture.”

A. Recommendations

All of these recommendations should be taken as suggestions; it would be unfeasible to implement all, and some are more practicable than others. The limited time available for fieldwork, also, may have caused the researcher to misunderstand certain issues. However, some suggestions may prove helpful as general guidelines or as the starting point for plans, programmes or ideas for future development.

General

Improving Communication

While the physical distance between London and Frankfurt makes frequent informal communication of the sort held between colleagues in the same branch impossible, the following suggestions may be helpful in encouraging good communication:

- Speeding up the reporting process by any means possible
- Encouragement of regular communication with Global Heads [of department, located in Head Office]
- Reinforcement new reporting structure by means of guidelines, physical relocation of departments and so forth

One might also promote a “dual” communication system, one hierarchical, between London and Global Heads, one lateral, between London Heads of Department. Such a system is already in development via the P[roduct] M[anagement] G[roup]s, which have been set up to provide a cross-functional basis to the lines of reporting, and thus to maintain communication between departments without compromising the direct-line system.

While it is too late to address the communication issues which arose during the process of integration itself, the following guidelines may be useful in future cases:

- Making communication the top priority
- Making public even the most trivial information about the situation at hand
- Use of all possible media e.g. Intranet, bulletin board, newsletter, etc. as organs of communication

Enabling Staff for Change Management

While staff have received change management training, the interviews suggest that more effort in this direction may be helpful. Some suggestions are:

- Making change management education specific rather than general
- Ongoing rather than one-off change management programmes
- Positive reinforcement of changes

With regard to departments having difficulty accepting the new divisions, it might be worth looking at [DEPARTMENT NAME], where the cultural changes have been solidly accepted, despite some initial problems. In this case:

- A symbolic break was made with the old system, with departments being physically relocated
- The changes were associated, not with the breakup of an old group, but the formation of a new one
- A strong collective identity was encouraged by naming practices, relocation, and social activities

The solidarity of London Branch departments can thus be used to encourage cultural change, through developing the identity of the new group along the same lines as those of already existing groups in the branch.

The following practices are proving successful regarding the changes in leadership:

- having the old leaders endorse the changes as much as possible
- distancing the old leaders from the new organisation
- encouragement of contact with new leaders

It is thus advisable to continue with these practices until staff have fully adjusted.

Changing the Outlook on Frankfurt Head Office

Staff ambivalence towards Head Office may be improved by encouraging a positive attitude to its culture. Suggestions as to how to achieve this include:

- Following the Frankfurt social calendar where possible
- Encouraging social meetings with Frankfurt colleagues
- Encouraging travel to Frankfurt
- Following the guidelines for promotion of German culture in section 5.1.4
- Encouraging staff exchanges and/or cross-branch hiring

In this case, furthermore, London's sense of group identity should be "expanded" where possible to be more inclusive of Head Office; as one manager noted, London's proximity to Frankfurt means that the branch is less "foreign" than those further overseas. Some suggestions include:

- Redesigning extant images of branch organisation to fit the new structure
- Describing the new structure, not in terms of Frankfurt and London, but in terms of a global organisation with a German focus
- Positive reinforcement of the new focus (see above)

It might also be helpful to prepare a document outlining the distinctive points of London and its environment, to be sent to visitors, trainees, expatriates and so forth before their arrival.

Promoting Mutual Understanding of Cultural Differences

The encouragement of mutual appreciation of English and German culture will make for better understanding between branch and Head Office, and among branch staff. Staff may be encouraged to read books about cultural differences (suggestions for which may be found in Appendix 3), and one might also incorporate cross-cultural activities into the current social calendar, for instance by:

- holding excursions to areas of interest in both countries: within England, day-trips to Stratford, Oxford, Canterbury etc. can be easily arranged, and group tours of various German sites or areas might also be arranged, perhaps as an incentive for language class students
- Establishing a dedicated bulletin board, possibly in the canteen, for cartoons, articles, etc. on both cultures
- specific excursions for trainees, expatriates and other newcomers

In particular, more could be done to encourage understanding of German culture than English, as there is currently more incentive for the German staff to learn about England than vice versa. Some suggestions include:

- Encouraging language lessons
- Including German-focused events in the extant repertoire of employee social events, for instance:
 - Carnival and/or *Oktoberfest* parties
 - German cultural evenings
 - Dinners at German restaurants
 - German wine- or beer-tasting
- Promotion of German-focused events and institutions
- German magazines could be made publicly available

Summary

Broadly speaking, then, the following may be helpful in staff adjustment:

- Focus on Communication
- Encouraging a positive attitude to change and multiculturalism
- Positive reinforcement of desired attitudes

All of these can be done using existing London Branch structures and practices to assist the integration of the branch as a whole.

B. English and German Cultural Differences in the Office

While it is not possible to cover all the similarities and differences between German and English business cultures, one can summarise some of those important to the staff of [BANK'S NAME] London Branch. Due to lack of space, what follows is limited to the most general observations; a list of further reading on both business cultures may be found in Appendix 2.

a) Communication Style

i) Conversational Style

Germans described the English as polite, “hard to understand,” and even evasive; by contrast, Germans were seen as blunt, direct, and inclined to make remarks which the English considered too personal, although they were also seen as more polite to customers than the English. A German-speaking UK employee, for instance, contrasted German managers, who would openly correct employees’ mistakes, with English managers, who would drop hints that employees were on the wrong track. German humour also tends to be more deadpan than the English, and in some cases what was intended to be a joke was taken seriously as a result. Because these differences were generally understood, there were few misunderstandings except among new arrivals and trainees; however, the most popular managers were those who were able to switch back and forth between UK and German communication styles depending on their audience.

ii) Philosophy of Language

The differences between each group’s attitude to language hinged on the status of English. Many in the UK, English being the “global language of business,” did not learn other languages. The Germans, by contrast, did not expect foreigners to speak their language; many speak English as, for them, its use is a mark of cosmopolitanism. While some staff from both groups saw no reason for the English to become bilingual, others felt that language skills were increasingly necessary for international business success.

b) Business Style

i) Approach to Business: “Long-term” Versus “Short-term”

Germans were said to have a long-term, and UK staff a short-term, approach to business; one manager spoke of the UK being “deal-focused” and Germany “relationship-focused.” This affects the conduct of business in each culture.

ii) Use and Conduct of Meetings

German and English businesspeople show a marked difference with regard to conducting meetings. While the English usually engage in a small amount of social conversation at the beginning of meetings, and will often combine meetings with a social activity such as lunch, the Germans tend to start in on business straight away, leaving social talk for other occasions, and to draw a firmer distinction between work and play (see section c (ii), below). Both, also, view meetings as being for different purposes: in one incident, a mixed group at a two-day workshop, in which one day was to be spent data-gathering and one writing up results, failed to gather enough data on Day One. The English and Americans wanted to spend Day Two data-gathering as well, while the Germans wanted to follow the schedule as written. The Anglo-Saxons were more flexible with regard to the schedule but not the material, and the Germans were more flexible with regard to the material but not the schedule, suggesting that each had different expectations from the same activity.

iii) Conduct of Business

The conduct of business was something of a sore point between Germans and English, with people tending to view their own group as based on conflict and the other as consensual. It is likely that both groups are, again, focusing on different aspects of business. Given their differences in communication style, the Germans may not realise that the English are arguing when in fact they are, and what an English person may see as an authoritarian manner may be standard communication style to a German. Also, one English mode of expressing displeasure in meetings—“walking out”—was seen by a German as impolite; Germans thus might be seen as “consensual” for remaining in meetings, and the English for not challenging the point. Both groups thus value the same traits, but have different ways of expressing these.

In general, the German business system was seen as placing more value on hierarchies and rank structures than the British (although this did necessarily not mean that individual Germans valued hierarchy; often they were its harshest critics). The Matrix Integration system was perceived as “German” by some English employees on the grounds that it was focused on linear hierarchies and individual responsibility, as opposed to, as one put it, individual accountability coupled with collective responsibility on the part of the board of directors.

c) Use of Space, Time and Body Language

i) Proxemics (use of space by a culture)

English and German office proxemics were broadly similar, as both cultures

- have an office layout with desks close to the walls and the centre left open
- have separate “meeting” rooms containing a central table and chairs
- demarcate individuals’ work areas with items of personal property
- mark hierarchies by giving higher-status individuals separate rooms.

However, the English work and live in smaller spaces; they are also more inclined to designate rooms and areas by function. The Germans seemed more security-conscious. Finally, a comparison of office proxemics between [BANK'S NAME] London and [BANK'S NAME] Frankfurt suggests that while "open plan" office space is the norm in the former, the latter is more inclined towards closed-off offices and less shared space.

ii) Chronemics (use/perception of time by a culture)

Most English people saw the Germans as "punctual," and were less concerned about lateness than the Germans. The English were also less inclined to distinguish between work and leisure time: while all branch staff worked to an "English" plan, Germans outside the UK usually work to set hours and engage in leisure afterwards, while the English will take advantage of a lull in work to play, but will also work to the task rather than to the schedule. As a result of these different work patterns, each culture regarded the other as more inclined to leisure.

iii) Kinesics (body language)

Personal space is larger for the English than for Germans in daily conversation (although this is reversed during travel); the small German personal space and relative lack of conversational gestures were sometimes seen as threatening by the English. The English also avoid physical contact except in intimate situations, where the Germans will touch others casually on the back and arms. The English, also, expected more relaxed body language in a work situation than did Germans.

d) Social Systems

A cursory glance must be given at both social systems. The English school system, for instance,

- varies in quality and structure depending on the school and the area
- is generally "de-streamed,"
- focuses on "the basics,"
- has a school day from around nine to around four
- permits students to go directly into the workforce at sixteen

The Germans, by contrast, have

- a heavily streamed and standardised system
- 8:30 to 1.30 or 2.00 school day
- a focus on an all-round education
- an emphasis on occupational training within the education system

At university or college, the English take less time to complete their degrees, and focus more on general "arts" or "sciences" than on the practical training emphasised in the German system; however, postgraduate degrees are more common, and less a marker of academic elitism, among Germans. The English were also less able to take time out of school to work.

Career paths after education also differed. While most of the expatriate employees in London had worked for [BANK'S NAME] since finishing their education (the sole exception had spent a similar amount of time at another firm before taking a job with [BANK'S NAME]), UK staff tended to have taken several short-term jobs for a while after completing education. UK employees also tended to move jobs about once a decade, which appears to be less usual among Germans.

The welfare systems were also different in each case, with the German one being more comprehensive, as were the employment laws and role of the unions. The cost of living is also higher in England than in Germany.

Finally, while space does not permit a discussion of the different business environments of each country (see C. Lane 1989), one might note that the German corporate banking system has no English equivalent; in the UK, also, cooperative banks are not part of the state system. By contrast, while Frankfurt is very like the City, its global focus and level of specialisation is not as extreme. These differences give each group, as one manager noted, “a different understanding of the way business functions” to the other.

e) Symbolism

While symbolism is not as significant as other differences one should note that both groups defined themselves and each other through, among other things,

- the consumption of particular foods
- the supporting of national football teams
- attitudes to language

In addition, the Germans saw their welfare system as a point of pride, and both they and the English viewed the possession of German “blood” as significant in defining who is and is not “German.” The English, similarly, were defined by their “class” system and by their humour, giving each group symbolic markers through which to distinguish themselves. For the most part, such symbols were neutrally valued.

However, there were some symbols which had different meanings on both sides, and could become emotionally charged. The eating of beef, for instance, is a strong English cultural marker, and so non-English humour about “British beef” can be taken too seriously. Europe, likewise, was generally approved of by the Germans, but the English often felt more ambivalent about it. Symbols which caused too much friction were deliberately avoided: to take a single example, nationalist banter about the car industry abruptly ceased when the BMW-Rover difficulties were announced.

Conclusion

While the above remarks should be taken as guidelines only, they indicate areas in which English and German employees of [BANK'S NAME] differed. While these differences were mainly benign, a knowledge of where they lie might help avoid misunderstandings between members of each culture.

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